**Dear Teaching Team..**

I really didn’t know what to expect coming into the class. To be quite honest, having taken CS 147 in the fall, I was kind of out on Human-Computer Interaction; I really liked the material but I just did not have a good experience with the stress of it all. I took this class as my capstone for the Symbolic Systems major, not expecting to like it but just to get through with it. However, this class completely changed my opinion. I think one of the things that I didn’t necessarily like about CS147 is that the class felt aimless. Sure, you learn the HCI principles through building a product that deals with a need you found in the community, and you were placed in a studio with a theme, but without actually learning about that theme, sometimes it felt like you weren’t really addressing something actually important versus something that only you saw as important. However, I think this class, with its focus on Behavior Change, really solved that problem. I really enjoyed having lectures not only focusing on the design principles, but also on different theories of what causes both positive and negative behavior change. Iit felt as if we were learning about important, life-changing things, which better equipped us to do our projects. To be honest, this class kindled my love for HCI; it’s literally the reason why I’m applying to the coterm program.

I think another huge reason that I really liked this class was because I loved working on our project. Part of that was because of the subject matter: trying to help seniors and coterms make the most of their remaining time at Stanford is something that affected me personally, and so interviewing people that I knew about how to spend remaining time at Stanford was something that really was impactful in terms of framing the rest of my Stanford experience. The other part of it was my team - I don’t think I’ve worked on a group project here at Stanford that’s been so seamless, collaborative, and just generally *fun.* I think a part of it was the personalities of the group: everyone seemed to vibe really well together, which made working together really simple. It felt like everyone was always honest about their capabilities and willing to pick up the slack from others as necessary, and being someone with less experience, having two HCI coterms in Ecy and Jinhee to give ideas, provide support on things, and help plan our things was an undeniable asset. I can say I’ve learned so much from this group about what a good group dynamic looks like and how to foster that, from always clearly communicating responsibilities in a group chat and being honest if things don’t seem like they’ll work out, to even just always going up to a board and writing things down to get ideas flowing. Because of these things, our group sessions always felt really productive, and it made the work really easy overall. I’m really gonna miss this group and the experiences I’ve had with them this quarter.

In terms of our project itself, I can’t help but feel that our work is necessarily incomplete. It’s hard to be able to finish a project in 10 weeks, let alone one that tries to change something as difficult as behavior. But I’m proud of the work we did, and the ideas that we brought. Issues with spending time with friends is something that is talked about a lot at Stanford, but I feel that we really worked on something that could make a difference in that. And even if the idea doesn’t move past the ideation stage, I know I learned a lot that I will personally take into consideration with my remaining time at Stanford. One thing ethically that has always bothered me a little, however, with our idea was the idea of importing contacts. It seems like a very small thing, but in a world where data is king and there are very little regulations against collection, having someone’s contacts could potentially be very valuable. We asked for contacts to make having friends and inviting them easier, but this could definitely backfire depending on whose in charge. It also potentially leads to a slippery slope - there’s a very valid justification to use cookie data to verify “what kinds of activities” someone would like, even if we don’t think about doing it right now.

Overall, this was a great class, and I’m grateful for having been admitted. In the future, I know I will take the principles of this class’ focus on behavior and the lessons I learned from my group about good ways to work with a small group and apply them elsewhere, whether in other HCI classes or literally out in the real world. Thank you all for your support and help this quarter, I personally truly appreciated it. Good luck with everything else going on with you this quarter!

Sincerely,

Nolawi Ayelework