INTRODUCTION TO INTERACTIVE DESIGN: WORLD WIDE WEB

Yale Summer Session
ART S167 (2021)

Tues. / Thurs. 1:00 – 4:15 pm
Online and at Home

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OVERVIEW

Welcome to the World Wide Web. This summer intensive studio course[1] focuses on the impact that inter-networked computers have made on art, design, and communication at large. We will be looking at the Internet and the WWW critically – as material, platform, and subject for your creative practice. Participants are encouraged to create work that can live within, alongside, against, around, or in response to the Internet. Coinciding with this work will be lectures, readings, and discussions inspecting the ways in which today's Internet – its military origins, utopian ideals, infrastructural physicality, access points, dark design patterns, and perhaps information overload – affects our perception of the world as artists and designers.

This is an art and design course emphasizing visual communication. Week by week, students will be continually asked to generate novel form: to design, sketch, read, write, iterate, and publish. Throughout this process, special attention will be paid to choices in content, layout, data, navigation, pacing, interface, and interaction. On a more technical note, participants can expect to learn some of the foundational skills of front-end web development – HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. While this is not a programming course, students can expect to learn some introductory programming skills to better develop their own unique, graphic forms. No prior experience in programming is required.

GOALS AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Create moments of genuine individuality and personhood online
- Foster a sense of authorship and publishing
- Explore the relationships between web server and web browser / designer and audience
- Gain a general understanding of the Internet and the World Wide Web[2]
- Respond critically and skeptically to trends in user interface, communication style, and the visual display of information online
- Make and evaluate typographic decisions for screens, desktops, and mobile devices
- Experiment severely with form and content
- Develop a position – deciding what is important to you critically, aesthetically, morally, etc.
- Learn new technical and conceptual skills that might be applied to a continued creative practice

EVALUATION AND GRADING CRITERIA

You will be evaluated according to your overall engagement in the course and the work you produce over its duration. Active participation during class sessions will also be taken in account.

- Originality in point of view, content, and authorship
- Formal approach and typography
- Execution of technical skills
- Strangeness (in idea, presentation, and/or production)

Please note: The focus of this class is not the invention of useful products, but the invention of useful techniques and approaches might be.[3]

1 This course will (once again) be held online. Rather than meeting in person, all of our work will be done remotely. Each of our unique immediate surroundings – houses, apartments, dorms, basements, parks – need to operate as design studios. Fortunately, this is a course about the Internet. Our computers and web browsers still offer us a window to the world and a means of producing novel work.

2 Where these technologies come from, where they are today, and where they might be headed next.

3 Laurel Schwulst, the designer / educator, who has shaped much of this course, has offered a similar note in the past.

The grading scale is as follows:
A Outstanding performance, work excels in all areas
B Exceeding basic expectations for all assignments
C Satisfactory performance, the completion of all assignments on time and at an acceptable level
D Less than satisfactory performance
F Failure

Halfway through the course, students will receive an unofficial midterm grade reflecting their current progress and projected outcome. At the end of the course, students will receive their final grade. Students may revise or otherwise redo / update their work at any time through the end of the course. The final grade will be based on whatever work lives on your individual websites or was otherwise submitted by Sunday, August 15th, 2021.[4]

MATERIALS

This is primarily a software-focused class. We will be doing quite a lot of work on our computers (Zoom Meetings, web browsing, development, debugging, etc.). Be sure to have access to a reliable network connection along with a fully charged machine for the full duration of the course, and especially during each class meeting. Students are responsible for their own files, making sure to always save and back them up.

For editing and updating code:
Download a reliable code text editor. It will be useful to have one with features or extensions available such as language-specific syntax highlighting, code auto-completion, or Git integration. Some popular ones today include:

- **Visual Studio Code**
- **Atom**
- **Nova**

For development and testing:
Download a modern browser with good development tools like a page inspector, JavaScript console, and responsive design mode.

- **Firefox**
- **Chrome (or Canary)**

For image-making and sketching:
Adobe **Photoshop, Illustrator,** and I**nDesign** are industry-standard tools available on most Yale computers or through the Yale Software Library. There are also open-source alternatives like **Gimp** and **Inkscape**. You might choose to use programs like **Sketch** or **Figma.** Some other good digital image-making tools include a smartphone, digital camera, scanner, screen capture, etc. Sometimes writing can prove to be an incredibly useful method for working through ideas. At the very least, there's almost always a pen and a piece of paper somewhere nearby.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Throughout the session we will look at various writings and works from artists, designers, performers, writers, programmers, historians, and others. Some of these can be found in the following reading list. You are welcome to seek out and purchase these items on your own. Otherwise, excerpts will be provided as PDFs throughout the session.

- The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology (2019) published by RHIZOME
- In the Beginning... Was the Command Line (1999) by Neil Stephenson
- Weaving the Web (1999) by Tim Berners-Lee

4 This date may need to be adjusted, based on information from the Yale Summer Session offices. It will only be pushed later into August, not earlier. Any adjustment will be announced.

