

# SYSTEMS DESIGN ENGINEERING

## Interruptions

**SYDE 740 – *Topic 8***

(Reading course.)

---

**Fall**

The study of interrupted work has been growing and solidifying as a sub-discipline of human factors engineering. Most of us work in environments where we must regularly manage interruptions in addition to our daily work. Interruptions are interesting from a human factors perspective in terms of understanding how they disrupt work, the process costs involved in resuming work following an interruption, and from a design perspective, the best strategies for mitigating interruptions and making task resumption easier.

In this course, the student will be expected to read deeply into the existing research on interruptions. The student will be expected to develop an understanding of current cognitive models of the effect of interruptions on work and the current understanding behind task resumption strategies. At the end of the course the student should be familiar with the literature, competent in the current models and also able to understand how to effectively add interruptions into the study of complex work. The student will be expected to produce a report that summarizes the literature, explains current models, and concludes with a critical assessment of how and when to best use interruptions in research and which measures are most appropriate when studying interrupted work.

---

INSTRUCTOR: C. Burns  
E-MAIL: c4burns@uwaterloo.ca