

Instructor: Jason Palmeri
Class: Monday and Wednesday, 3:30-5:18 (Denney 343)
Standard Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 5:30-7:00 (Denney 343)
Additional Office Hours: By appointment or chance (Denney 324 or online)
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450.03 (Wi 06)

Professional Writing and New Media

450.03 is a course in the professional writing that focuses on writing in digital environments. In this course, you will learn to:

- Compose and revise persuasive, useful texts for diverse professional audiences.
- Design and conduct a basic usability research study.
- Develop skills in collaboration and project management.
- Employ XHTML Transitional and Cascading Style Sheets to code web texts.
- Gain a working knowledge of software for composing words, images, and sounds in an age of new media (Dreamweaver, Photoshop, Audacity).
- Employ and consciously modify stylistic conventions for composing words and images.
- Reflect critically on the social, ethical, and material implications of new composing technologies.

During this quarter, we will complete a class project for a real-world client: The Ohio State University Office of Student Financial Aid. In groups of four, you will conduct usability research about the OSU financial aid website and report your results to financial aid website development team. You will also individually develop your writing, design, and technology skills through composing a blog and creating a website on a topic of your choice.

Required Materials

- 1) PDF Readings (linked from daily schedule). I strongly encourage you to print these PDFs for ease of reading. If you do not have good access to a printer, I can provide you with a stack of photocopies that you can photocopy.
- 2) On-line technology tutorials (linked from course website).

- 3) A good grammar and style handbook (preferably one that focuses on your area of specialty)
- 4) A digital storage device (portable hard drive, CD-R, DVD-R, flash drive)

Evaluation

The grade breakdown will be:

Usability Research Project: 30%

Final Website Project: 30%

Blog: 25%

Resume and Cover Letter: 5%

Participation: 10%

(Detailed prompts will be posted to course website)

Policies

1) *Course Technologies*. No prior technology knowledge is expected for this course. While I will teach you all the technologies you need to know, you must be willing to experiment, to play, to research, and to seek help, recognizing that learning a new writing technology is rarely a linear, step-by-step process. Many of the programs we are using are available for free-trial download; you can also access all of these programs in the English department's digital media studio (Denney 343) as well as in other labs around campus. I strongly encourage you to use the English department studio (open nights and weekends) as it is a great collaborative environment for learning and experimenting with technologies.

2) *Plagiarism*. If you use the words, images, sounds, or ideas of another person, you must give them credit. Failure to do so is considered plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. Please remember that at no point during the composing process should words, images, sounds, or ideas not your own be represented as such.

3) *Respect*. Cell phones should be turned off. You should not instant message or carry on side conversations while anyone (student, instructor, or visitor) is addressing the class. While I encourage you to offer constructive critiques of your peers' work, personal insults will not be

tolerated.

4) *Attendance*. Attendance is important to the success of this class and to your development as a professional writer. Therefore, each unexcused absence after two will result in the lowering of your final grade by a full letter (for example, from A to B). Excused absences, such those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade.

5) *Student Work*. Student Work must be completed and submitted on time. All assignments should be turned in during the class period when they are due. Failure to turn in an assignment draft at all will result in the deduction of one-third of a letter grade on the final version of the paper (for example, B+ to B). Late submission of a final graded assignment will result in the deduction of one full letter grade for each day past the due date (for example, B+ to C+). The grade will not be affected when a draft or final graded assignment is late for reasons that would result in a excused absence.

6) *Access / Accommodations*: We all have varying abilities; we all carry various strengths and weaknesses. Some of these might even be “documented” with a place like the OSU Office for Disability Services (ODS). If so, please just let me know. With or without documentation, it is my intent to make our learning experience as accessible as possible. With documentation, I am especially interested in providing any student accommodations that have been determined by the student and an ODS counselor in advance. Please let me know NOW what we can do to maximize your learning potential, participation, and general access in this course. I am available to meet with you in person or to discuss such things on email. The Office for Disability Services is located at 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue, phone 292-3307 (TDD 292-0901). See: <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>

Schedule

Wednesday 1/3: Introduction

Tech: Course website; Mac OS; Basic HTML

Monday 1/9: Rhetoric and Usability I

Due: Blog Entry

Read: Barnum, "User and Task Analysis"; Schriver, "How Documents Engage Readers' Thinking and Feeling"; Henning, "The Seven Qualities of Highly Effective Web Writing"

Wednesday 1/11: Rhetoric and Usability II

Due: Blog Entry

Read: Kuniavsky, "Usability Tests," Crowley and Hawhee, "Kairos and Rhetorical Situation"

Monday 1/16: No Class (MLK Day)

Wednesday 1/18: Basic Design Principles

Due: Blog Entry

Read: R. Williams, "Non-Designer's Design Book" (selection)

Monday 1/23: Rhetoric and Usability III

Due: Blog Entry

Read: Barnum "Briefing the Participant"; Wallace, "Web Writing for Many Interest Levels"; Johnson, "Refiguring the End of Technology"

Wednesday 1/25: Information Architecture I

Due: Blog Entry

Read: Rosenfeld and Morville, "Organization Systems" and "Labeling Systems"

Monday 1/30: Information Architecture II

Due: Blog Entry

Read: Rosenfeld and Morville, "Navigation Systems,"

Wednesday 2/1: Group Conferences

Due: Usability Research Plan Draft (review with me during scheduled conference)

Monday 2/6: Studio

Due: Final Website Proposal

Wednesday 2/8: Studio

Due: Usability research plan final (emailed to me as a word or rtf doc)

Monday 2/13: Resumes and Cover Letters

Due: Blog Entry

Read: Kollin, "Resumes and Cover Letters"

Wednesday 2/15: Studio

Due: Resume and Cover Letter

Monday 2/20: Disability and Design

Read: Linton, "Claiming Disability"; Slatin and Rush "Maximum Accessibility"

Due: Blog Entry

Wednesday 2/22: Studio

Due: Alpha Version of Professional Website

Monday 2/27: Studio

Due: Draft Usability Test Report

Wednesday 3/1: Studio

Monday 3/6: Peer Response

Due: Beta Version of Professional Website

Wednesday 3/8: Final Presentations

Due: Final Usability Report + Presentation

Thursday 3/16: Release Version of Professional Website