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Hours: Friday 9-10:30 &
by appointment

Digital Media I

COMM 225 Section 01: Meets Tuesdays from 8:30AM – 11:20AM in 556 Nugent

Digital and interactive media permeate virtually every aspect of our society--from information delivery and product marketing to education and entertainment. In this course you will learn practical and critical skills necessary to become a technically proficient and cognitive digital media maker. Literacy in any medium is the ability to both access (read) materials created by others and to generate (write) materials for others. In this course you will learn to “speak” the language of digital media and to become conversant with the computer as an expressive medium. Through hands-on exercises and projects, you will be introduced to creative approaches to media production and to a range of software. The format of this class is designed to bridge theory and practice. We will explore contemporary issues including: digital imaging, the computer as a medium, typography, copyright, sound and moving image, and web design. We will concern ourselves with “how” and “why” the digital world is constructed the way it is. Students will be challenged to deconstruct this world and to develop an ability to analyze and critique the cultural implications of digital media in our lives.

* Prerequisite: WRIT 101

Learning Goals

A successful student will develop the following skills by the end of the semester:

- Use a Macintosh computer, Photoshop (digital imaging) and Dreamweaver (for web design) to generate media.
- Understand the function and relationship of computer hardware, operating systems, input/output devices and the Internet.
- Generate media that is critical and cognizant of a larger context (social, political, historical, and/or economical).
- Develop an appreciation and understanding of the production process.
- Successfully find solutions to technical problems.
- Give and receive constructive feedback in a group setting.
- Use feedback given to others in the generation of new work.
- Develop, present and articulate creative ideas in both written and verbal formats.
- Analyze your relationship with digital technology, the role it plays in your life, in your work, in our society, and in the world.

Instructional Methodologies

Although some of you will not choose to become Digital Media Artists or Designers, most of you will interact with one and/or the process multiple times over your professional career. This course is structured to give you insight into the process, the skills and techniques used, the vocabulary to successfully engage in dialogs about digital media project, build your confidence with technology and design, and develop problem solving skills that translate into many other fields and disciplines.

I am a firm believer that theory informs practice and practice informs theory. Over the course of the semester you will be introduced to a number of conceptual problems, ethical questions, theories, techniques and ideas. Being aware of this material is not enough; A student who is engaged in the process of learning is motivated to develop her/his ability to learn and problem solve, is not afraid to take risks and ask questions, and is willing to experiment and test ideas and techniques. Most class periods will include a micro-lecture, demonstrations, activities, discussion of ideas/theories, collectively generating knowledge, experiments, and the generation of media.

Because many nuggets of insight/information/knowledge manifest themselves in practice, our class will work collaboratively with a local non-profit organization, Eviction Intervention Services, on the redesign of their website (beginning in October). Through this very real process and collaboration, you will gain insight that you would not from class exercises. In our partnership with EIS, students are valued for the knowledge and insight that they can provide to the collaboration. In our partnership all participants are seen as learners and teachers. Our interactions with EIS will primarily take place on campus

during class time and facilitated by the instructor. Students are expected to make one site visit (EIS is a short walk from campus) as part of their design research. Because research is integral to the design process there will be an opportunity for 1-3 students to become an EIS expert – see me for details. This process will start BEFORE our web project and will replace 2 assignments.

This course is intense and immersive. Students are encouraged to stay on top of assignments and attend all classes, as missing just one assignment or one week will leave you struggling to catch up. Students are urged to meet with the instructor if s/he is having difficulties with the material to develop a plan for continuing success. Each week's material builds on the prior week—so getting help at the first sign of struggle is integral to your success. Please do not be afraid to ask questions... chances are a number of other students want to know the same thing and will be relieved when you ask the question!

Required Materials

USB Flash Drive (256MB+) or a portable Hard Drive

All required readings are provided.

Your enthusiasm, curiosity and willingness to learn.

