

# CSE 440: Introduction to HCI

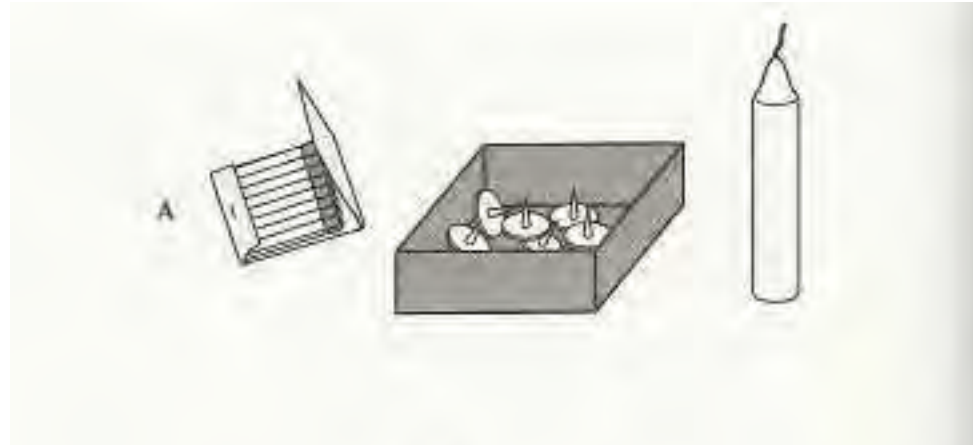
User Interface Design, Prototyping, and Evaluation

Lecture 04:  
Critique

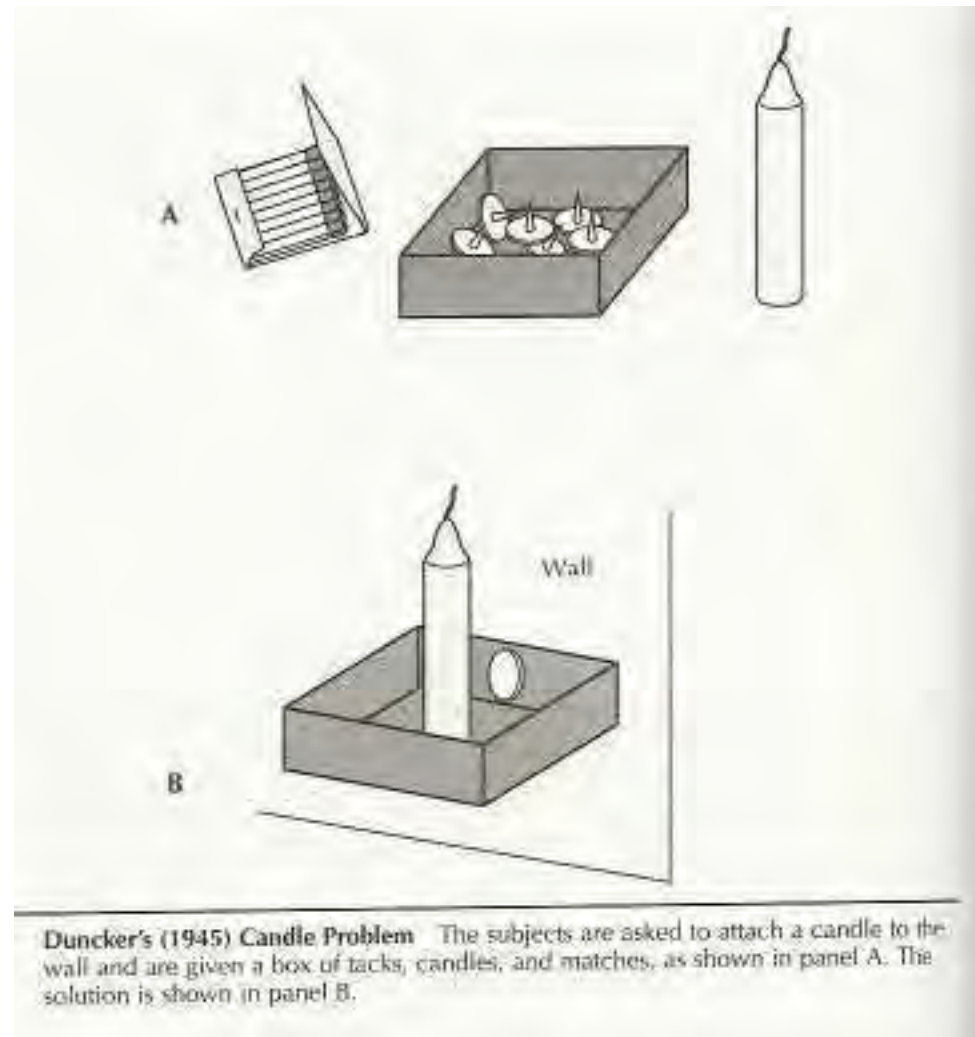
Tuesday / Thursday  
12:00 to 1:20

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# Functional Fixedness



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# \$5 Challenge

Teams of students “funded” with \$5

Allowed several days to plan

After they open the envelope, allowed two hours

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Winner made \$650...

