

Dr. Bill Wolff
Internet and Writing Studies, Fall 2010, 42829

Syllabus

Course Location: Education Hall 2110

Office Location: Education Hall 3075

Contact: wolffw@rowan.edu, @billwolff

Course Hours: T 6:30pm – 9:00pm

Office Hours: T/TH 1:00 – 2:30 & by appt

Office Phone: 856-256-5221 (email, tweet first)

Course Web Sites: <http://williamwolff.org/courses/iws-fall-2010/>
<http://groups.diigo.com/group/iws-f10>

Course Description

In a recent editorial in the *Guardian*, English novelist, screenwriter, and journalist, Ray Connolly begged the question, “If publishers can sell their books online, why can't writers? Actually, they can. It isn't difficult. Anyone who is computer savvy can become a publisher these days. I know, because I've just become one.” Connolly announced that he is putting his latest book, *The Sandman*, online in serialized format on his own professional web site—for free. Connolly is just the latest in a line of writers and artists—established and burgeoning—who are choosing to circumvent traditional publishing processes and institutions by putting their work online, often for free, for an established audience and/or to create a new audience.

Other writers and artists use professional web sites to connect directly with fans, advertise, upload videos and/or trailers, provide samples of work, share ideas on the artistic process, and link to sites where their work can be purchased. By taking advantage of the freedom of the web, the power of social networking, and the pleasure of connecting directly with new and established audiences, artists are becoming more than writers or musicians or photographers or craft-makers. They are becoming publishers, marketers, and self-promoters. Often this happens in a coordinated effort with traditional publishing institutions and companies. Other times the goal is to gain enough exposure to attract traditional publishing opportunities. Other times the goal is merely to share one's work with an unknown audience. It all depends on the artist and their individual goals.

This course will help you gain the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to compose your own professional online presence. We will read scholarly texts that introduce us to the evolution of written communication and writing technologies, Internet studies, hypertext theory, and electronic literature (eLit). We will also read practical texts that introduce us to web design, usability, blogging, and the two primary web design languages: HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). We will use these texts, theories, and skills to analyze and compose various online spaces, and to make sound choices when determining how, where, and why to share your work online.

The course will have two main projects and several smaller assignments that support and enhance the development of the main projects. Each project will have its own extended assignment page.

Designing a Professional Web Site using Wordpress (14 weeks)

Each student will compose a professional web site using the free and robust blogging and information management software, Wordpress. Each student will have their own URL and will

learn how to install a blog, learn how to manipulate themes, learn how to use it for more than just blogging, and compose their professional site. The professional site will be completed in two installations. The first installation will be based on the WPFolio theme. The second installation will be based on a theme of your choice, which must be heavily manipulated to fit your own particular goals. Each installation will be accompanied by a short reflective statement.

Blogging (14 weeks)

This semester students will use the blog feature of their professional web site to engage with the texts we'll be reading, reflect on their web design progress, and share ideas with their future audience. Each student will be responsible for at least 3 blog posts per week: 1) one that extends the class discussion; 2) one that discusses their web design progress; and 3) one based on a weekly feature that you create to help promote yourself.

Social Bookmarking (12 - 13 weeks)

Social bookmarking is the process of publicly archiving web pages you find interesting for possible future use. As a class, we will be using Diigo to socially bookmark web sites that directly relate to ideas and skills discussed in class that we think other classmates will find useful.

Analysis of a Professional Web Site (2 essays)

As a way to get a better understanding of how people in your field are using professional web sites and social media, you will write two short analysis papers. The first will analyze a web site in terms of its content, goals, and usability. The second will analyze it in terms of how the person is leveraging social media (blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and so on).

Required Texts and Materials

Abbate, J. (2000). *Inventing the Internet*. Cambridge, MA; MIT Press.

