CS160 Fall 04, Project Proposal

Overview
Your assignment is to propose an idea that could form the basis of a course project for this semester. Your design should be based on consideration of a real group of users and their needs. This is an individual assignment.

Project Requirements
The theme for this semester is Educational/Creative Technology. This includes e-learning systems, educational games, tutoring systems, smart help systems etc. Since learning has a close relationship with creative work, project options include portals or collaboration systems for creative work. This gives you a lot of flexibility in choice of platform including desktop and laptop PCs, PDAs, smart phones and high-end game engines. We can help with some of these platforms, specifically laptop computers and a limited number of PDAs. We encourage you to think about novel ways of interacting with your system including speech, touch screen and pen interfaces. Focus first on addressing a real user need, not on the immediate possibilities of the technology. Try to address someone else’s needs rather than your own. Talk to other potential users to understand their needs.

Deliverable
You will submit an essay of no more than 2 pages of text. Your essay should follow the outline below and will be graded using the writing guidelines that follow:
1. Target user group
2. Two personas (representative users)
3. Problem or Idea (short)
4. Analysis of Problem
5. Suggested Solution

Writing Guidelines
Creativity (3 pts)
The proposal should try to address a practical problem with a novel use of technology or present a new or enhanced work practice enabled by technology.

Writing (3 pts)
The writing must clearly present the important facts and be terse and concise. The nitty-gritty details aren’t needed at this point. The organization should follow the outline, with the conclusions in each section leading into the next in a logical manner.

Target group and personae (3 pts)
Your target group should be sensible (people you have access to) and not trivial (CS undergrads is not a challenge). Personae should be developed in enough detail that they are generative (suggesting answers to questions about them). What are their needs and wants?
Problem Description (3 pts)
The problem description should be short and specific about the high-level goals of the project. The problem should be described in terms of user activities and/or tasks and the kinds of learning users need to do. Avoid describing or suggesting a solution at this stage. Your problem should certainly not be constrained by particular technologies – that will undermine the next stage of design, which includes searching for an appropriate technology.

Problem Context and Forces (3 pts)
The analysis section should give more background for the problem. What aspects of the situation might influence the problem solution? Think about location, time, environmental factors etc. Then think about aspects of the user group, their education, available time, motivation, values etc., What related or complementary solutions exist already?

Solution Sketch (3 pts)
Give a very brief sketch of the kind of solution(s) you are considering. Since your problem has barely been specified and you haven’t done any user interviews, you probably don’t have enough information to make many design choices. So your solution sketch should be very general. Concentrate on the functionality that your solution should deliver, not the medium (technology) that gets chosen to deliver it. You should consider different technologies (a portal available though a phone, PDA, or kiosk) to achieve the functionality that your solution needs.