# Why Critique?

Critique helps evaluate early, often, and cheaply

Applicable to artifacts of many types

Compare to other expert inspection methods

You are not your own worst critic

We collectively know more than any one of us

It is hard to see past your own decisions

Design requires getting past our own infatuation

A design can feel like  
our love, our baby...



# Learning to Give and Receive Critique

You will learn to both give and receive critique

- Each is important

- Each is a skill developed through practice

Many activities will consist of group critiques

- Each group will present an artifact

- Other class members and staff will offer critique

Starting today with critique of  
Assignment 2b: Design Research Plan

# Why Critique?

Critique is not just for design

It applies to many artifacts and domains

Examples?

# Why Critique?

Critique is not just for design

It applies to many artifacts and domains

Examples?

visual art, writing, design, code (i.e., code review)

Over time, you should gather people who can give you high-quality critique in everything you do

You may meet some of those people in this class

We do not insist on  
deploying flawed code...

# Critique is About Improvement



# What is Critique?

Critique is a method for feedback

It is not just a list of complaints

1. Presenters sit down with critics
2. Quickly explain their artifacts  
(e.g., less than 2 minutes)
3. Critics give feedback, ask questions
4. Presenters respond,  
take notes on what is discussed

# Critique is Neither Criticism nor Design

Seriously, not just a list of complaints

Critics offer honest feedback

Both positive and negative

Presenters should be able to learn

*what works well* and

*what is problematic* about their artifact

It is then presenter's responsibility to sort through feedback, decide what is important, how to act

You must take notes for later review

# Tips for Presenters

Critique can be hard, especially at first

Try to avoid being defensive

You are not your work, separate yourself

Remember the expertise you bring

Even if “the room” knows more about design, you know more about your problem / artifact and your rationale for the current design

# Tips for Presenters

Taking advice is not giving up authorship

You still make the final decisions

A half-baked suggestion does not contain all the details of a finished solution

Design your critique

What you show invites different forms of feedback

Verbally indicate what kind of feedback you want, but also provide an artifact of appropriate form

This course will guide you in a variety of forms



# Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

## 1) establish clear roles

Presenter: presenting, not convincing

Audience: understand problem and context,  
ask lots of questions

Facilitator: watch schedule, stay on agenda,  
take notes to help presenter,  
ask key steps for moving forward

# Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

2) ensure agreement on the problem

State the problem and context for feedback

I am showing [early/mid/late] work

Around [the problem]

Because [why it's a problem]

And am looking for feedback around [specific focus for feedback]

State what is not the current focus

Ensure understanding and check for clarity

# Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

3) focus on feedback, not criticism

## Criticism

passes judgement

finds fault

is personal

is vague

tears down

is ego-centric

is adversarial

belittles the designer

## Critique

poses questions

uncovers opportunity

is objective

is concrete

builds up

is altruistic

is cooperative

improves the design

# Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

4) keep laptops and phones put away

Exception for the presenter,  
but prefer paper whenever possible

Exception for the facilitator / note taker

# Tips for Presenters

## Keep an eye out for design rationale

You probably made some decisions without thinking through good reasons at the time

Critique can help give a rationalization for past decisions as you explain the artifact to others

## Exploit failure

A “failed” artifact should teach you about the design space, what won’t work, and why

The goal is to improve, this requires failure

# Tips for Critics

There are many strategies for giving critique

Hamburger method

I like, I wish, what if

Socratic method

These provide ways to give critique that can help the conversation go smoothly

Can give you a question to ask when you do not have one, provide a way to ask that is productive and less likely to create defensive reaction

# Tips for Critics: Hamburger Method

“Bun, meat, bun”

**Bun:**

Something fluffy and nice

**Meat:**

How to improve

**Bun:**

Something fluffy and nice

Not a “shit sandwich”

Positives need to be genuine, enable learning from both positive and negative aspects of the artifact

# Tips for Critics: I Like, I Wish, What If

## I Like:

Lead with something nice

## I Wish:

Often leading from what you like

## What If:

An idea to spark further conversation, better than:  
“I think you should have...” or “Why didn’t you ...”

Gives the presenter benefit of the doubt if they did  
already think of your idea, can present rationale



# Tips for Critics: Socratic Method

Identify an aspect of the design and ask “Why?”

Can be good if unsure what else to say

Forces presenter to give, or develop, explanations for design decisions, which can help build up the design rationale

Not fundamentally negative, hard to get defensive

# Tips for Critics

Limit your use of personal pronouns (e.g., “you”)

Critique is about the artifact, not the designer

A designer deserves honest feedback

Both positive and negative

Including clarity and rationale

Help with actionable suggestions

But it is not your design

Perhaps several possible ways of thinking

# Summary

Fall out of love with the things you build

Let others help you see past the infatuation

Get feedback early, often, and cheaply

Focus on improvement

In brainstorming, we were not *criticizing*

In critique, we are not *defending*

You will learn to both give and receive critique

If you are having difficulty, please come talk to us

# Design Research Plan Critique

With your group, find another group

Decide which group will present first

Swap half the audience group to another table

Present your Design Research Plan

Decide who is taking notes

Remind project context

Present proposed methods

Present details via design research artifact

# Design Research Plan Critique

Some things to look for:

Are questions open enough,  
avoiding the presumption of a particular design?

