

AVT 519

Syllabus

The School of Art

George Mason
University

Special Topics in Graphic Design:

Web Design & Usability

Fall 2016 | Section 003

M/W 7:20pm-10:00pm

Lab 1021

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Office hours by appointment

Catalog Description: Exploration of topical studies in graphic design, including theoretical and critical aspects of studio production.

Course Description: Students explore the role of user experience, user research, usability, and usability testing in web design. Students apply user-centered design methodologies, standards-based development practices, and usability testing towards creating web-based experiences.

Prerequisite(s): Admission to AVT graduate program or permission of instructor.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Define the terms “user experience design, usability, user-centered design, interface design, information architecture, and accessibility” and discuss how these terms are applied to designing for the web.
- Communicate the concept of a web site design.
- Create prototypes and conduct user research, including usability testing, during different stages of web site development.
- Develop a web site concept using a user-centered design process.
- Construct a web page using valid, structured, and semantic markup that is styled using a separate stylesheet and contains images or graphics optimized for web delivery.
- Create and publish to the web a web site that responds and adapts to a user’s device and display.

Texts and References:

- References, resources, and articles will be posted to the Blackboard course shell as needed. Book-based readings are accessible via Safari Tech Books Online, courtesy GMU's Library.

Technology Needed:

- Internet connection
- Server space for student portal/portfolio and assignments
- Text editor (color-coding capability recommended)
 - We will be using Atom or Brackets in the computer lab
- Web browsers
 - Expect to test work on multiple browsers, platforms, and devices.
- Word processor and presentation software (as needed)
- Image editing/creating software (as needed)
- Screen sharing and recording software for usability testing
- Storage media (USB drive/disk recommended)

Materials and Supplies:

- Index cards (4x6 and/or 5/8). These are not precious. You'll be using them like candy. Get many and bring them to class each week.
- Sharpies or other markers for sketching
- Notebook for storing class materials. Sketchbook for sketching.
- Pens, pencils, and paper for taking notes, sketching out ideas, storyboarding, problem solving, flow charting, etc.

Student Evaluation

Grades: Grades are based on culmination of points (think XP). Points are earned by completing various challenges. Point values for these challenges are based on their complexity and difficulty. Something easily accomplished (for example, submitting a URL) would have a lower point value than something of higher difficulty (for example, presenting a completed, working website).

Points awarded for a given challenge are based on effort towards the challenge and level of completion. Evaluation criteria for a given assignment is including with the posted

assignment details. Work must be officially submitted, per challenge instructions, for points to be awarded. Conversely, work not submitted or work not submitted correctly will receive 0 points. Late work may not receive the full amount of points available.

Your standing (grade) in class is based on the percentage of points achieved out of points assigned.

Levels: Everyone starts at level 0 (n00b) with 0 points. As you gain points by completing tasks and activities, you rise in levels, the highest being 20 (Master). See the Levels chart in the Bb course shell for levels and their points values.

Challenges: All challenges and challenge details are posted to the Blackboard course shell. Challenges include skill and creative building exercises, longer term projects, in class activities, presentations, and assessments. Completing challenges earns points, allowing you to level up. Some challenges may be completed multiple times for additional points.

Plugged In: This specific type of challenge centers around your participation for a given class session. This challenge is worth 50 points for each successful completion. Success looks like arriving on time, being prepared, being an active, helpful participant, and staying for the duration of the class session. Anything less than that receives fewer points. You must be present in the class session to receive any points for a given Plugged In challenge.

Submitting Work: You will maintain a web portfolio portal for all work completed for this class. All work must be posted on your portfolio web portal unless specifically stated otherwise in the challenge details.

For most assignments, work submitted for evaluation must be posted online to your web server and the URL to that specific work is submitted as a text submission for the corresponding challenge. Unless otherwise specified, files should not be submitted for assignments. Always follow the specifications given for a particular challenge. *When in doubt, ask questions.*

It is your responsibility to ensure that all work online is kept up-to-date with the latest versions. It is also your responsibility to acquire alternate means of posting work online if your main account runs out of space. Finally, work not found via your portal will not be graded—this includes any work sent to me via email.

