

ENG 391c: Advanced Software for Professional Writers

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30 - 3:30pm or by appointment

Overview

What does it mean to be a professional and technical writer in today's world? What new writing technologies do writers need to know and understand to effectively engage in modern communication? And how can writers find a balance between rhetorical and technical skills to create a professional online presence? These are some of the larger questions we will explore throughout this course.

With the development of Web 2.0, the WWW has moved from a static model to a dynamic and interactive one. Blogs, apps, wikis, youtube and data-base driven websites all signal a potentially more democratic online world where users post their own content using "free" services based on database technology. In the process, the design of websites has changed too, and there has been a proliferation of website genres to accompany it. For the purposes of this course, our goal is to first develop an awareness of these different genres and conventions, and then design an online portfolio (using programs such as Dreamweaver and Photoshop) that reflects this understanding and showcases the work you have completed in your own career and institution.

Course Objectives

- Demonstrate an awareness of web genres and the rhetorical and design practices that each exhibits
- Demonstrate your proficiency with digital writing software (Dreamweaver and Photoshop) by building an effective online portfolio as well as a prototype website for a nonprofit
- Experience writing across a variety of media and genres using various tools, and improve ability to make rhetorically-based decisions about these options
- Share and articulate your understanding of web design by presenting your work to your peers through in-class presentations.

Required Texts

The Principles of Beautiful Web Design—Jason Beard, Sitepoint Press, Second Edition, 2009. Available at Amherst Books.

Assignments

Attendance/Participation	10%
Reflection Notebook (RN)	20%
In-class Tutorials	15%
Tech Demo	10%
Proto-site	20%
Online Portfolio	25%

Major Components of the Course

Reflection Notebook (RN)

Once a week, I'll give you a prompt to help guide your reading. Your responses to these prompts should be 250 - 400 words. Your RN should be a place where you explore questions, grapple with complex ideas, agree/disagree with the course readings, etc. I will be looking for proof that you are making connections between what we've read and what we're doing in class, as well as your own experiences. RN posts will be graded using a (√+, √, √-) scale.

Tech Demo

You and a partner will deliver a technology demonstration to the class (20 minutes) on digital tool that you find to be useful. This can be a presentation on a tool we're using in class, or one that others in the class may not know about.

Online Portfolio

Content Expectations (points to consider):

- Purpose of your site—how do you want to welcome visitors to your site? How will they know this is a portfolio? What kind of persona do you want to project?
- Who is your audience? Are you designing with them in mind? What kinds of content will they be expecting to see? You might provide...
 - o An explanation of your theories/ideas of good visual/technical design. Consider adding links to websites about graphic design and other sites you have deemed worthy to share.
 - o A discussion and/or summarization of what you've learned from other courses and/or experiences.
 - o Career aspirations and professional goals.
- Will you have any interactive elements (a blog, a contact page)?
- A polished and updated resume in both HTML and PDF.
- Appropriate work from other college and writing courses.

Design/Technical Expectations:

- Does the portfolio/proto-site effectively show both design and technical skills?
- Is the navigation clear, functional and intuitive?
- Does the portfolio demonstrate a knowledge of color theory?
- Do the use of images and graphics show competence in visual rhetoric?
- Is the site architecture designed well?
- Is the site html and css valid by W3C standards? Does it consider accessibility issues?

Proto-site for a Non-profit

Following the same content questions above, your proto-site should demonstrate both the rhetorical and technical conventions that currently define the site genre you are building.

Tutorials and Assignments

Throughout this course you will be assigned tutorials and other writing assignments. All tutorials and assignments will be given due dates and are expected to be completed on time. Most will be based on a (√+, √, √-) scale. Assignments will be assessed by the following criteria:

- timely completion
- depth of engagement with readings

- technical skills
- visual interest—page layout and design
- quality of content

Late assignments will be penalized. A central assignment that will be given more weight will be an in-depth analysis of two websites of your choosing. Most work will be posted online on your allotted university server space to share with others in the courses.

Course Policies

Attendance and participation: Being prepared and active in online class discussion is expected and will be taken into consideration for the final grade

Late work: All work must be submitted on or before the indicated due date and time. I will not accept late work. I will not grant extensions for reasons other than those of an emergency nature, which do NOT include computer or technical problems.

Plagiarism: You are advised to review the University's policies on plagiarism, which apply to all written work.

Classroom Community Responsibilities:

Creating a community that enables us to grow and develop as writers depends on each of us fulfilling our individual responsibilities, offering mutual respect to one another, and being receptive readers of one another's writing. Please keep this in mind.