INFORMATION VISUALIZATION

Course: LIS–658–01  Chris Alen Sula, Ph.D.
Semester: Fall 2013  Office: PMC, Room 604B
Meeting Information: Thursdays, 6:30–8:50pm  Office Hours: Wed, 3:10–6:10 pm or by appt.
Location: PMC, Room 606  p 212.647.7377
credits: 3  e csula@pratt.edu
Prerequisites: None  w http://chrisalensula.org

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course examines the art, science, and practice of information visualization. Particular emphasis is placed on the ways in which position, shape, size, brightness, color, orientation, texture, and motion influence perception of information and facilitate comprehension and analysis of large and complex bodies of information. Topics include cognition and visual perception; the aesthetics of visual media; techniques for processing and manipulating information for the purpose of visualization; studies of spatial, relational, multivariate, time-series, interactive, and other visual approaches; and methods for evaluating information visualizations.

COURSE GOALS + LEARNING OBJECTIVES
The goals of this course are to:
• explore various theoretical, practical, and aesthetic perspectives on information visualization
• examine cognitive and psychological research relevant to visual perception and information processing
• develop familiarity with a wide variety of visual representations, with particular emphasis on selecting appropriate representations based on data frameworks and audience
• build skills in planning, developing, and evaluating information visualizations

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
• critically discuss information visualizations in light of current theories and research
• make good design choices in the context of various tasks, communications goals, and data constraints
• transform data into meaningful and effective visualizations using current software and tools

REQUIRED TEXTS
• Additional readings [available on Learning Management System via my.pratt.edu]

COURSE WEBSITE
All students enrolled in the course have access to course materials on Pratt’s Learning Management System (a Moodle installation) available at my.pratt.edu. Please make sure you know how to access LMS and use Moodle. Also, please note that LMS facilitates communication using Pratt e-mail only. If you do not use your Pratt account, please use webmail to forward your Pratt e-mail to an account that you do use.
COURSE FORMAT
This course will be structured as a lecture/discussion and lab. While the professor will clarify the main points of each session and address more advanced research material, the main portion of class will be devoted to discussion of the required readings for that week. Students will bring their own ideas, experience, and interpretations to class and will learn from sharing and hearing others. This course will also include routine labs exploring visualization processes and methods. Active preparation is therefore an important part of the class and contributes significantly to your overall learning in the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS + ASSIGNMENTS
Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visualization commentaries</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab reports</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Visualization commentaries (5 posts, 6% each)
Throughout the course, students are expected to contribute to an ongoing Tumblr featuring examples of visualization. At minimum, you must follow the Tumblr throughout the course and make at least one new post per week. Your post should include an image/screenshot (appropriately credited) and link to the original visualization, as well as brief commentary on the visualization (250–500 words). Your post can make positive and/or negative remarks about the visualization, but above all, it should demonstrate a careful reading of the texts and creativity in finding those ideas in practice throughout the field. By making thoughtful contributions to the archive, you will help to create a public resource that looks at visualization in a critical light.

Lab reports (5 reports, 6% each)
Throughout the course, we will explore various tools for managing data and creating visualizations. You will be responsible for bringing in appropriate datasets for these exercises and for experimenting with these tools in a structured way during lab time. Within one week of each lab, you should submit a short report (500–750 words) that includes:
(1) introduction,
(2) materials, including software and datasets,
(3) methods of visualization,
(4) results/discussion, including images, and
(5) future directions.
Your report should demonstrate that you have followed best practices as discussed in class and in the readings.

Final project (40%)
Students may complete a range of activities for their final projects including:
• analytic—creating a set of visualizations pertaining to one set/type of information (the visualizations may be print or digital, static or interactive, as appropriate to the information and intended audience, and must be accompanied by critical reflections on that work)
• methodological—creating a tool for visualizing one set/type of information (accompanied by critical reflections on that work), or proposing such a method in the form of a research paper
• evaluative—completing an evaluation or user study of different methods, tools, or visualizations
Any of these activities may be carried out individually or collectively. All students will make a short presentation of their projects in class on Dec 12, 2013, and the final version must have some individually written component of at least 1,000 words that incorporates theory and research in information visualization. Students should email a short proposal (no more than 250 words) before Nov 28, 2013. Proposals require approval by the professor before the project is eligible for grading.
GRADING
All graded assignments are due on the date indicated. All assignments will be graded on a rubric basis, with the criteria circulated in advance. Final grades will be awarded as follows:

- **A** sustained level of superior performance demonstrated in all areas of course requirements
- **B** consistent level of performance that is above average in a majority of the course requirements
- **C** performance that is generally average and course requirements are achieved
- **D** below average performance and achievement of the course requirements
- **F** accomplishment of the course requirements is not sufficient to receive a passing grade

Late work will not be accepted without prior approval by the professor. Students with health conditions or no-fault hardships are strongly encouraged to notify the professor immediately to discuss their work plan.

