Introduction to Web Design
for Information Organizations (Info 552)
College of Computing & Informatics, Drexel University
Course Syllabus, Winter 2021

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Course Overview

Introduction to creating websites that incorporate interactive web services to support users in information organizations. Students learn to establish websites that meet usability, accessibility and intellectual property standards, via composition of text and graphic files and use of scripts for interactive application to support community information resource needs.

Expected learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

- Demonstrate the fundamentals of website design using standards-compliant HTML, CSS and usability methods.
- Integrate Web 2.0 technologies into a user-focused website.
- Evaluate websites for information organization, content representation, design best practices and site navigation.
- Apply basic web design theories and practices as they apply to information support for clients.
- Justify the importance of web design literacy for information professionals.

Course mechanics

Course structure

This is an online, asynchronous course. Each week will include some readings and activities. The weeks run Monday to Sunday. Assignments are always due on Sunday by 9:00 p.m. Eastern. This is an introductory course, and as such, the full scope of this topic is presented. You will receive a lot of material, but you are not being tested on it. Instead, you are being challenged to absorb as much as you can for your own understanding and apply the material to the projects you'll be doing. You can find an at-a-glance view of the topics we'll cover on the final page of this syllabus.

Readings

The main textbook for this course is ***Information Architecture: For the Web and Beyond* (4th ed., 2015), by Rosenfeld, Morville and Arango.** This book focuses on the conceptual aspects of web design, such as how websites should be organized for understandability. The second—optional, but recommended —book is ***HTML and CSS: Design and Build Websites* (1st ed., 2011), by Duckett**. This is an excellent resource for understanding and learning the syntax of HTML and CSS if you'd prefer to get this information in book form.

In addition to the books, the course will make use of numerous articles that are available freely on the open web. In addition to the articles themselves, this will get you acquainted with industry-standard publication venues, such as *A List Apart*, *Nielsen Norman Group*, *UX Booth* and *Brain Plane*t, which you may wish to continue reading even after this class.

Software

This course requires you to download and install free software. You will be expected to learn and be able to use these tools. Our web hosting will be provided by Drexel via DUNX1. If you want to work ahead, you can start by setting this up. Follow the instructions here. If you haven't already learned this the hard way, you should back up your work regularly. I recommend using a syncing backup service; Drexel offers all students 5 TB of space in Drexel OneDrive. Other similar services include Dropbox, Google Drive or Box.net.

The most important piece of software you'll need is called a *text editor*. This is different from a *word processor,* such as Microsoft Word or Apple Pages. Word processors are meant for creating documents to print out, but for this class we need software meant for writing code, and such software is referred to as a text editor. Your computer comes with a text editor built in (on Windows it's called Notepad, and on Mac it's TextEdit), but we can do better. **In this class, I recommend using Atom, a free, modern text editor available for Mac and Windows** (and other platforms). Among other nice features, Atom color-codes your code as you go along, so it's easier to spot mistakes and understand the structure of your code. Though I recommend Atom, you are free to use any text editor you wish.

You will also need to have access to a basic image editor. (These days, even a smartphone app should work just fine!)

Discussion boards

Learning web design can be exciting and, at times, confusing. The Discussion Boards offer an opportunity for you to share your journey with your classmates—to ask and answer questions, discuss the readings, share resources, etc. There are several forums that will be open throughout the term. In general, there is no requirement for a particular number of posts per week. However, posting will be required at some points, such as in the peer-user testing during Week 8 (see the section "Mini-Assignments" below).

In the past, students have also benefited from creating informal learning groups via the Discussion Boards. If you learn better with colleagues, this is highly recommended! You can make use of Zoom or other software to meet or you could connect in person, geography permitting.

Contacting me

Student–instructor interaction is an important part of any course. I am available to you, even in this asynchronous, online setting. I want to help you succeed in this course, in your program at Drexel—and in life. Please contact me with any questions, problems, discoveries or anything else. If your question is general and may be of interest to others in the class (e.g., syllabus, readings, schedule, etc.), please post it on the *Raise Your Hand* Discussion Board so that others can benefit. With personal or urgent questions, email me directly. If you have a technical question, you will be better off contacting the IT department.

My office hours this quarter are Tuesday afternoons from 4 to 6 p.m. Philly time. These are "email office hours," meaning that if you email me at this time you can expect a quick response. If you would like, we can quickly get onto a private Zoom meeting with voice and video.

