GDES-220 Digital & Emerging Media Design I

"The era of transitioning human beings to the screen is over. Now is the time for designers and storytellers to fully embrace the ascendant platforms and invent a vernacular beyond the derivative language of engineers and marketers." — Z. BRYANT

course description

During this course we will learn to speak a new language — that of screen-based craft. This course aims to:

- Introduce students to writing hand-coded HTML and CSS as it applies to the practice of web design
- Empower students to analyze and critique interfaces from the perspectives of both user and designer
- Develop the student's ability to use essential design software to create interfaces and assets
- Illuminate the thought process of the user by discussing and applying fundamental concepts of usability design

learning outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand fundamental technologies of the web and how they work together to create a website
- Use HTML and CSS to create basic websites with single and multi-column layouts
- Use key tools of interactive design with basic proficiency, including Photoshop, Illustrator, and CSS
- Create hierarchy in an interactive layout in a way that promotes clarity and usability
- Understand the disposition of web users as it applies to creating usable interactive experiences
- Troubleshoot design and technical problems using online and printed resources

textbooks

Don't Make Me Think, Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability (3rd Edition)
by Steve Krug. 2014 (3rd ed).

HTML & CSS: Design and Build Websites
by Jon Duckett. 2011.

These books will be on two-hour reserve at the library. Additional required readings will be available online, posted to Blackboard, or distributed in class.

meeting out of class & communication

I am available to meet before and after class upon request.

The best way to reach me outside of class is via our class Slack. Please allow a **minimum** of one weekday for an email response. **I will not respond to a technical question asked the day before a project is due!** Department policy discourages critiques via email. Plan ahead and take advantage of class time.

preparation for class

Be prepared at the start of each class with assigned work and supplies. This includes the presentation of sketches and mock-ups **in required form** for critiques. **Students who are not prepared and do not participate in class critiques should not expect private critiques with faculty at a later date or at the end of class.**

Printing something out surreptitiously once class has begun or posting something during class that was supposed to be done before class counts as late.

assignments & grading

Applied projects are weighted heavily, including the intermediate steps taken to get to the final deliverable. The instructor will lower the final project grade one full letter value for any intermediate deadline missed (comps, research, etc). Any project not seen in progress will receive an "F", even if the final is delivered on time.

Considerations for assignment grades:

- Concept, developmental process and execution
- Presentation and craft (this applies to neatness and commenting of code)
- Design aesthetic and usability
- Class participation and professionalism in critiques and discussions

There are no midterm or final exams for the course. The final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Design projects	**65%**
Exercises	**20%**
Quizzes	**15%**
Class & crit participation	**Modifies grade as necessary**
Attendance	**Modifies grade as stipulated (see below)**

exercises

Exercises will be given a score of **2** for correct completion and submission. A **1** will be given for exercises with errors or that have been submitted incorrectly. At the instructor's discretion, a **3** can be given for work that shows a great deal of consideration and significantly and substantially exceeds the requirements.

An average of **2** equates to full credit for the exercise portion of your grade. **Late exercises are never accepted**, but your lowest exercise score will be dropped.

projects and deadlines

Unless stated otherwise, most assignments will be submitted by uploading the files to the gff.mx/gdes220 server and posting a working link to the instructor via slack. Different browsers may have different methods of rendering websites. **For this class, the only browser that matters is the latest version of Google Chrome.**

Any project not submitted correctly and in its entirety by the beginning of the class period in which it is due will be considered late, and will automatically receive one full letter grade lower. The grade will continue to drop at a rate of one full letter grade per class meeting. Requirements for project submission are clearly stated on the project handout and in class and must be followed exactly.

You must complete and submit all projects to pass the course. This course is structured so that all work can be completed during a normal academic session. The instructor will not issue an incomplete grade or grant an extension without a serious, documented excuse.

It is essential that you save files in multiple locations to prevent the accidental loss of your work. Accidental erasure is not grounds for a deadline extension.

classroom conduct

Turn off your cell phone. Do not browse the web, text, or take calls during class.

Do not use the internet for Facebook, social media, or other personal use during class. I will occasionally ask you to put your computer to sleep during lectures or demos, at which time the monitor must be off.

Food is not allowed. Drinks should be in containers **with lids** and left in the front of the lab, **away from computers**.

Only one unexcused absence for the semester is allowed. The student must provide documentation for additional justified absences promptly (not at the end of the semester). Additional unjustified or undocumented absences will lower the final grade for the course at a rate of half a letter grade per absence (i.e. from A to A- and so on). Tardiness that exceeds 30 minutes will count as one absence.

If you have been absent, you must contact a classmate before the next class for notes and assignments. Absences do not equate to automatic deadline extensions.

Missed quizzes must be made up at a time arranged with the instructor. It is your responsibility to schedule that time.