Are questions specific enough,  
offering a potential to gain new insights?

Are there other participants to consider?

Are there other methods to consider?

Is the proposal feasible for 1 to 2 weeks?

# Considering an Effective Critique

Is there a set agenda for work being shown?

Are there clearly defined roles in each session?

Has the facilitator kept conversation focused?

Have presenters accurately shared the scope of their problem?

Did everyone in the room understand the problem framework, enough where each person felt equipped to ask questions?

Was feedback provided in the form of questions or criticism?

Did the critique feel like a cooperated effort to improve a design, problem outline, or individual process?

# Resources

## On Critique

Four Things Working at Facebook  
Has Taught Me About Design Critique

<https://medium.com/facebook-design/critique-is-an-important-part-of-any-design-process-whether-you-work-as-part-of-a-team-or-solo-ef3dcb299ce3>

How to Survive a Critique:  
A Guide to Giving and Receiving Feedback

<http://www.aiga.org/how-to-survive-a-critique>

## On Interviewing

User Interview Techniques:  
Guidelines for Obtaining Better Results

[https://canvas.uw.edu/files/44191347/download?download\\_frd=1](https://canvas.uw.edu/files/44191347/download?download_frd=1)

# Resources

## Guidelines for design research interviews

Structured in a format to use for critique of the interview process itself

Welcome		
#	Concept	Description
W1	Set appropriate expectations	Review context of interview, purpose of interview, roles of moderator, note taker and participant, estimated duration, moderator is not the designer
W2	Reassure participant	Not to lose of the participant, here to learn about the strengths/weaknesses of design. Participant should not speak for others unless specifically asked

Questioning		
#	Concept	Example
Q1	Avoid leading questions	Bad: How did you like the login screen? Good: What did you think about the login screen?
Q2	Where possible, ask open-ended questions instead of binary or limited choices	Bad: Does this make sense? Good: What are your impressions of this?
Q3	Ask opinion questions using balanced emphasis on different options	Bad: Is the feature helpful to you? Good: Is the feature helpful to you or is the feature not helpful to you? Why?
Q4	Ask about actual behavior for the individual, avoid hypothetical predictions for larger groups	Bad: Would this be a good idea? Good: How valuable would this be to you in your job?
Q5	Don't assign blame in probing questions	Bad: Why did you do that? Good: I noticed you did X. Talk me through your thought process.
Q6	Ask for specific examples and encourage storytelling	Bad: Do you have trouble with the search function? Good: Tell me about a time when you couldn't find what you were searching for.
Q7	Avoid overly complex questions that require lengthy descriptions	Bad: When this site was designed, there was discussion whether... Good: How could this site best meet your needs?
Q8	Don't ask participant to design solutions, ask for opinions on experience	Bad: What would be the best way to design this? Good: In your experience what other applications have done this well?
Q9	Ask curious questions to explore, but avoid argumentative probes	Bad: Do you have anything else to say about...? Good: Can you tell me more about...?
Q10	Ask "Why" to understand reasons for certain actions.	Bad: How would you rate your experience with the site? Good: How would you rate your experience with the site? Why?

Interacting		
#	Concept	Description
I1	Let the participant talk	Pause to let them finish a thought - don't talk over them.
I2	React to body language	Pick up on participant body language of frustration or annoyance and adjust interaction accordingly.
I3	Don't defend a design	Act as a neutral party outside of the design team - moderator is there for research, not to defend designs.
I4	Watch for self-censoring	Probe further when participant censors themselves by trying to be too nice, or blaming themselves.
I5	Develop friendly rapport	Be welcoming and helpful to participant without being too empathetic if participant is negative toward a design.
I6	Provide neutral encouragement	Offer fair assessment of participant's responses - don't overly praise positive or negative comments.
I7	Repeat answers	State responses back to participant to ensure accuracy on complex points and to encourage elaboration.
I8	Minimize moderator distractions	Be aware of annoying or repetitive gestures and phrases from the moderator and minimize them.
I9	Encourage think-aloud	For task-based questions, remind participant to think-aloud.
I10	Don't force opinions	Ask about participant opinions where appropriate, but don't force opinion if participant doesn't feel strongly

Closing		
#	Concept	Example
C1	Ask for overall assessment of subject	"Can you summarize your experience with X today?" or "From your perspective, what is the most important thing to consider in the design of X?"
C2	Request comments regarding topics not raised by moderator	"What comments do you have on topics we didn't cover today?" or "What else should I have asked?"



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