

# Creative Expression and the Web

**Course:** HONR 268R, section 101

**Class meetings:** Tues/Thurs 2:00-3:15pm (8/31/10–12/16/10)

**Location:** Computer and Space Sciences room 3332 (Mac WAM lab)

**Semester:** Fall 2010

**Professor:** Elisabeth Kvernen, Faculty Research Assistant/Web Designer, Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH)

**Office hours:** by appointment

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## Course description:

We live in a world whose social fabric has been profoundly changed by the introduction of the World Wide Web. In this course we will look at the how the web as a medium is shaping our daily lives and interactions and offering new avenues for creative expression; we will learn the underlying technologies of the web and how to create a basic website; and we will begin to understand the impact that design decisions have on a website's success or failure.

In this course you will learn by doing. Through a series of hands-on projects, you will come to understand the distinct possibilities for expression offered by the web medium, the importance of following web standards and best practices, and the basic design principles and processes that should be followed when developing material for the web.

## Learning outcomes:

1. Students will increase their understanding of the way that the web and new media are shaping our daily lives and interactions.
2. Students will learn how to set up a basic web page, and be able to speak articulately about the basic technologies that make up the web.
3. Students will learn to recognize websites that have made user-appropriate design choices, and provide a rationale for their own design choices.

## Required texts and materials:

- Interact with Web Standards: A holistic approach to web design (May 2010). ISBN: 978-0-3-2170352-1
- The Web Designer's Idea Book: The Ultimate Guide To Themes, Trends & Styles In Website Design (October 2008). ISBN: 978-1-6-0061064-6
- In addition to the two required textbooks, students will be assigned online and/or reserve readings on a regular basis.
- The following materials will be required for class use; if you do not have access to such items, you will need to purchase them:

- USB thumb drive with at least 1gb of storage
- Blank CDs and cases for turning in projects
- Several 3-ring binders

### Assignments:

For projects and assignments in this class we will be using a project management system called Open Atrium, which is located here: <http://www.elisabethkvernen.com/openatrium/honr268>. This is a tool used by professionals who work in various fields, including graphic design and web media. Open Atrium will help you keep in touch with your classmates and with me. Updates, assignments, and deadlines/milestones will all take place within Open Atrium. This tool will help you understand how professional creative teams maintain communication. **It is your responsibility to check Open Atrium every day.** A tutorial will be given at the beginning of the semester. You will need to provide a current and regularly used email address in order to access this web-based system.

This course will use Mozilla Firefox as its primary target browser. All content created for this course should display as you intended in the latest version of Firefox. If content does not display as intended in the latest version of Firefox, your grade will be adversely affected. We will design and develop for 1024x768 screens (important content is kept “above the fold” in an area no greater than 960 pixels wide by 600 pixels high).

Every UMD student is given 1GB of server space via TerpConnect (<http://terpconnect.umd.edu/myweb>); we will be using this space to host projects for this class. We will review how to connect and upload files to this space using an FTP program. The web location for your server space is <http://www.terpconnect.umd.edu/~username/>, where “username” is your university ID.

### PROJECTS (80%)

Project 1—Setting up a Wordpress blog (5%)

Project 2—Website Design Analysis (10%)

\*Project 3—Discography Website (parts 1 & 2) (20%)

\*Project 4—Package as Website (20%)

\*Project 5—Final Project (25%)

*\* Requires a process book (see in-class handout)*

In addition to the projects listed above, I will assign periodic exercises and quizzes.

### PARTICIPATION (20%)

*Class discussions and critiques*—many of the assignments will have class critiques. Sharing ideas and opinions is an integral part of the critique process, and you are expected to give and receive constructive feedback.

*Blog posts*—you are expected to maintain an active online presence for the duration of this class. As part of this course, we will be creating Wordpress blogs; each student is required to post to their blog at least once a week, about issues relevant to what we are learning in class.

*In-class group work*—occasionally we will have in-class group work; I expect you to work together as a team in a professional manner, and keep on task.

*Online participation*—you are expected to check Open Atrium every day for project updates and communication. You are also expected to read your classmates' blogs on a regular basis, and leave comments that foster lively discussion.