COURSE DESIGN

This course meets virtually for only ten sessions over five weeks. Given this condensed timeline, the course will be fast-paced and rigorous. Generally, any in-class session will contain some combination of: exercises, tutorials, dialogue and feedback, presentations, visits, debugging, or critique.

Outside of and between class sessions, there will be assigned readings, videos, or lectures along with writing prompts, project thinking, designing, developing.

SCHEDULE

The following schedule provides a generalized overview of the course. Specific readings, assignments, lectures and guests will be determined as the course proceeds. In response to our discussions, your interests and questions, or current and global events, this schedule may change. Any changes will be announced during class or sent out via email. Frequently check our class website as well as your email inbox for the most up-to-date information.

Jul. 13 (Tues.)	Welcome, “Hello, World!” Exercise, What even is a website? Newsletter introduction
Jul. 15 (Thurs.)	Exercise, Organizing Files for the Web Lecture, “A Possible History of the Internet” Tutorial, HTML
Jul.18 (Sun.)	**Via Email:** Newsletter review, propose 2 directions.
Jul. 20 (Tues.)	Lecture, “Hypertext: Web 1.0” Tutorial, CSS Part 1: Styles Exercise, Web Inspector / DevTools
Jul. 22 (Thurs.)	Lecture, “Salty, Muddy, and Wet: Infrastructure of the Internet” Visiting Guest Presentation, TBD
Jul. 27 (Tues.)	Tutorial, CSS Part 2: Layouts and Positioning Exercise, Typography on the Web
Jul. 29 (Thurs.)	Student Presentations, in-class critique
Aug. 03 (Tues.)	General Review, HTML and CSS
Aug. 05 (Thurs.)	Individual meetings Time for debugging
Aug. 10 (Tues.)	Individual meetings Time for debugging
Aug. 12 (Thurs.)	Final reviews with guest critics.
Aug. 15 (Sun.)	**Via Email:** All work (and any revisions) due, submitted online.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance to all class meetings is mandatory, and you should make a conscious effort to attend each class. Absence without a valid medical reason will be taken as an unexcused absence. The accumulation of three (3) unexcused absences, will result in a failing grade for the course. In addition to attendance, you should aim to consistently arrive on time. Repeated tardiness with no excuse will count towards one or more absences.

To excuse an absence, you must have provided me with advanced notice and a valid excuse (illness, emergency, etc.). After an absence, it will be your responsibility to catch up on any missed work – consult with your peers, visit office hours, etc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In this course, you will become familiar with using pre-existing languages, images, and software as the raw material with which you might create entirely new works. While making websites, you should frequently seek out examples, open-source projects, and all sorts of other online resources to inspire and improve your own work. We will discuss which technologies should be used, appropriated, or bootlegged, and how to properly credit their inclusion. We will also go over certain methods or libraries to avoid in the context of this class. There is no one set rule for this, as your work is your own. However, you should be able to stand by your work and be able to justify your decisions.

From: Academic Integrity at MIT: 'Writing Code'

> "Writing code is similar to academic writing in that when you use or adapt code developed by someone else as part of your project, you must cite your source. However, instead of quoting or paraphrasing a source, you include an inline comment in the code. These comments not only ensure you are giving proper credit, but help with code understanding and debugging."
>
> "You should not simply re-use code as the solution to an assignment. Like academic writing, your code can incorporate the ideas of others but should reflect your original approach to the problem."

If you do inevitably find code written by others to be incorporated into your own work, retype it rather than simply copying / pasting it in. Doing so will help you better understand what that code does line by line, how it fits within your project, and how you might improve the original author's work. On that note, avoid pasting huge blocks of code. Remember to do things one step at a time so you can fully understand what each part is doing.

WEBSITES AND YOUR PRIVACY

Beginning early in the session, we will be publishing websites to the public Internet. These websites will house or link to all coursework – not only the final project, but any related sketches, reading responses, labs, etc. Since they are online, that means that are visible to anyone with a network connection. Work completed in class should appear on your website, and will be used to determine your final grade at the end of the course. Projects that are not accessible online the day that they are due will be considered late. Especially since class meets remotely, you and your peers should be able to access your work. For anything that is natively offline – sketches, objects, wireframes, etc. – you should prepare visual documentation of it to share. This might take the form of hi-res scans compiled into a PDF, a series of digital photographs on a simple HTML page, or otherwise.

Although this course does require that you post work online and sign up for some online services, privacy matters. As a student, your privacy is legally protected under FERPA. **With anything you publish, you do NOT have to associate it with your name, image, or any other identifying information.** Please pick any username you like. Please inform me if you have a preferred alias or name to use on our collective class site. Please use smart passwords. Please be safe.