

LSC 532: Web Design for the Sciences, Spring 2008

Location: Room 139 Hiram Smith Hall
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm Tuesday, Thursday

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Office Hours: Thursday 11:00 – 12:00 or by appointment
Class website: <http://www.lsc532.2summit.com>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an *introductory* level web communications course. You will be introduced to core concepts needed to create professional and effective web sites from the perspective of a professional communicator (rather than from a programmer perspective). This course is taught in a hands-on, workshop manner with a mix of lecture and lab time. The course will have 3 somewhat distinct sections.

SECTION 1

First, you will learn about web communication concepts. Topics for this section include learning about project management/core process, graphic design (CRAP), user experience, interface design and user-centered design. Our projects for this section will focus almost exclusively on critiques and interface designs. During this section of the course, we will primarily use Adobe Photoshop (ie., programming will be kept to a minimum).

SECTION 2

After we learn about planning and presenting web site concepts you will learn how to create functional websites with XHTML and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). You will learn basic programming concepts, layout skills and techniques, explore the benefits of CSS and also post your first sites using file transfer protocol (FTP). We will also investigate browser variations and how (if we can) to embrace these variations. We will use an HTML editor during this time and possibly Adobe Dreamweaver.

SECTION 3

The third section will (as you probably can guess) build on the first two. During this section, you will be working on your projects while I introduce more advance web concepts and tools including analytic tools, audio/video tools, blogs, social networks and search engine optimization (SEO) techniques.

Throughout each section, significant time will be devoted to hands-on work in lab using XHTML, CSS and industry standard software to create a variety of projects. Although I will provide some support and technical assistance, you are expected to explore and learn on your own.

For those of you (and it's the vast majority of you) not familiar with these software programs, it will be your responsibility to learn them. We will discuss various resources to help you.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is the tentative outline for our course. Because this is a hands-on seminar, the syllabus may be amended if particular points need to be emphasized or skills practiced. The primary method for updating readings, assignments, etc. will be via in class.

Please note it is your responsibility to follow the class blog for homework assignment and other logistical information.

IMPORTANT! Reading assignments will be listed in the blog, so make sure to keep updated by reading regularly or subscribing to the RSS.

WEEK 1

Class 1: Course Introduction

Class 2: History of the Web, Communication Process, Web Teams

Homework: Review and Critique Eastbay's interface. Photoshop Tutorial 1

WEEK 2

Class 3: User-Centered Design: Eastbay Review then Design CRAP and Project Plans.

Photoshop Tutorial 2. Creating Web Graphics

Class 4: Lab Day, work on Eastbay and complete Project Plan. Due on Monday, turn in electronically (and a hard copy on Tuesday)!

WEEK 3

Class 5: Review Eastbay redesigns and discuss. Interface design principles continued.

Homework: Find and critique a website interface. What are the problems with the site? What CRAP principles are violated? Who is the primary audience? What is the primary purpose of the site?

Class 6: In class Quiz

WEEK 4

Class 7: Lab Day (work on interface redesigns)

Class 8: Review Projects. Navigation techniques. Taking it to the Web, XHTML introduction

WEEK 5

Class 9: XHTML introduction. How to use FTP to post your site online.

Class 10: XHTML concepts and techniques continued. Class project due at end of class

WEEK 6

Class 11: Introduction to Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). Introduction to client project. Begin working on interface redesign with team. Assign team roles.

Class 12: How to test your site online. Browsers and Browser quirks. CSS continued. Meeting with teams to discuss interface designs

WEEK 7

Class 13: CSS 3. Using Templates, Good vs. Bad (client interface concepts due at end of class)

Class 14: SEO, Analytics, User research ... testing your interface. Lab (being programming your client projects)

WEEK 8

Class 15: User testing. Beta Testing. Lab Day

Class 16: Lab Day

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK (March 15-23)**WEEK 10**

Class 17: Lab Day.

Class 18: Client Project Due

WEEK 11

Class 19: How to market yourself online. Homework is to creating 2-3 interface design ideas for yourself.

Class 20: Review of personal/promotional sites. Interfaces Due

WEEK 12

Class 21: How to promote your sites online. Integrated marketing approaches.

Class 22: Blogging. Audio and Video online

WEEK 13

Class 23: Individual Meetings

Class 24: Individual Meetings

WEEK 14

Class 25: Individual Meetings

Class 26: Bells and Whistles? Adobe Flash

WEEK 15

Class 27: Lab Day

Class 28: Lab Day

WEEK 16

Class 29: Final Projects Due and Presentations

Class 30: Final Projects Due and Presentations

PROJECTS AND GRADING

PARTICIPATION & QUIZZES (25%)

Do you come to class ready to discuss what you've learned and discover? Do you share your questions, ideas and findings in the blog? Do you bring website to critique to class? Please note, we will regularly critique sites by discussing their strengths and weakness' from a variety of perspectives including visual design, user profiling, information architecture, usability, programming, information architecture, usability, etc.

Additionally, we will have quizzes at random points throughout the semester to test conceptual and technical topics.

SMALL PROJECTS: Interface redesigns and XHTML/CSS projects from book (25%)

Interface Redesign 1: Critique then redesign the Eastbay sample I provide. What works? What doesn't? Who is the audience? What is the goal of the site? How can it be made better? You are responsible for writing a project brief and creating an interface redesign to make this page more user friendly. We will use Adobe Photoshop for this project and you will turn in a web ready file of your redesign and your project analysis.

Interface Redesign 2: You select a web page that needs a redesign. Using the information you've learned to this point, make the page better. DUE: Address of the page you selected to redesign, an electronic copy of the interface redesign and a design brief

At various points in the semester, you will be required to turn in XHTML and CSS projects outlined in your course text.

MAJOR PROJECT 1: Client Design (25%)

We will be working with a client (to be determined) to either create or redesign a website. This will be a team project (2-4 people). You will be responsible for designing, programming and presenting your website to the client. Overall project goals will be discussed in class.

MAJOR PROJECT 2: Personal Website (25%)

This is a website you will use to market and represent yourself to those in your profession (whether reporting, marketing, medicine, engineering, etc.). The site will be due during the final week of class.

For this project, you can incorporate any content and technology you find of value. This can include Flash, a podcast, a vidcast, a blog, etc. The final version must be a fully functional, working website.

COURSE TEXT AND WEBSITE

{Books}

These books are available on-line or at University Book Store

Learning Web Design (Jennifer Niederst Robbins)

This is a great introductory book to XHTML and CSS for those of you who have little to no experience. While there are many resources for learning XHTML and CSS online, this book covers, in an appropriate level of detail, what you need to know to be successful in this class.

Don't Make Me Think (Steve Krug)

Considered by many to be the one of the classics in web usability. Concise and powerful. You will have a much better understanding of web users and how to create highly usable sites after reading this text.

{Web Resources}

www.lsc532.2summit.com

You can find many of the web resources we'll be discussing in various blog posts I will be sharing with you (and your classmates will be sharing with you) throughout the course of the semester.

In addition to the required text, I will be assigning articles from the web to read as supplements to our course reading. These will be posted in the class blog, so make sure to either subscribe to the RSS or read the site regularly.