Web Design and Architecture

Graduate Program in Library and Information Science
The University of Western Ontario
Course: LIS 9723, "Web Design and Architecture"
Lecturer: Mark Rayner
Email: marayner@uwo.ca
Website: instruct.uwo.ca/fim-lis/9723/
Time: Tuesday, Wednesday, 9 -11:45 am
Location: 9-10 am: NCB 293, 10-11:45 am NCB 120 (IMC Lab)

Description

Any website is a combination of content, graphic design, interactivity, technology, and usability; this course will discuss -- through theory and practice -- how to combine these components to create well-designed sites. We will focus on usability, navigation and information architecture – elements that are often neglected when it comes to design. Your training in library and information science will be particularly useful in the area of information architecture. We will learn to use Dreamweaver, Photoshop and a number of other web tools to create *basic*, easily used websites.

Objectives:

Web Design and Architecture has several objectives, apart from the important goal of helping you acquire the basic skills you will need to produce a good website. You will learn:
   ♦ information architecture
   ♦ communications planning
   ♦ navigation and searching systems
   ♦ usability & accessibility
   ♦ writing and editing for the web.

Evaluation

Grades will be based on participation (15%) lab work (10%) and assignments (75%). Please note that your final project must be **an original work** -- you cannot use content from other websites to populate your site. See the website for full details about the final project.

Participation (15%) will be based on your contributions during labs and lectures.

Lab work (10%) will be based on the number of lab exercises you have completed -- some labs are worth two points, some are worth one, and others are foundational exercises that are not graded. These are pass/fail exercises (if you complete the lab -- even partially -- you get the points). However, they must be posted at your webpage by the deadline or you will **not receive the points**. I will check your site for completed exercises a week after the exercise is assigned, so I urge you to double-check to ensure that you can see the exercise on the web after you've completed and published

the exercise.

Critique (25%)
Research and write a short (500-word) informal critique of the website at http://www.jbizmech.ca. What are the site's communications goals? Examine how the site is structured, how the navigation works, and how easy it is to use. Does it violate Krug's primary rule of usability and make you think? Is it easy to find the information you want? Is the appropriate level of technology applied? Is it aesthetically pleasing? Are there interactive elements? How well does it do with Krug's "trunk test"? In short, explain what is wrong with this website.

(Due date: May 27, 28)

Website Proposal (20%)
Write a communications plan to address how you will reach your audience for a subject of your choosing. Design the architectural blueprints for the website, and create a detailed content map – what information needs to be available at what point on the site. Include the file structure with this map. Also, make some design sketches to show what you believe the site will look like. What design elements will best communicate your ideas? Consider the overall tone, colour, and layout. This is your best chance to get the site right – it should be fully planned before you begin creating it. Keep form and content in mind. To get a low "B" (assuming everything is correct), hand in:
- communications plan (two pages, minimum)
- architectural blueprint
- detailed content map, including file structure
- design sketches

To get a higher mark:
- other relevant materials such as content, graphic elements, color palette, etc.

(Due date: June 24, 25)

Website Production (30%)
Produce the site that you have envisioned, proposed and designed. Keep everything that we have discussed in class in mind, but remember that we are focusing on creating original sites that are easy to use in this class. The site will be a minimum of 18 web pages in size (separate html files) and a maximum of 30 pages (you can build a bigger site, but I'll stop marking at 30 pages). When your site is completed, email the URL to me at: marayner@uwo.ca. A complete marking criteria will be provided on the class website, but the following factors will weigh heavily in the final mark:
- originality and effectiveness of content
- download times
- ease of use
- browser compatibility
- persistent navigation & local navigation
- basic accessibility (alt tags) and good page title information
- content that is written for the web.

(Due date: Aug. 7, noon)

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Lateness penalties and bonus marks:
Assignments must be handed in to me by the end of the class (10 am) on the due dates. A lateness penalty of 5% will be applied per day afterwards, including the weekends. For Website Production, there will be a lateness penalty of 5% if the site is not ready by noon on the 7th, 10% if it is not ready by 9 am on the 8th, and 20% if it is not ready by 5 pm on the 8th. Sites will not be accepted after the 10th. There is a 7.5% bonus if it is ready by 5 pm on July 30th.

Texts: The textbooks are on reserve in the GRC, and copies are available at the Campus Book Store. (Information Architecture is reduced this term.) Note that the Dreamweaver and Photoshop books are optional, but if you like to have a text by your side as you learn new software, the Green/Weinman book is excellent.

Don't Make Me Think: Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, 2/e   (*Think*)
By: Steve Krug, Roger Black
New Riders; ISBN: 0321344758

Information Architecture for the World Wide Web, 2/e   (*IA*)
By Louis Rosenfeld, Peter Morville
O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN: 0596000359

Dreamweaver 8 Hands-On Training (optional)
By: Garo Green, Daniel Short
Peachpit Press; ISBN: 0321293894

Adobe Photoshop CS Classroom-in-a-Book (optional)
By: Adobe Creative Team
Adobe Press; ISBN: 032119375X

Web readings:
See website.

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Tentative Schedule

Week of:	Class/Lab	Readings for next class
May 5	Introductions. Elements of Web Design. Lab: hands-on critiques	*Think*, chap. 1-4 *IA*, chap. 3
May 12	Usability Lab: bad sites, html, fetch	*Think*, chap. 5 *IA*., chap. 5*
May 19	Writing for the web Lab: Dreamweaver, overview Exercise 1: rewrite ##	*Think*, chap. 6 *IA*, chap. 7-8
May 26 **(critique due)**	Navigation & searching systems Lab: site management, basics, Dreamweaver, images, Exercise 2: Tables #	*IA*., chap. 10, 11
June 2	Research & Strategy Lab: Dreamweaver, css Exercise 3: CSS ##	*IA*, chap. 12
June 9	Conceptual design, content mapping Lab**:** Dreamweaver, layers & tables Exercise 4: Layers #	*Think*, chap. 7,* chap. 8*
June 16	Metadata & Marketing Lab**:** Dreamweaver templates Exercise 5: Template #	Web reading: *Colour in design*
June 23 **(proposal due)**	Color, graphics, design Lab**:** Photoshop – basic tutorial	*IA*, chap. 15, 16, 17
June 30	Reading Week	
July 7	Home Page & Project Management Photoshop: Optimizing GIFs & JPGs Exercise 6: Optimizing ###	Web reading: a history of accessibility
July 14	Accessibility & Standards Lab: work period	-none-
July 21 & 28	Work periods (the course evaluation will take place one of these weeks)	
Aug. 4 **(site due)**	Work periods	

# = number of lab points available	* = to get ahead on the reading