E-PORTFOLIO
Students entering the MSLIS degree program in fall 2012 are required to complete an eportfolio that is approved by their advisor before graduation. The eportfolio provides students with an opportunity to showcase their best work from SILS courses and an opportunity to demonstrate they have met the learning objectives of a MSLIS degree. Work completed for this course may be included in the eportfolio, esp. work satisfying bolded areas below. Students must demonstrate that their work jointly fulfills the following learning outcomes:

1. Students **carry-out and apply research**
2. Students **demonstrate excellent communication skills and create and convey content**
3. Students **use information technology and digital tools effectively**
4. Students apply concepts related to use and users of information and user needs and perspectives
5. Students perform within the framework of professional practice

Detailed information on the learning outcomes, requirements and how to create your eportfolio is available from: http://www.pratt.edu/academics/information_and_library_sciences/about_sils/sils_eportfolio/

POLICIES

**Academic Integrity & Institute-Wide Policies**
Students are expected to adhere to the Academic Integrity Code and Judicial Process of the Pratt Institute. All infractions will be reported, and I am disposed to fail all violators for the entire course. Students must adhere to the Pratt Community Standards listed in the current Student Handbook.

**Disabilities**
Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must obtain clearance from the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For further information, contact the Coordinator of Disability Services in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at 718.636.3711.

**Missed Sessions and Incompletes**
If you miss a session, be sure that you complete the readings, consult your classmates or the professor about the discussion, and (as always) demonstrate your knowledge of previous readings in later sessions. Students with three or more absences for any reason will not receive an A in the course and, in accordance with Pratt Institute policy, may fail the course. The professor is generally allergic to incompletes. Students with health conditions or no-fault hardships are encouraged to notify the professor immediately and discuss options for work plan.

**Participation in Faculty Research**
Students taking this class may be asked to participate in faculty-sponsored research; all contributions will be appropriately credited.

**Revisions to the Syllabus**
While this syllabus provides a reliable framework for the course, including readings and assignments, it is subject to change pending notice in class and on the course website.
# COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a tentative outline of topics, readings, and assignments. On occasion, I may add, delete, or substitute topics or readings. Changes will be announced in class and posted to LMS; no printed updates will be given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPICS AND READINGS</th>
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| 1    | 8/29  | **Course Introduction**  
• Heer, Jeffrey, Michael Bostock & Vadim Ogievetsky (2010). “A Tour through the Visualization Zoo: A survey of powerful visualization techniques, from the obvious to the obscure” ACM Queue 8(5)  
| 2    | 9/5   | **History and Theory of Visualization**  
• Few, Now You See It, Ch. 1  
| 3    | 9/12  | **Perception and Visual Processing**  
• Few, Now You See It, Chs. 3, 6  
| 4    | 9/19  | **Narrative for Visualization & Lab: Vérité TimelineJS**  
| 5    | 9/26  | **Data for Visualization & Lab: Google Refine**  
| 6    | 10/3  | **Temporal & Statistical Visualization I: Part–Whole, Deviation, Distribution**  
• Few, Now You See It, Chs. 7–10  
## Lab: Tableau

### Statistical Visualization II: Correlation, Hierarchy, Multivariate
- Few, *Now You See It*, Chs. 11–12

### Mapping, Countermapping, and Geospatial Visualization

### Lab: CartoDB or Tableau (Mapping)

### Relational Data & Network Analysis
- Hollstein, Benita (2011). “Qualitative Approaches” in *ibid.*, 404–16

### Lab: Gephi (Lab)

### Interactive Visualization
- Few, *Now You See It*, Ch. 4

### NO CLASS — Thanksgiving Break

### Lab: Final Projects

### Final Project Presentations

**Final project due**