Topics in Media Production: Web Basics

School of Journalism and Mass Communications / College of Liberal Arts and Sciences / University of Iowa

Spring 2015 - 5:30 p.m. - 7:20 p.m. MW, W340 AJB
DEO: David Ryfe

Instructor
Max Freund / Interactive Media Journalist
The Gazette
Maxwell-freund@uiowa.edu / @mnfreund

Office hours: 7:30 to 9 p.m., MW, W340 AJB – as needed.

Materials

A computer

A USB flash drive. Not required, but it could come in handy.

To do well in this class

This course is a best attempt to teach you the skills you need to create and operate a robust, active and dynamic website with an eye towards presenting journalistic content in an engaging and impactful way.

In order to do so, students will be challenged to learn the fundamentals of HTML and CSS, within the framework of hand coding their own website without the aid of an existing CMS (content management system).

While this may be a challenge for some students, it will provide them with the skillsets needed to move forward and work in any existing web framework, while also allowing them full customizability from the onset.

Although no course can provide you with every possible skill needed to build and run a website, engaged students will learn the most critical and fundamental of those skills. We will also lay the groundwork for you to acquire new skills on your own.

Most students in this class will have no prior experience with web development. So if you are scared you are behind from the onset, or that your brain can't handle this stuff, don't worry, it can, and you can. Mistakes and confusion are to be expected
from time to time, but together, we can break through those barriers and gain a stronger understanding of journalistic web development.

We will assume that everyone has little or no web development experience, and build you up from there. While this might mean a bit of boredom in the first few weeks of the semester for some of you, by the end of this course, you all will be leaving with valuable portfolio pieces and advanced, marketable skills.

Most of the class, particularly later in the semester, will be devoted to students working independently on creating their own websites. This is a real-world, hands-on workshop course that requires students to learn by doing. We’ll have plenty of time in class to devote to working on your assignments and collaborate coding exercises, so that you’ll always have help when you get stuck.

So, if you do your homework, attend class, pay attention, follow along, take a few risks, and ask questions when you are lost, then there’s no way you won’t do well. You can do this.

**Outcomes**

Upon completing this class, you should expect to leave with a working knowledge of:

- basic HTML, CSS, and Javascript.
- You should be able to build and maintain a simple, journalistic-focused website
- Have multiple long-form journalism projects that showcase your ability to tell stories through a variety of mediums, including but not limited to: text, videography, photography and data mapping.
- Be able to demonstrate an understanding of not only how to execute those pieces, but how to put them together into a cohesive, and informative piece of journalism.

**Assignments**

**Projects (500 points of your class grade)**

The majority of your grade will come from three projects that will be completed over the course of the semester. These projects will be individual pieces of journalism that fit within a topic area you select.

These projects will also be the key pieces of content within your website.

What makes a project successful is the marriage between good storytelling and strong web development. The Internet is a toolbox, and as journalists, we have a variety of tools available to tell our stories. And while this is a student course,
everyone will have gone through prior classes that provided experience with multiple storytelling techniques (text, photos, videos, audio, charts, maps).

This class aims to take those storytelling techniques and add to a student’s toolbox the ability to design a narrative using code. The order, layout, functionality, and aesthetics of a site will lend a hand to the storytelling, and can be just as impactful as the words that are written.

The first two projects will be worth **150 points** each. The third and final project will be worth **200 points**.

Grading rubrics for each project will be handed out prior to beginning work.

**Test (150 points of your class grade)**

There will be one test in this class. This test will be an in-class, closed notes test of HTML and CSS concepts. The test will be prior to the project portion of the class, and this is because it will give me a stronger understanding of what key concepts have been digested, and which ones need a bit of review before diving directly into development.

**Homework (100 points of your class grade)**

While the projects are the major component of the class, minor homework assignments will be given throughout the course. These will be things such as building your first web page, or completing the site navigation. Specific requirements and expectations for these will be given at the time of assignment.

**Code Academy (50 points of your class grade)**

Code Academy is an online tool for learning web development. While this is a powerful tool, we will be using it primarily as a resource for practice and review. A variety of Code Academy assignments will be given in the earlier part of the course to reaffirm your knowledge of what was taught during the previous class.