### Grading:

80% Projects, assignments, exercises and quizzes

20% Participation, including class discussion, blog posts, group work and online participation

Points	Grade	Explanation
--	0	assignment not turned in, counts as an F grade
0-59	F	unacceptable—fails to meet requirements of the assignment, or minimal skill level
60-69	D	unacceptable—fails to meet content requirements
70-79	C	average—turned in on time, fulfilled assignment
80-89	B	either one element was outstanding or the assignment in general was better than average
90-100	A	entire assignment exceptional

Please note that simply completing all requirements does not constitute extraordinary work. Good grades are earned by good work. Extraordinary grades are earned by extraordinary work.

### Course expectations & policies:

- Technology policy**—The personal use of all electronic devices during class is strictly prohibited. This class takes place in a computer lab, and you will be using the computer to complete your work. Please refrain from using the computer for outside projects during class time. Remember that I have access to all your screens, and may view them at any time from my desk. Also, all cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode.
- Attendance**—Punctual attendance is mandatory. Prompt and consistent attendance demonstrates professional behavior. In order for you to succeed in this course and to receive the information necessary to complete course assignments, you need to be on time for every class. If you do miss class and need to find out what took place in class during your absence, please contact a classmate. If you still need clarification after you have spoken to someone, you may contact me. Absence is not an excuse for late work; please turn in all assignments on their due date.
- Late work**—Assignments are due on the date stated, at the beginning of the class or at the time designated. For every class an assignment is late, 5 points will be deducted from your grade. If you are late to class, the project component(s) due that day are considered late and the appropriate amount of points will be deducted from your grade. Note that often more than one component of a

project is due on the same class. These are counted separately and you will lose 5 points from your assignment for each component that is late.

4. *Technology issues*—Let’s face it: technology breaks. Servers go down, transfers time out, files become corrupt. The list goes on and on. These are not considered emergencies. They are part of the normal production process. An issue you may have with technology is no excuse for late work. You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work.
5. *Food and drink*—No food or drinks are allowed in the MAC WAM lab.
6. *Plagiarism*—It is illegal and unethical to use someone else’s work without properly crediting the source, whether online, print, or other. If you are not sure whether to credit a source, or to quote or paraphrase, or to use original language, please ask me in advance—or err on the side of citing the source you are using. If I discover that you’ve plagiarized material for this class, I will follow the university’s policy for violations of academic integrity. Under that policy the consequences of plagiarism can include failing this course and being expelled from the university. For more information or to review the University Honor Pledge, visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html>.
7. *Class preparation*—You are expected to have read the assigned portion of whatever text we are working on and arrive in class prepared to discuss it. If you do not understand what you’ve read, you should come to class prepared with some questions about it—I recommend writing them down. A couple of suggestions: take notes on what you read, make a note of anything you do not understand or with which you disagree, or which sparks your interest.
8. *Writing*—All writing should be done in standard English. Use of slang or jargon is acceptable only where appropriate to the circumstance. All written assignments must be typed.
9. *Accommodations*—If you are on record with the University as having special academic or physical needs requiring accommodations, please schedule an appointment with me as soon as possible. We need to discuss your accommodations before they can be implemented.

### Weekly schedule (Tuesday/Thursday 2-3:15pm)

#### Preparation and Background Knowledge

#### Week 1

##### August 31 (Tues)

Topic: Introductions, Class Overview

Readings assigned: Chapters 1-2 (Interact)

Homework: Setting up a Wordpress blog (due 9/2)

##### September 2 (Thurs)

Topic: Tools & Setup

Due: Setting up a Wordpress blog

Readings assigned: Chapters 3, 4 (Interact), Section 01/Sites by Type (Idea Book)

Homework: Website Design Analysis (due 9/9)

#### Week 2

##### September 7 (Tues)

Topic: Learning on the Web, Internet Fundamentals & History

Readings assigned: Chapter 5 (Interact)

##### September 9 (Thurs)

Topic: Writing for the Web

Due: Website Design Analysis  
Readings assigned: Chapter 6, 7 (Interact)

