

Bill Wolff
Writing for Electronic Communities, Spring 2008
Syllabus

Course Info

Course Location: Education Hall 2110

Office Location: Education Hall 3075

Contact: wolffw@rowan.edu

Course Web Sites: <http://williamwolff.org/courses/wd-summer-2008/>
<http://blackboard.rowan.edu>

Course Hours: MTWH 2:50 – 6:00pm

Office Hours: T, W 1:00 – 2:30 or by appt.

Office Phone: 856-256-5221

Course Description

In this course we will learn how to design Web pages, starting with HTML coding and building to more complex layouts, using cascading style sheets and intricate graphic designs. But it is not just a course in coding and graphic design. We will be thinking critically about the important issue of the day: designing aesthetically intricate, usable, accessible pages according to Web Standards.

We will be designing Web pages with the user, not the designer, in mind, which will force us to ask difficult questions: Who is our intended user? Our accidental user? How will they be coming to the page in similar ways? In different ways? Is there ever a way to create a Web page that can be usable for all people, regardless of physical or mental disability? What if the user is blind? What is the importance of Web page usability? What are the characteristics of a usable, accessible Web page? How can we be sure people using versions of Netscape, for example, that are four years old can still view the Web page? How does the fact that Web technology is constantly evolving inform the way we think about Web design?

These are difficult questions, ones we may never satisfactorily answer. But, everything we do in this course—read, write, design, reflect—will bring us closer to answering them, and the questions their answers inspire.

We will be completing three primary design projects, with many design and reading assignments to go with them. Much of the work will be done in groups. It will be important for us to remember that we all come to Web design from different backgrounds, and with different design skills and tastes. Designing is a very personal experience, and the group work we will be doing will ask each of us to place a great amount of trust in each other. Ultimately, this course - and the projects we will be doing - will challenge us to look at our ideas and worlds in new, complex, and, hopefully, challenging ways.

Brief Description of Assignments

We will be completing three overlapping projects. This will allow us to constantly re-think and reflect on the work we are doing, adapting and borrowing ideas from each of the projects.

Project I: Professional Web Site and Design Portfolio

The goal of this three-week-long project is to design a professional web site that presents yourself and your skills to colleagues, future employers, the general public, etc. The design portfolio is a portion of the site where you can showcase your work and skills. As such, though you will be required to include work you have completed class, you are also encouraged to include work that is directly related to your professional goals: artwork, papers, resume, teaching philosophy, and so forth. A secondary goal of this project is to learn about CSS and its open source internet culture, begin to engage with that culture, and to highlight what you learn in such a way that benefits the course. To help facilitate that will create a collaborative social bookmarking list in which we will post CSS and Photoshop tips, tricks, and hacks that will be beneficial to the course as a whole.

Project II: CSS Zen Garden

In this project we will be working with the XHTML code and style sheet provided for graphic designers at the CSS Zen Garden, a web site that is a stunning "demonstration of what can be accomplished visually through CSS-based design." Even though the XHTML and CSS backbones are provided, we will be designing our own pages and images; indeed, each of the many different designs on the page have the exact same XHTML code and CSS backbones. The only difference is the attributes associated with each CSS element. This is an exciting time in web design, and in this project we will be jumping head first into the discussion.

Project III: Web Site Re-design

Project III is a collaborative project which involves an imaginative, analytical redesign of a section of a large web site. In groups, students will create a site inventory, an audience analysis, a prototype of the new site, and a final design for the new site. Students will learn about Web Standards and Access First Design. In the process of re-designing the site, we will incorporate many of the skills learned in Projects I and II.

Required Texts

Adobe Creative Team, *Adobe Photoshop CS3 Classroom in a Book*. Berkeley: Adobe P, 2007. Make sure CD is actually included in the back of the book.

Goto, K. & Cotler, E. (2005). *Web ReDesign 2.0: Workflow that Works*. Indianapolis: New Riders.

Griffiths, P. (2006). *HTML Dog: The Best-Practice Guide to XHTML and CSS*. Berkeley: New Riders.

Krug, S. (2006). *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, 2nd Edition*. Berkeley: New Riders Press.

- Various photocopies and online readings.
- Computer with Internet access
- Microsoft Word or [any of many online alternatives](#) (papers must be turned in in .doc or .rtf; no other formats will be accepted)

- Rowan email address
- Other materials as needed

Office Hours

Office hours are designed for you, giving you a more private environment in which we may talk about your work, your performance in class, etc. If you are unable to see me during my office hours, do not hesitate to make an appointment to see me at a different time.

Contacting Each Other

There will be times during the semester when I will need to contact the class and you will need to contact me. I will contact you via your Rowan email account, so please be sure that you are checking it regularly and/or forwarding it to the email service you use most regularly. If you do not know your Rowan email address, you can find it on the Email page of the Rowan web site (<http://www.rowan.edu/toolbox/email/#students>).

I am in my office only during office hours and the brief times before and after class. As a result, calling me in my office will not get you an immediate response. I strongly suggest you contact me via email, which I check all day long.

Email, however, tends to be seen as an informal medium. This, however, should not always be the case. All emails that I send to you will have a meaningful subject line and a proper salutation (“Hi Class,” or “Hi Jane,” etc.). The first sentence will notify you of the purpose of the email, and then will get to the heart of the matter. It will end with a formal closing (“Thanks, BW”). I expect the same from any email you send. Any email that does not will immediately be deleted and not responded to.

Students with Disabilities

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856.256.4234. The Center is located on the 3rd Floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

Attendance and Late Work

You are expected to be in class. For every absence after 1 absence your final grade will be reduced by a full letter. A student is considered late if they arrive after the sign-up sheet has gone around the room; lateness equals .5 absences. Work handed in late will not be accepted.

Grading

Grades correspond to the Graduate Handbook (A-C) for graduate students. Requirements for specific projects will be detailed when the project description is handed out. Each project is 30% of the final grade; class-participation is 10%.