Optional Materials

Optional/Suggested Design/Composition Texts:

The Visual Story by Bruce Block

The Non-Designer's Design Book by Robin Williams (second addition)

Optional Technical Texts

Technical books become out of date quickly; I recommend finding an appropriate online resource. Many tutorials (of varying quality) are available without cost online. Good video tutorials are available from Adobe at

http://www.adobe.com/designcenter/video_workshop/. Exceptional, complete and thorough tutorial sets are available for a wide variety of digital media software at <http://www.lynda.com> for \$25/month. [Http://www.w3schools.com/default.asp](http://www.w3schools.com/default.asp) offers great resources for coding (HTML, CSS, XML, PHP, etc.).

Optional/Suggested History/Theory Texts:

The Reconfigured Eye by William J. Mitchell

Multimedia-From Wagner to Virtual Reality edited by Randall Packer & Ken Jordan

The New Media Reader edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort

Grading & Attendance Policy

Assignments must be turned in complete and **ON TIME** to earn an A in the course. All assignments must be turned in to earn a B in the course. All major projects/assignments must be completed to pass the course. Assignments are due at the start of class. All assignments are to be turned in on the server BEFORE class begins. Written assignments are due both digitally (on server as a .doc, .txt or .rtf) and physically (printed and stapled in the left hand corner – ABSOLUTELY NO FOLDED CORNERS).

At the first sign of struggle with the course material the student should contact and meet with the instructor to develop a plan for continuing success. Those who demonstrate honest effort and commitment will receive the support they need to succeed. Students who do not meet this standard will not do well in this course.

Attendance is REQUIRED. Many assignments and activities do occur IN CLASS; you are responsible for all material and assignments missed due to an absence. *All students are forgiven for 1 absence IF all in-class assignments are completed in a timely fashion.* Three absences will result in a failure of this course, as you will have missed 9 hours of instruction.

Grade Distribution (100 points total)

- 5 Picture Identification (and focal Point) Assignment
- 5 Digital Cosmetic Surgery Photo (in focus, resolution, composition, color-corrected)
- 5 Digital Cosmetic Surgery Exercise
- 10 Composite Image
- 5 Usability Study
- 10 Report: State of Current EIS Website
- 5 Mockup
- 5 Mockup Revision (group)
- 5 Styling Text Exercise

- 5 CSS Exercise #2
- 20 CSS Website w/Templates (group)
- 5 Reflection of Learning Paper
- 10 Mini-Web Test
- 5 Completion of In-Class Assignments

Student grades will be negatively affected by late assignments, poor attendance (including arriving late and leaving early), and lack of participation or preparedness.

Tips for Success

- Plan your time – multimedia projects are time consuming and technically involved. Plan **at least** three hours a week to spend in the Digital Media Lab or on your own computer. You will spend MORE time in the lab if you are not prepared to start on your project when you arrive – research, materials, sketches and site maps all need to be done before you arrive. The open lab schedule is posted on the lab door.
- Work with a friend—two heads are better than one when you run into technical, conceptual or creative roadblocks. Many students work in the Digital Media Lab—you shouldn't have trouble finding a buddy there.
- Save and save again. Back up your work in MULTIPLE locations.
- Attend class – each week builds on the previous one. Missing class will severely impact your grade.
- Ask for help when you have trouble – don't allow yourself to get behind on new material.

Health & Safety

Only drink beverages with a lid. Be especially careful around computers, one spilled drink can result in electrical shock and/or expensive damaged equipment. Please keep foodstuffs on tables in the center of the room away from equipment.

Staring at a glowing monitor for extended periods of time can cause headaches, eyestrain and problems with your eyesight. Remember to take frequent short breaks by looking away from the monitor and focusing on something in the distance, or close your eyes for a moment. Your eyes need a break!

Repetitive stress injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome, ulnar tunnel syndrome, and tendonitis can develop with excessive keyboarding, mouse-ing, etc. Use good form and stretch your muscles regularly to reduce your risk. If you have wrist pain use one of the mouse pads with a wrist pad available in the lab.

Use good posture! Try not to slouch: sit upright, maintaining the natural curves of your back and keep your shoulders relaxed. Take time to properly adjust your chair and workspace. If you have trouble reaching the floor comfortably place a book under your feet. Stand up and stretch occasionally.

Policies

GERMS: Computer labs breed illness. Please be conscientious and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before (and after) using the computers, particularly if you have been sick.