There is no limit on how many attempts you can have at individual lessons, and therefore, these lessons are essentially free points. I suggest that you take the time to get them!

**Attendance and Participation (200 points of your class grade)**

To receive full points for attendance and participation, you must be present for every class and be attentive, and engaged in that class’s content.

To obtain full points for participating, you must be vocal and contribute during class. Web development at times can be complex and confusing. I will have no idea if or
when a topic is confusing if you do not speak up. In addition, many class periods will be spent critiquing work and brainstorming project ideas. Collaboration is the best way to identify great ideas, and therefore the contribution of all class members is expected.

Regarding attendance. You will begin the course with a full 100 points given for attendance.

**Unexcused Absences**
Things come up, I get it. Everyone get’s one free one.

After your first, for each unexcused absence you will be docked 15 points from your 100 points allocated to attendance.

If you have four unexcused absences total from class, you will receive a 0 for both your attendance and participation portion of your grade.

If you continue to miss classes beyond four classes, you will be subject to a 1 on 1 review during office hours, and possible automatic failure of the course.

**Excused Absences**

There will be no loss of points for excused absences, however, assignments that are due on the date of an excused absence will still need to be turned in that day, unless other arrangements are made.

Excused absences must be discussed on an individual basis, and will most likely be granted for family emergencies or serious illnesses.

Something else to remember....

The majority of the homework and project’s grading rubric will be based off of demonstrating a mastery of the lessons taught in class. Therefore, if you choose to not attend class, it is unlikely you will be equipped with the development and storytelling techniques necessary to obtain a good grade on projects.

In short, come to class. You (or your parents) are paying for this education, let’s have fun together and learn some cool stuff. I promise, it will be worth it.

(Thumbs up)

**Regarding late work**

Deadlines are real. That is true in the business world, as well as the academic. If an assignment is turned in one day late, there will be an automatic 25% reduction of
your grade. After two days, the automatic reduction will be 50%. Beyond two days, the assignment is forfeited, and you will receive a 0 for the assignment.

The class will be graded out of 1000 points.

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<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>(960 – 1000)</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>(700 – 729)</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>(870 – 899)</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>(800 – 829)</td>
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Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentages and point totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance / Participation</td>
<td>(200 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code Academy Assignments</td>
<td>(50 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>(150 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minor Homework</td>
<td>(100 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projects (2)</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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<td>Extra Credit</td>
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Class Schedule

A breakdown of the class schedule, including topics for each lecture and the dates for homework and other assignments is available at this location http://tinyurl.com/ow6ppxq

Note: This schedule is an approximation of what will be covered. As the semester progresses, lecture subject matter may change. If there is a change in the due date of a homework assignment listed on the schedule, that change will be announced in class.

Project rubrics and track sheets

Project rubrics and track sheets will be used for each project. These documents will help keep track of the progress you are making throughout a project, while also providing the grading document for when the project is completed.

Students are expected to maintain these sheets throughout their project. Failing to do so, or losing their documents can result in a lesser grade on that project.
Outside of class

As a 4-hour course, the CLAS guidelines recommend 2 hours of outside work per semester hour, per week. Therefore your 4-hour course should equate to roughly 8 hours of outside work and study per week.

While assignments will make up a large portion of this time, this course is filled with concepts that are ripe for self-exploration. The students who take it upon themselves to build their skills outside the classroom will strengthen their abilities and make a higher grade a more attainable reality.

Now all extra bits!

The Iowa Dozen

We learn to...
1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value...
6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore...
10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions
12. The role of media in shaping cultures.

This course particularly covers #4, #8, and #10.

College of Liberal Arts Policy and Procedures

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook.
Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondence (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty

All students taking CLAS courses have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct will have their grade reflect such misconduct and is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with me, and then with the Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies, Charles Munro (Charles-munro@uiowa.edu). If we are still unable to resolve the issue, then contact the departmental director, David Ryfe. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event
is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety website.