Bolter, J.D. (2001). *Writing space: Computers, hypertext, and the remediation of print, second edition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gitelman, L. (1999). *Scripts, grooves, and writing machines: Representing technology in the Edison era*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hayles, N.K. (2002). *Writing machines*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Meloni, J. & Morrison, M. (2010). *Sams teach yourself HTML and CSS in 24 hours, Eighth Edition*. Indianapolis, IN: SAMS.

Nielsen, J. & Loranger, H. (2006). *Prioritizing web usability*. Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.

Sabin-Wilson, L. (2010). *Wordpress for dummies*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley.

- Computer with Internet access
- A professional hosted URL
- Various online readings and other materials as needed
- Various free software applications and browser plugins
- Microsoft Word or any of many online alternatives (papers must be turned in .doc or .rtf; no other formats will be accepted)—see <http://j.mp/4LnxAW>

- Rowan email address

If you have a laptop, I encourage you to bring it to class.

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. Office hours this semester are T/TH 1:00 – 2:30.

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. 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 Twitter (@billwolff) and/or email, both of which I tend to 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. Twitter is less formal, so feel free to just tweet me questions. Please add the course hashtag (#iwsf10) to all course related tweets.

I’ll get back to your tweets and emails as soon as possible—usually within a day. If I don’t get back within a day, it may be that I did not see your tweet or email for one reason or another, such as an email going in my spam folder. Send me a polite reminder and/or ask me in class if I got it, and I’ll get back immediately.

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

You are expected to attend class every day. You cannot pass this class if you miss more than the maximum number of permissible absences, **including excused and unexcused absences**. For our section of Internet and Writing Studies, which meets twice a week, the **maximum number of permissible absences is 3**. Lateness is .5 of an absence. You are late if you arrive after the sign-in sheet has made it around the room.

Excused Absences

You will be permitted to make up missed work for excused absences only. These include:

- religious observances
- official University activities
- illness
- death of a family member or loved one
- inclement weather

You must provide verifiable documentation. Consult with your instructor for what is considered acceptable. In the case of religious observances or official University activities, you must inform your instructor **in advance** of your absence for it to be excused.

In the case of illness, death of a family member or loved one, or inclement weather, you must inform your instructor as soon as possible after the fact. If the events described above lead to your exceeding the maximum absence limit, you will be referred to the Dean of Students for a hardship withdrawal from the class.

Excused and unexcused absences will be treated using the following scale:

1 or fewer	no penalty
2 absences	-2/3 final grade (a B would become a C+)
3 absences	-1 1/3 final grade (a B would become a C-)

If you have 4 or more absences you will receive an F for the course.

Course Strands

In this course all work will be dedicated to students developing their skills in the following Course Strands:

Web Design: Students will develop their ability to compose sophisticated, usable, standards-compliant web sites using the Wordpress.org software.

Online Identity: Students will develop their ability to compose a nuanced and rhetorically sophisticated online identity through their web site and various other online spaces.

Critical Thinking, Writing, and Reading: Students will develop their ability to analyze the texts they read and then filter that information in terms of the theories and other texts being read.

Technology: Students will learn how to use various online tools and technology-related skills that can help them develop their abilities in the other course objectives.

Collaboration: Students will develop the ability to work collaboratively in activities that range from blogging to social bookmarking to in-class design work.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated in the following way:

Professional Web Site: Installation One	15%
Professional Web Site: Installation Two	35%

Blogging	25%
Social Bookmarking	5%
Professional Web Site Analysis (2; 7.5% each)	15%
In-class Discussion	5%
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Total	100%

Grades will be determined on the following scale:

A+ 100;	A 96	B- 82	D+ 69
A- 92		C+ 79	D 66
B+ 89		C 76	D- 62
B 86		C- 72	F 59 and below

Detailed criteria will be provided for each assignment. Missing assignments will receive a 0. **All major assignments (including rough drafts) must be completed to pass the course.** Late major assignments will be deduction have a grade for every class period it is late. For every 3 late non-major assignments, your final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade. It is better to complete an assignment late then to not complete it at all.