Web Design Basics

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

Fall 2017 - 5:00 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. MW, W332 AJB
DEO: David Ryfe

Instructor
Max Freund / Managing Editor of Digital
The Gazette
Maxwell-freund@uiowa.edu

Office hours: 6:15 to 7:30 p.m., MW, W332 AJB – as needed.

Materials

A computer

A USB flash drive. Required to store your website.

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 customization 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 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.

**JMC Learning Outcomes**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes by helping you achieve proficiency in understanding and applying the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in real space and cyberspace. Achieving these outcomes means the ability to:

**Media Literacy:** Understand the principles of media literacy and develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains.
- Students will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.

**Writing and Storytelling:** Understand that clear, concise, correct writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating it effectively requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences.
• Students will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.

Other Learning Outcomes

• Strong HTML / CSS skills with some Javascript
• You should feel adept at layout and design of an article space for journalistic purposes
• You should have gained a deeper understanding and appreciation for a variety of digital storytelling techniques.
• Gain portfolio pieces focused on audio/visual storytelling, data analysis, and social media interactions.
• Be able to demonstrate an understanding of not only how to execute those techniques, 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) (Midterm on Sept. 20)
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!

**Participatory Quizzes (100 points)** I used to grade participation based on vocal inclusion and engagement within a class environment. I have shifted from this structure, as it unduly punishes an individual who is less vocal, but still equally engaged.

Therefore participation will be gauged on in-class pop quizzes given on material previously covered. If you attend, and participate, these will be easy points. If you fail to attend, or are distracted during class, then you will struggle.

Ultimately, this is a way to measure participation that is agnostic of an individual's temperament and level of vocal engagement.

**Attendance (100 points)** Attendance is important with a class that is so dedicated to in-class work and discussion. Attendance is expected and students will earn points based on being present and attentive during class.

With this expectation, sometimes students find themselves unable to attend for personal reasons. To simulate a “real world” environment, students will be provided with two “PTO” days. These are free misses that do not affect your grade. However for them to be used a student must notify me via email about their intention to miss class.
Additional misses will only be excused for university-sanctioned events (think travel for sports etc.) or for documented hospitalization or medical issues. Additional misses above the two “PTO” days will result in a 10-point reduction in attendance for each miss. If a student misses 5 or more days without cause, their grade and overall standing in this course will be under review, and will be subject to a 1 on 1 meeting where we discuss how we can rectify this issue and refocus the student’s efforts in class.

**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.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>(960 – 1000)</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>(770 – 799)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(930 – 959)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(730 – 769)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>(900 – 929)</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>(700 – 729)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(870 – 899)</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>(650 – 699)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(830 – 869)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>(600 – 649)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>(800 – 829)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>(0 – 600)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentages and point totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance / Participation</td>
<td>(200 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Academy Assignments</td>
<td>(50 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>(150 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Homework</td>
<td>(100 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects (2)</td>
<td>(300 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>(200 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 [https://tinyurl.com/webjournalismbasics](https://tinyurl.com/webjournalismbasics)

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.
Class Collaboration

Web development and journalism can at times be viewed as independent activities. Whether it is the cliché view of the developer who puts their headphones on, pounds Mountain Dew, and codes in a dimly lit room, or the go-it-alone reporter who pounds the pavement to find the next big story, these disciplines can at times be solitary ones.

While that is often the case, I want this course to be a space for inclusionary conversation. Web development and journalism are artistic endeavors, and with anything artistic there are varying ways of completing tasks.

One solution you might identify, while perfectly correct in application, could be completely different from another classmate’s chosen path.

We will strive to share these differences and learn from each other. This is why we will have multiple instances of “collaborate coding” exercises where two people work on the same computer. This requires open dialogue and a chance to see the inner workings of another person’s processes. And don’t worry, if you are a shy person and fearful your ideas may fall by the wayside, you share turns taking control of the keyboard.

That being said, collaboration on individual assignments is not allowed. It is your responsibility to develop your own stories and build your own websites. If I see instances of repeated code across multiple students’ assignments, this will be considered academically dishonest.

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 (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other policies. These policies vary by college (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

Electronic Communication
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/).

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities.
Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at diversity@uiowa.edu or diversity.uiowa.edu.

**Academic Integrity**
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College’s [Code of Academic Honesty](https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies). Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address.

**CLAS Final Examination Policies**
The final exam schedule for each semester is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this final exam information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. ([https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies](https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies))

**Making a Complaint**
Students with a complaint should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the departmental executive officer (DEO), also known as the Chair. Students may then bring the concern to CLAS ([https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities)).

**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 must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, definitions, and the full University policy, see [https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/](https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/).