FOOD & DRINK: Our class is long, and it is understandable that you may need food or drink. Please keep your snacks and beverages on the center tables and FAR AWAY from our brand-new, adorable computers. Please also don't touch the computers with sticky or food-covered fingers... please wash your hands first, we want to keep our lab clean.

CELL PHONES: Be respectful to the learning environment - No cell phones should be visible or audible during class.

LAB ACCESS: Students enrolled in a digital media course are permitted to access the classroom during school hours when classes are not meeting. The class schedule is posted on the lab door. If you would like to use the lab and the door is locked bring your MMC ID to the security desk at the front door and sign out a key.

DISABILITIES: Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for this course

must either enroll in the Program for Academic Access or register with the Office of Student Support Services. For any accommodation, the instructor must be presented with either a letter from the Assistant Director of the Program for Academic Access or an Accommodations Card from the Office of Student Support Services during the first week of classes.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: MMC fosters an academic community where students and faculty work together to create a learning experience that imparts knowledge and forms character. To achieve this, the College requires all members of the community to adhere to the policy of Academic Honesty that can be found in the Student Handbook, the College Catalogue and on the College website.

Digital Media is an academic subject. If you are using digital resources or images in your digital work you MUST cite the source (hyperlinks are acceptable in this medium). Stealing and taking credit for work that is not your own is dishonest and may also be ILLEGAL. Images, songs, text and video can only be used in their entirety if they are in the public domain or can demonstrate "fair use." If you have specific concerns related to digital media please contact your instructor immediately.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: September 8

Course Overview

Focus on experiential and active learning, problem solving and life skills

Introduction to Computers & Mac OS

Dock, Desktop, Server, RAM, ROM, Hard Drive, Processor, Ergonomics

Layout Basics

Composition, Focal Point, Scale, Color, Contrast, Movement/Line

Photoshop: Layers & Transformation

Layers, Duplicate Layer, Transform (Scale, stretch, squash, rotate, translate), Saving, File Types

Homework: Read "How to do Things with Pictures" and Picture Identification Assignment; Bring Digital Camera to class

Week 2: September 15

Review Reading

Labels/Captions, Insertions, Deletion, Substitution, Cropping/Framing, Composites, Record/Document

Layout

Focus, Balance, Rhythm

View "Retouched Photos"

Ethics, Responsibility, Representation

Digital Imaging

Resolution, Pixels, Color Wheel, Inputs/Outputs, Analog vs. Digital

Photoshop: Digital Imaging

Variations, Levels, Clone Stamp, Airbrushing, Dodge & Burn, Alpha/Transparency, Blend Modes

Homework: Digital Cosmetic Surgery Photo & Read Pixel Perfect & Read Excerpt from Cosmetic Surgery

Week 3: September 22

Review Reading

Who is involved in the re-touching process? What are the responsibilities/ethics associated with the profession? What are the similarities/differences to cosmetic surgery? What role does digital technology play in our understanding of body and body manipulation?

View Example Composite Images

Copyright

Copyright vs. Plagiarism, Fair Use, Creative Commons, copies & distribution, derivative works, "tangible form of expression", Protection, Purpose/Origins

Photoshop: Compositing Basics
Selections, Masks, Copy & Paste, Replace Color, Patch

Homework: Complete Digital Cosmetic Surgery Exercise; Bring Materials for Composite Image; Read “Searching & Sampling”

Week 4: September 29

View & Discuss Digital Cosmetic Surgery Assignments
Believability/Lack of Evidence of Tampering, Process/Choices, Composition, Focal point

Exercise: Finding & Matching Perspective

Photoshop: Faking It
Distort, Creating Shadows, Scale

Homework: Composite Image

Week 5: October 6

View & Discuss Composite Images
Believability/Lack of Evidence of Tampering, Process/Choices, Composition, Concept

Introduction to HTML
Tags, Attributes, File Structure, HTML Grammar, Naming Conventions
Write HTML Page: body, head, title, img, a, p, br
Brief History

Discuss Service Learning Project – Visit by Service Learning Coordinator

Homework: Bio Page & Read Chapters 1 & 2 from “Don’t Make Me Think”; *Review EIS Website*

Week 6: October 13

Web Design Process
Planning: Purpose/Mission, Content, Audience, Client, Writing, Editing, Information Architecture
Design: Research-Mockup-Revision cycle
Implementation: Templates, Testing, Make “live”

Usability Research
What information needs to be available? Who needs access? How easy is it to find?

