

Design for the Web 1

Art 39540, Spring 2008

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Mon 9:00—11:50 am, CG-122

<http://webhackery.com/>

Overview

This is a class about websites. It focuses both on the technical process of designing and building, and assessing the effectiveness of websites in reaching their goals. This is a production workshop, but we'll also be having a more general conversation about screen-based design and online communication. We will explore techniques for building websites as well as ways the web has been used in art making, research, socializing and commerce.

Course info

Broadly speaking, you will be graded on participation and projects. You will be expected to participate both in class and through the course website. Weekly readings are short, so please do them. Lab work and readings should take approximately 3 hours per week, but let me know if it's taking more time than that. By the end of the course you will have built a personal portfolio website, contributed to collaborative group project and created a work of net art. There is one required book and two recommended books.

Goals

- Apply effective design principals to screen-based media.
- Become familiarized with the tools of design and online art making.
- Be comfortable talking about new media and online art making.
- Find strategies for collaboratively problem-solving a creative project.
- Prepare a portfolio that effectively promotes your objectives.
- Learn how to talk about your work and offer helpful feedback to peers.

Grades

25% class participation

15% online participation

35% assignments

25% projects

Reminders

Lateness and absences will effect your grade. Please turn off mobile phones, instant messaging, email, etc. while in class.

Texts

- Required: Visual Quickstart Guide: HTML, XHTML, & CSS by Elizabeth Castro, ISBN 0321430840.
- Optional: Thinking with Type by Ellen Lupton, ISBN 1568984480.
- Optional: Making and Breaking the Grid by Timothy Samara, ISBN 1592531253.

Readings, assignments and projects

We'll have weekly assignments and readings as well as 3 bigger projects that span the semester:

1. Personal portfolio site
2. Local business site
3. A work of net art

Schedule

Week 1: Intro to the web

Jan 28, 2008

Introduction to the course. Who made the web and for what purpose? What constitutes a web page?
Types of websites and how they work. How do you find stuff? What are URLs? Hackery?

Week 2: Text and markup

Feb 4, 2008

Text is the foundation of the web. But how does one write for the web? How do readers operate in an online context? Introduction to WordPress.

Week 3: Page structure

Feb 11, 2008

What are the required components that make up a web page? What kinds of things can you add to a page? Inline vs. block HTML, stylesheets and JavaScript.

(President's Day — No class)

Feb 18, 2008

Week 4: Intro to CSS

Feb 25, 2008

How do stylesheets work? Selectors, rule sets and properties. Elements, IDs, classes and context. Linked, page-defined and inline. Colors, units, order of execution. Combining properties with shortcuts.

Week 5: Manipulating text

Mar 3, 2008

What kinds of things can you do to inline content with CSS? Making text readable. Using sIFR to extend your range of available typefaces.

Week 6: Page layout

Mar 10, 2008

Preparing page compositions in Photoshop. HTML display modes: block, inline, float. The box model. HTML positioning (for block elements): static, absolute, relative, fixed.

Due: Portfolio project**Week 7: The typographic grid**

Mar 17, 2008

A brief history of the typographic grid. Why grids can be helpful. When to abandon grids. How to use grids in web design. Introduction to the Blueprint CSS framework.

(No class, meet on Wednesday)

Mar 24, 2008

Week 8: Template-based design

Mar 26, 2008

Using a standard layout across multiple pages. Thinking about navigation systems. A very gentle introduction to PHP.

Week 9: Information architecture

Mar 31, 2008

How do you create a coherent “site” out of your collection of pages? How do you clearly express to the user where they are and where they can go? What are accessibility, web standards and usability?

Week 10: Net art

Apr 7, 2008

What does it mean to make artwork for an online audience? How is net art being made today? What is its history? Is it “dead”? Should we care?

Due: Client project

Week 11: Social software

Apr 14, 2008

How do users interact with each other online? What is the interaction between groups, tools and goals for various social websites? How do different websites interface with each other?

(No class)

Apr 21, 2008

Week 12: Video

Apr 28, 2008

How does time-based and interactive media change the user experience? Embedding videos onto web pages. Shooting, editing and encoding video for the web.

Week 13: The web ecosystem

May 5, 2008

How do web pages interconnect? What are syndication feeds? What is a link referral? What is Google PageRank?

Week 14: Final presentations

May 12, 2008

Final presentation of student work.

Due: Net art project