

Notes from mid-course meeting

There is a general positive impression of the course so far, although there are and have been a number of issues. Student representatives and course organizers both agree that the workshops are central to the learning outcomes of the course and that they generally provide meaningful means to achieve the learning outcomes. One important positive aspect of the workshops is that they are not graded on performance but are only “pass or fail” moments based on attendance and handing in a reflection assignment. As such, there have not been major issues with the workshops themselves.

However, two administrative issues have affected the workshops specifically and the course in general. Firstly, a minority but significant contingent of students taking the course, i.e. students from the Industrial Design Engineering Masters program, have frequent schedule collisions because the “study blocks” of this course were not properly communicated to students when they were choosing courses this spring (this course is a popular course among industrial design students since a few years back).

Secondly, course planning has not been sufficiently finalized in good time, which has led to important information being published or otherwise communicated late to students. Some information has become clear among the students since the beginning of the course while some information is still unclear to different degrees. The main example is the mandatoryness of the workshops; it is more or less clear by now that the workshops are mandatory, while there is some slight confusion whether the reflection assignments are also mandatory, and there is very little clarity as to what happens if you miss a workshop and how many you can or cannot miss. Suggestions centered on providing information, e.g. stating whether a workshop is planned to involve a reflection assignment whether or not the assignment is ready to be published or not and announcing to the students taking the course that a reflection exercise has been added belatedly and simultaneously remind of the “soft” deadline for the exercises. Furthermore, making information about how workshops function, especially if you miss one or more, more publicly available. It was repeated that certain workshops can be supplemented alone, but there are significant differences between how workshops can be supplemented, and the course organizer need to be informed to be able to organize supplements.

The social work environment is generally experienced as positive and the students generally seem to find it easy to get in touch with teachers and course organizers about issues, and not being sure about what issues one has is a greater obstacle. However, there is a certain recurring tendency for students to fall into certain roles depending on their backgrounds. The most significant example of this is how students with significant backgrounds in software and/or computer engineering easily get assigned or take on more technically oriented roles instead of design oriented roles.

Finally, there was a slight impression that the formal course requirements in software development knowledge might be slightly too high, and in the video prototyping workshop specifically there was a request that video editing software be suggested in the introduction.