Late Work: Work turned in late will not be awarded the full amount of available points for the assignment. Point values decrease by 10% of the total value, rounded to nearest integer, for each day the assignment is late.

Resubmitting Work: Work submitted on deadline may be resubmitted for an improved grade. The final deadline for resubmitted work is the last class session of the term.

Class Policies

Lab Policies: No eating, or drinking at the computer. Avoid any other activity outlawed by the Technology department. Please limit surfing to the activity at hand.

Class Participation: When in class, you are expected to participate in class. That means participating in the activity at hand, be it working on a project, participating in a critique, following the lesson, etc. If no specific activity is currently in play, use the time to work on class assignments and projects or researching related topics. I urge you to make the most of the time and resources provided by this class and myself. Push yourself to the next level.

Class Conduct: Professional conduct is expected. Respect for classmates, the instructor, and the classroom environment is expected.

Class Communication: Primary communication is through scheduled class time. If necessary, students will be contacted through their student email account. Class assignments and other useful information will be posted on the Blackboard course shell. I can be available for online chat. Email at pstought@gmu.edu to set up a time and venue.

Handouts: All course resources or handouts posted to the Blackboard course shell. This includes assigned readings.

Saving Work: You are responsible for all of your work. Keep backups of your files. Keep your files organized. Losing your files due to a technology meltdown is not a valid or accepted excuse for not having your work. School computers are not suitable or safe places to keep your files. Be smart. Practice safe computing.

Faculty Tardiness/Absenteeism: In the event that I am late or absent *and no other notification is provided*, students should wait 30 minutes. Students must then circulate an attendance sheet and designate one of their members to scan or clearly photograph the attendance sheet and email the scan/photo to the instructor.

School of Art Policies

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences: If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need Academic accommodations please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Office of Disability Services (SUB I room 234, 703-993-2474). You must provide me with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through the Office of Disability Services.

Technology: In accordance with George Mason University policy, please silence all cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

Commitment to Diversity: This class will be conducted as an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design: As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Open Studio Hours: SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

Important University Dates:

Consortium Registration Deadline	TBD
First day of classes; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date	August 29
Labor Day, university closed	September 5
Last day to add classes —all individualized section forms due	September 6
Last day to drop with no tuition penalty	
Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty	September 20
Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)	September 30
Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via Patriot Web	September 26 – October 21
Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)	October 3–October 28

Columbus Day recess (Monday classes/labs meet Tuesday. Tuesday classes do not meet this week)	October 10
Incomplete work from spring/summer 2016 due to instructor	October 28
Incomplete grade changes from spring/summer 2016 due to Registrar	November 4
Thanksgiving recess	November 23–27
Last day of classes	December 10
Reading Days	December 12
Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular classes or exams may not be held.	
Exam Period	Tues. December 13–Tues. December 20
Degree Conferral Date	December 21

The Winter Graduation Ceremony will be held on Wed December 21.

ArtsBus - Dates for Fall 2016: September 24th, October 22nd and November 19th.

ArtsBus Credit and Policies: You are responsible for knowing and following ArtsBus policies and rules. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for important information regarding ArtsBus policy. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment.

If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300.

Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need ArtsBus credit BUT may need to go on the ArtsBus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus trip at the Center of the Arts. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.

Visual Voices Lecture Series: Fall 2016 Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater: <http://soa.gmu.edu/visualvoices/>. Dates for Fall 2016: September 1st, September 8th, September 22nd, October 6th and October 20th.

MASONLIVE/Email: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Attendance Policies: Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code: Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Writing Center: Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis. The Collaborative Learning Hub Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects, Macs are also available; as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit ittraining.gmu.edu to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.