Comm 244: Design for the World Wide Web

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Course Overview

The Web is indispensable to the lives of most people today. Whether it's access to news, banking, schoolwork, or friends, few of us can imagine (or particularly would want to imagine) what the world would look like if the Web suddenly disappeared tomorrow. With the explosion of sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Squarespace, web publishing is now easily within the reach of almost anyone with a little patience and some basic computer skills.

What makes all of this possible? Think about the sites we interact with daily. Who are the people who made these sites? How did they know where to start? What do "they" know that you yourself want to learn this semester?

"They" are web designers. Web designers work on complex projects, solving many problems along the way. They must have an understanding of the technology that underpins the web along with an even better understanding of how people access the web today. They contribute to communications strategy, but are not marketers. They must understand and use the principles and practices of graphic design, but must simultaneously integrate usability and accessible design practices into their work. They must understand and articulate the "business purpose" for a website, while thinking like, and advocating for, the people who need to use that site.

In short, web designers work in a broad, interesting field, which crosses several disciplinary boundaries. Many people choose to specialize in one aspect of web design such as strategy, visual design, or user experience design. While small projects can be sometimes be completed alone, larger projects are simply too complex for any one person to undertake alone.

For this course, you will be exposed to a range of knowledge and skills that the generalist web designer is expected to be familiar with. No one course will make you an expert in web design, but you will learn about the profession and pick up new skills and knowledge along the way. By the end of this course, you should be able to speak intelligently about the field and have a much better understanding of what aspects (if any) of the field appeal to you. At the end of this semester, you will be empowered with the basic knowledge and expertise to craft your own sites.

Class Website

All homework and project descriptions will be posted on the class website at:

http://www.simmons.edu/~grovesd/comm244

Office Hours

I work full-time for Simmons and am here most days. If you would like to see me outside of class please email me to set up an appointment.

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Attendance & Grading

We will cover a lot of information in this course. The good news is that you will learn something new each class. The "bad" news is that you will really need to come to class, and by "coming to class" I mean, coming to class prepared, having done your reading and homework, ready to ask questions, present your work, and critique the work of others.

For each class, I'll expect you to speak confidently, making references to what we've learned through lectures, discussions and readings to bolster your point of view. You will be expected to critique the work of your classmates, and to receive critiques of your work. This is a good thing. Design is an iterative process, and good designers know always to seek the input of their colleagues in order to improve their work. Better to hear it from friends before it's published to the Web.

Given the importance of your active participation in class not only for yourself, but for your classmates, **more than two absences will result in the reduction of your final grade by one full letter grade**. If you know you will be absent from class, I appreciate notice ahead of time so I can plan accordingly. Whether excused or unexcused, absences will affect your coursework. We will only meet 13 times this semester. I expect you to attend each session. You will receive a zero for your participation grade for each missed class.

Your grade will be determined by a combination of marks received for homework assignments, quizzes, a midterm, and a final project. In addition, participation will be factored into your final grade. You may use the following as a rough guide for your final grade:

Homework:	15%	
Recipe Book:	~~15%~~	20%
Story Project:	~~15%~~	20%
~~Shopping Project:~~	~~20%~~	
Final Project:	~~25%~~	30%
Participation:	~~10%~~	15%

Homework grades will be split into three categories: class website and exercises and writing assignments (blogs). Each of these categories will be graded individually and then averaged into the final homework grade.

Text

Learning Web Design,
Fifth Edition
by Jennifer Niederst Robbins
ISBN: 978-1491960202
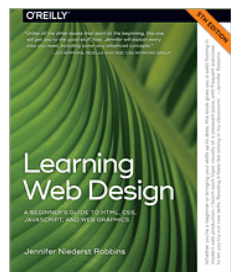
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Weekly Blog Assignments

For this class you will set up a blog on your class website and write semi-weekly blog posts. The topic will be posted on the course website each week. These blog posts are meant to get you thinking and writing about issues in web design. While writing the posts, you should be practicing good web writing techniques. This means writing posts that are clear and concise. You should write enough to fully and thoughtfully answer the prompt. Generally, this should mean your posts are between 200-400 words.

Keep in mind that normal writing rules still apply to the web, even blog posts. All of your posts should be thoroughly edited. They should be well-written and not contain typos or misspellings. If you use other sources or websites, make sure to credit them. While it is not expected that you use formal citations for these posts, it i's proper web etiquette to include a link any refrenced website or article. Make sure to also check that your link works!

Blog posts containing more than three typos or misspellings will be marked incomplete and returned.

Academic Honesty

You're in school to learn, and to improve yourself. Don't take the work of others and present it as your own. Don't let a friend who already knows this stuff do your work for you. You (and they) might be well-meaning, but you need to use your judgment about when someone is helping, and when they are doing your work (and in effect, getting your grade) for you.

If you have questions, ask. If you need help, seek it in class or during office hours. While I will always welcome questions, I will be thoroughly unimpressed by a presentation of work that is not your own. Cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Simmons Honor Board. To learn more, information is available at: http://www.simmons.edu/student-life/handbook/rights-responsibilities/honor-system.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students who wish to receive academic accommodations for this course must first register due to a documented diagnosis/disability with the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). The most commonly requested accommodations are extended time for testing and use of the OAS Testing Center. OAS will provide eligible/registered students with an Academic Accommodations Authorization form to share with each instructor to confirm the student's authorized accommodations. The OAS is located on the 1st floor of Lefavour Hall in the Center for Student Success and is open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. For more information about the services and accommodations available through the Office of Accessibility Services please, review the following link: simmons.edu/access.