Feel free to email me at any time. Note, however, that I do not generally check email on nights or weekends. In our always-on society, it is important to set boundaries—firstly because healthy lives require off-time, and also because our academic activities require uninterrupted periods of time for reading, writing and thinking. Moreover, taking time for rest and pursuing leisure activities have been shown to

improve productivity, creativity and accomplishment, as Alex Pang discusses in his book *Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less*. I hope you will join me in living with more balance.

Time commitment

This is a graduate course in a professional school. Drexel estimates that the total workload (readings, assignments, notes, exercises) will take *12 to 15 hours per week*. Be prepared for a serious commitment of attention and effort. It will pay off!

Assignments and Grading

Your course grade will be broken down as follows:

Online Portfolio (*due Week 5*)	30%
Community Website (Final Project) (*due Week 9*)	40%
Reflections	20%
Mini-Assignments	10%

Assignments

There are two main assignments: an online portfolio, and a community information website (final project). Assignment descriptions and rubrics are posted in the Assignments section on Blackboard.

Reflections

In the second half of the term, you will submit four reflections:
- *Week 5* – A Discussion Board post reflecting on creating your online portfolio
- *Week 7* – A website usability assessment, to be submitted as an assignment under Week 7
- *Week 8* – A short reflection on the readings, to be submitted as an assignment under Week 8
- *Week 9* – A Discussion Board post reflecting on your final project; you must also post two replies to others' reflections by Wednesday of Exam Week

Guidelines for these reflections are provided in each respective week's section on Blackboard.

Mini-assignments

In addition to the projects and reflections, you will complete a handful of mini-assignments throughout the term. These include HTML and CSS Exercises, Peer-User Testing on the final project websites, and periodic participation in the Discussion Boards. Details will be given along the way.

Grading

Research has demonstrated that grades diminish students' learning, decrease students' interest in the subject matter, and prevent students from taking creative risks. Moreover, many students experience anxiety about grades. In this class, we are here to learn, to become interested in web design, and to take some creative risks by trying new things (not just following a rubric)—and we certainly don't need more anxiety in our lives. My intention with this class is to help you to work in an organic way, as you will after graduation. So in this class, we will take a different approach to assessment.

When you turn in an assignment, by default it will receive a B. If it is excellent work, then it will receive an A. If it is weak, then it will receive a C. You can expect to receive grades and feedback within a week of an assignment's due date. If you are unhappy with the grade you received, you can always make revisions and resubmit the assignment, up until the end of Week 9; if you do this, include a cover letter explaining what changes you made and why. For reference, here is my interpretation of the meaning of the letter grades:

- *A – Excellent:* Original and creative thinking, strong writing. Goes above and beyond expectations. Demonstrates mastery of the course content by referencing and exemplifying concepts from the readings, lectures and other materials. Supplements required coursework with additional readings, reflections and observations.
- *B – Good:* Meets expectations. Demonstrates overall understanding of the concepts presented in class. Most writing is well done with well supported arguments.
- *C – Marginal:* Meets most expectations. Some learning is shaky.
- *D – Poor:* Shows flawed understandings of course content. Little participation and effort.
- *F – Failing:* Deep misunderstandings, poor attention, very low participation.

Late work

Meeting deadlines is an important professional responsibility. My late policy in this class will help you practice meeting this responsibility while also being flexible—things happen, I get it. I will accept late work, but it will be penalized. From one minute late up to one week late, the assignment grade will be lowered one full letter grade; up to two weeks late, it will be lowered two letter grades; up to three weeks late, it will be lowered three letter grades. Work submitted more than three weeks late will not be accepted. And while you may resubmit assignments for a better grade, this late penalty will stick.

Policies

Academic integrity

You are expected to conduct yourself in a respectful manner as befitting the university environment. This includes academic integrity. In this course, as with any Drexel course, cheating will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism (using others' intellectual work without reference) and cheating. All work you submit must be your own work, with sources properly cited. Any plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in a sanction that may extend to failing the course. I am obligated to report incidents of cheating (including plagiarism) to Drexel administration. A student who is found in violation twice (even if in two different courses) will be expelled from the university. For more information, please refer to the Provost academic integrity policy or to resources regarding Student Conduct and Community Standards.

Changes to the syllabus

I am here to help you learn, and I want to make sure we achieve the expected learning outcomes in this course. To do this, I may have to make some changes to the syllabus—for instance, if it becomes clear that we need to spend more time on some topic. I'll do my best to honor the syllabus as is, and I'll be sure to let you know about any changes as far in advance as possible.