Initial Client Meeting
What is the organization’s mission and purpose? What goals would you like a website to help you reach? Who is your target audience? What do you know about the audience? What are their aesthetic and informational needs/desires? How can we find out more details? Who are your competitors and partners? How/Why do your clients your organization out? How do your services fit into a larger context?

Meet with our Partner: Eviction Intervention Services

Homework: *Report: State of Current EIS Website*

Week 7: October 20

Mockup Basics
Resolution, Color Scheme Choices/Options, Integration of Logo, Maintaining Identity, Navigation, Site Map, Designing on a Grid

Establish Design Teams
Site Map & Recommendations: Based on the readings provided and the report you have done, What are the most important concerns/needs for the redesign? Why? What are the strengths that we should build on? Why?

Introduction to Dreamweaver
Setting up site/Managing Site; Images & Links; Tables (cell, column, row, padding, spacing, border); Save for Web

Homework: Mockup; Read: “Web Design for Non-Designers”

Week 8: October 27

View & Discuss Mockups

Composition/Layout; Focal Point; Color; Compliments organization and mission; Clear Structure; Fulfills recommendations

View Web Design Examples

Typography Basics

Serif, Sans-Serif, Concord, Contrast, Conflict, Size, Color, Cases, Style, Weight, Alignment, Readability, Legibility, Fonts, lorem ipsum

Information Architecture and Information Hierarchy

Strategies to guide your audience through information

Meet with Design Teams: Work on Revised Design

What ideas/suggestions/comments from the review need to be addressed? How will you address them?

Homework: *Revised Mockup*; Read: Web Typography; Typographic Contrast & Flow

(<http://www.webdesignerwall.com/tutorials/typographic-contrast-flow/>)

Week 9: November 3

Meet with Design Teams

Organize Presentation

Present Design Concepts to EIS

Discuss Site-Map Revisions with EIS (based on recommendations)

Discuss Feedback from EIS and Colleagues

Introduction to Cascading Stylesheets (CSS): Styling Text

Why Style?, Internal Vs. External Styles, Syntax, Selector, Property, Value

Homework: *Collect Materials for EIS Site* (edit text, photos, etc.; create necessary graphics);

Styling Text Exercise

Read CSS Typography: Contrast Techniques, Tutorials and Best Practices – not just the homepage

(<http://www.noupe.com/css/css-typography-contrast-techniques-tutorials-and-best-practices.html>)

NOTE: November 10 is Advisement Day

Week 10: November 17

Review Styling Text Exercise

From HTML Pages to HTML Sites

Best Practices, Linking Pages, Organization

Digging Into CSS

Cascading Rules, Box Model (Height, Width, Margin, Border, Padding), Float, Class, ID, Styling HTML Tags, background, Starting from templates

Homework: CSS Exercise #2

Week 11: November 24 (Note this is the day before Thanksgiving Break and IS CRUTIAL for your success on the group project).

Review CSS Exercise Assignment

Media on the Web

Adding Sound & Videos, Creating Animated GIFs

Meet with Design Teams

What starting template best matches your design?

What do you want to include in your design that you don't know how to do?

Begin CSS Mockup

Homework: *Generate media still needed for EIS Site*

Week 12: December 1

HTML Implementation

Creating Templates; Comments; Making a Site Live; Testing In Multiple Browsers on Multiple Platforms

Meet with Design Teams

Continue Developing CSS Mockup

Informal meetings with EIS

Homework: *Finished Version of Website*

Week 13: December 8

Meet with Design Teams

Site Testing

Review Designs with EIS

Does the site match the identity, needs and mission of EIS?; dynamic composition; clear information hierarchy; clear, easy navigation

Homework: *Revised Website*; Reflection Paper

NOTE: DECEMBER 15 will be a MONDAY schedule

Week 14: December 22

Final Presentation of Sites with Classmates

In Class Mini-Technical Test (emphasis on CSS)