## Planning a Website

### Week 3

#### September 14 (Tues)

Topic: Information Architecture & Site Planning  
Readings assigned: Chapter 8, 9 (Interact)

#### September 16 (Thurs)

Topic: Content Analysis & Content Strategy  
Readings assigned: Section 02/Sites by Design Style (Idea Book)

### Week 4

#### September 21 (Tues)

Topic: Basic Design Principles I  
Readings assigned: Section 03/Sites by Theme (Idea Book)  
Homework: Exercise 1: Homepage Design

#### September 23 (Thurs)

Topic: Basic Design Principles II  
Readings assigned: Chapter 10 (Interact), Section 04/Sites by Color (Idea Book)

## Implementation—HTML & CSS Fundamentals and Accessibility

### Week 5

#### September 28 (Tues)

Topic: HTML Intro  
Readings assigned: Chapter 11 (Interact)  
Homework: Exercise 2: Creating Links

#### September 30 (Thurs)

Topic: CSS Intro  
Readings assigned: Chapter 12 (Interact), Section 05/Sites by Element (Idea Book)  
Homework: Exercise 3: Markup Workflow

### Week 6

#### October 5 (Tues)

Topic: The <head> element  
Readings assigned: Chapter 13 (Interact)

#### October 7 (Thurs)

Topic: Headings and Paragraphs  
Readings assigned: Chapter 14 (Interact), Section 06/Sites by Structure (Idea Book)  
Homework: Exercise 4: Using Ems

### Week 7

#### October 12 (Tues)

Topic: Whitespace  
Readings assigned: Chapter 15 (Interact)  
Homework: Exercise 5: Box Model

#### October 14 (Thurs)

Topic: Links

Readings assigned: Chapter 16 (Interact)

*Week 8*

**October 19 (Tues)**

Topic: Images, Part I

Readings assigned: Chapter 17 (Interact)

**October 21 (Thurs)**

Topic: Lists

Readings assigned: Chapter 18 (Interact)

Homework: Exercise 6: Taming Lists

*Week 9*

**October 26 (Tues)**

Topic: Tables

Readings assigned:

Homework: Discography part 1 assignment (due 11/2)

**October 28 (Thurs)**

Topic: Images, Part II

Readings assigned: Chapter 19 (Interact)

*Week 10*

**November 2 (Tues)**

Topic: Forms

Due: Discography part 1 assignment

Readings assigned: Chapter 20 (Interact)

Homework: Discography part 2 assignment (due 11/9)

**November 4 (Thurs)**

Topic: Floats

Readings assigned: Chapter 21 (Interact)

*Week 11*

**November 9 (Tues)**

Topic: Positioning

Due: Discography part 2 assignment

Readings assigned: Chapter 22 (Interact)

Homework: Package as Website assignment (due 11/23)

**November 11 (Thurs)**

Topic: Accessibility

Readings assigned: Chapter 23 (Interact)

*Week 12*

**November 16 (Tues)**

Topic: Accessibility & Testing

Readings assigned: Chapters 24 (Interact)

**November 18 (Thurs)**

Topic: Testing & Validation

Readings assigned: Chapter 25 (Interact)

Homework: Final Project proposal (due 11/30)

*Week 13*

**November 23 (Tues)—No class**

Due: Package as Website assignment

**November 25 (Thurs)—No class, Thanksgiving**

Final Project

Week 14

**November 30 (Tues)**

Topic: In-class work on Final Project

Due: Final Project proposal

**December 2 (Thurs)**

Topic: In-class work on Final Project

Week 15

**December 7 (Tues)**

Topic: In-class work on Final Project

**December 9 (Thurs)**

Topic: In-class work on Final Project

Week 16

**December 14 (Tues)**

Topic: Final Project Presentations

**December 16 (Thurs)**

Topic: Final Project Presentations

Parts of this syllabus were adapted from material by Leslie Jensen-Inman, as shared on her website *Teach the Web*.  
([http://www.teachtheweb.com/course\\_materials/syllabus.php](http://www.teachtheweb.com/course_materials/syllabus.php))