Excessive tardiness, early departures, and excessive break time will count as equivalent to half of one absence **(2 infractions = 1 absence)**.

grade scale

A 90–100 ("Wow")
This grade indicates work which is clearly superior. It does not mean "satisfactory" or "adequate." Such work must reflect an excellent understanding and communication of the material. Projects and exercises must show clear conceptual thinking and successful use of design principles, craft (as it applies digitally) and technique.

B 80–89 ("Good")
This grade indicates work that is more than merely satisfactory. Such work will reflect an above average understanding (and communication) of the material. There may be only minor errors in craft and technique.

C 70–79 ("Average - Okay")
This grade indicates work which is competent, adequate, and satisfactory in presentation. Such work reflects effective understanding of most of the material covered. There are no excessive errors in craft and technique.

D 60–69 ("Not so good")
This grade indicates work which is unsatisfactory, not competent, or inadequate in terms of presentation or fulfilling the assignment. Projects and exercises which contain serious errors in craft and technique will normally be given this grade.

F below 60
This grade is assigned for failure to complete an assignment in both a timely and competent manner.

academic integrity

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if your have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course. Plagiarism is unacceptable and applies to written assignments as well as design projects and exercises.

supplies

Flash drive (minimum 2GB) — You will often transfer files from labs to personal machines and backups.

2GB Cloud Storage — Utilize storage space on Dropbox.com, Adobe Creative Cloud, or Google Drive to save files (you still must back up files in a second location)

Sketchbook with blank, or grided pages (a lined notebook is not sufficient) — At least 9" x 12".d.

Something to take notes in — This could be your sketchbook or a separate notebook.

Pencils, pens, colored pencils, and other sketching materials as needed

Be present and come ready. Come to every class, be here on time, and stay for the whole class. Bring your work ready to be shared. The worst waste of time is coming to the critique and showing something that you put together five minutes before. Always come to class with projects looking better than they looked last time.

Pay attention. When I ask you to execute an exercise, a project, or an assignment, I post detailed instructions on how I want it to be done, named, and submitted. It is your responsibility to make sure you follow these precisely. Precision is absolutely essential in the practice of web design. Do not let your grade slip just because you forgot to name files properly or submit it in the correct fashion.

Be excited about the work you're doing. In this class you have great flexibility with the topics on which to work. I can't stress enough the importance of focusing on a subject you really care about or want to learn about. Be curious about the world inside and outside of design.

Show pride in your work. Try your best to aim for work you're proud of. Take it seriously and treat it with respect. Even if you don't get there right away, your process will be very rewarding.

Take responsibility. As Morpheus said, "I'm trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You're the one that has to walk through it." You must work hard, be proactive, and follow up with your research and ask questions. Do not wait for me to take direction of your project — you have to do that. It is my responsibility to give you the skills and direction, but it is yours to figure out your design and make it better.

Don't procrastinate. Allocate ample time to work on your projects throughout the week, not just the day before it's due. No matter how able and talented you may be, ideas take time to percolate. There is a huge difference between spending 12 hours on a project over a week, and spending 12 hours on a project the day before — not to mention the difference in stress to yourself.

Document feedback. Do not come to class without implementing suggestions or resolving comments made in critiques. Getting the exact same comments week after week is not going to do you any good. Make evident attempts to resolve your design issues. Even if you don't succeed, don't pretend you don't know they exist.

Go beyond the project requirements. Following the project requirements to a tee will only get you a passing grade, not an 'A'. Do not expect an automatic highest grade just for submitting a functional project. If you want an 'A', you must submit a project that could be shown at the annual AU Design Expo.

Leave complaints and negative attitudes at the door. We all get frustrated at times, but dwelling won't help you improve. I'll be happy to answer as many questions as it takes to get you in a better situation, but I will not welcome excuses. Being positive and having a professional demeanor will get you far in this class — and in future pursuits.

emergency preparedness

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

design program facilities and access

As a student registered for a design course you will have access to the design computer labs during staff-supervised hours. After system activation (after the add/drop period is over), student IDs must be swiped at the door for access. Every student is also entitled to an assigned locker for as long as he/she is registered for design courses. All students must treat Katzen facilities with respect and care. Careless damage of furniture, equipment, or supplies will receive a citation according to the Katzen building usage policies.

You will submit all projects and exercises in this class using the FTP server at gff.mx/gdes220. Though you can use any FTP client you'd like, we'll be using Cyberduck for Mac (a free download from http://cyberduck.ch).

FTP (File Transfer Protocol)

Server: gff.mx

Port: 21 (default)

Username: (ie: lastname@gff.mx)

Password:

If you upload a file and receive a "403 Forbidden" error when you try to access one of your HTML pages in a browser, OR if many of your image files and other links are broken and yield a "403 Forbidden" error when trying to access them individually, the UNIX permissions of the file are set incorrectly. This can happen for a variety of reasons. You can fix it from Cyberduck, however.

Right click affected files or folders and select "Info." Under the Permissions tab, check the "UNIX Permissions" number. **The correct value for folders is 755. The correct value for files is 644.** You can alter the permissions for multiple files at once by selecting them all.