Dropping the course

If you are considering whether to continue your enrollment in the course, please refer to the Course Add/Drop Policy and the Course Withdrawal Policy.

Student conduct

Drexel University adopted a student conduct policy requiring that all students have the responsibility to be aware of, and abide by, the University's policies, rules, regulations, and standards of conduct. The Student Conduct and Community Standards policy information is available in the <u>Official Student Handbook</u>.

Appropriate use of course materials

It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you may be the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others. Use of this intellectual property is governed by Drexel University policies, including the <u>Acceptable Use Policy</u>. Briefly, this policy states that course materials, including recordings, provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations. Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the University's <u>Code of Conduct</u>.

Participating in course evaluations

Student evaluations are a required element of every course. Evaluation forms are completely anonymous. They are confidentially used to make improvements in our curriculum and teaching. They are also used by administration in evaluating faculty performance, and in decisions about promotion, tenure and retention. Please take part in course evaluations.

Support and Recommendations

If you are experiencing anxiety, depression or other issues

Drexel offers free and confidential support for anxiety-related problems, depression, family concerns, relationship issues, adjustment issues, eating disorders, alcohol- and drug-related problems, and questions about gender and sexual identity, all through the Drexel Counseling Center. The Counseling Center is located at Suite 201 in the Creese Student Center at 3210 Chestnut St. The telephone number is (215) 895–1415. **For emergencies, or to reach an on-call counselor after regular business hours, please call (215) 416–3337**. Learn more <u>on the Counseling Center website</u>.

If you need technical support

Get 24/7 technical support for Blackboard Learn from the Instructional Technology group <u>online</u> or by calling (215) 895–1224. For any other technical support (email, logins, etc.), Drexel University IT is here for you. You can contact them through email at <u>consult@drexel.edu</u>, by phone at (215) 895–2020, or by submitting the online <u>Problem Report Form</u>.

Support for equality and diversity

Drexel University strives to promote an environment of equality of opportunity and compliance with university policies and federal, state and local laws prohibiting discrimination based upon race, color, religion, gender, marital status, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability and veteran status. If you have a question or complaint concerning discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation, contact the Office of Equality and Diversity <u>online</u> or at (215) 895–1405.

Coaching, mentorship and tutoring

The Center for Learning and Academic Success Services (CLASS) serves as the organizing department for a variety of programs and services that promote coaching, peer mentoring and tutoring at Drexel. The Center is located on campus at the Creese Student Center (3210 Chestnut Street), Suite 050.

Campus activities and community

Find the Student Handbook, conduct and community standards, and the Counseling Center at on the Student Life website. Consult this site for information on campus activities and student programs.

English help

The English Language Center offers English language instruction and support services to students, especially those who speak English as a second language. They are located at 229 N. 33rd Street. The telephone number is (215) 895-2022.

If you have a disability or are facing other challenges

Students requesting accommodations due to a disability at Drexel University need to request a current Accommodations Verification Letter (AVL) in the ClockWork database before accommodations can be made. These requests are received by Disability Resources (DR), who then issues the AVL to the appropriate contacts. For additional information, visit the DR website, reach them by phone at (215) 895–1401, or by email them at disability@drexel.edu.

Free health services

The Student Health Center is located at 3401 Market St, Ste 105. You can call them at (215) 220–4700.

Career counseling

CCI Career Services offers help with job placement, job postings and credentialing. Outside our college, the Steinbright Career Development Center (SDLC) offers individualized career counseling, career fairs, career programs and resume workshops. The office is located at 3201 Arch Street, Suite 250, Philadelphia, PA 19104. The telephone number is (215) 895-2185.

Course Schedule

In this course, the weeks run Monday to Sunday. Assignments are due on Sunday at the end of the given week by 9:00 p.m. Eastern.

Week	Dates (M–Su)	Topics	Assignments
1	Jan 11–17	HTML and Standards	HTML Exercises
2	Jan 18–24	Portfolios and Overview of IA	HTML Exercises
3	Jan 25–31	CSS and Navigation	Online Portfolio Content Plan
4	Feb 1–7	Typography and Copyright	CSS Exercises
5	Feb 8–14	Embeds and Recap	Online Portfolio and Reflection
6	Feb 15–21	Content Strategy and Writing	Final Project Proposal
7	Feb 22–28	Usability	Website Usability Reflection
8	Mar 1–7	Javascript and Analytics	Reading Reflection; Peer-User Testing
9	Mar 8–14	The Future of the Web	Final Project and Reflection