



Hist^{DA} 697 (2006) CREATING HISTORY in NEW MEDIA

Creating History in New Media
History 697
Spring 2006
Fine Arts B202
T 7:20-10:00

Office: 335 Robinson B
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and by appointment
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schedule

Tuesday,
January 24

- Housekeeping & Introduction
Practicum: Structuring a Document

Tuesday,
January 31

- Reading: Working with XHTML & CSS
Charles Wyke-Smith, *Stylin' with CSS*
Internet Visits: CSS Tutorials, Templates & Tools
Charles Wyke-Smith, *Stylin'*
Tony Ansllett, [CSS Creator](#)
ProjectSeven, [QuickDraw MacFly 2004](#)
David Shea, [CSS Zen Garden](#)
B. J. Fogg, [How People Evaluate a Web Site's Credibility](#)
Practicum: Standards-Based/CSS Design
BLOG URL DUE

Tuesday,
February 7

- Reading: Typography
Robin Williams, *Non-Designers Web Book*, Ch. 12
Internet Visits: Typography
Erin Kissane, [Typography Matters](#)
Jenny Lyn Bader, [Forget Footnotes, Hyperlink](#)
Gertrude Himmelfarb, [Where Have All the Footnotes Gone?](#)
Jean Baptiste Piggini, [Macro-Typography: A Style Guide](#)
Paula Petrik, [Scholarship on the Web: Managing Footnotes](#)
Practicum: The Problem of the Footnote
CSS PAGE DUE

Tuesday,
February 14

- Reading: One-Woman/One-Man Show
Carrie Bickner, *Web Standards Solutions*
Internet Visits: More Standards-Based/CSS Design
Owen Briggs, [Sane Font Sizes](#)
Max Design [Listutorial](#)
Max Design [Floatutorial](#)
Accessify, [List-o-Matic](#)
EvoIt.org, [Ten CSS Tricks You May Not Know](#)

Tantek Celik, [Ten CSS Tricks—Corrected and Improved](#)
Practicum: Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

Tuesday,
February 21

— **Presentations: Type Assignments**
TYPE ASSIGNMENT DUE

Tuesday,
February 28

— **Reading: Color**
Edward Tufte, *Visual Explanations*
Robin William, *Non-Designers Web Book*, Ch. 9
Internet Visits
Spectacle, [Color Schemes](#)
Ideabook, [Tip Sheet: Color Strategy](#)
Luke Wroblewski, [Natural Selections: Colors in Nature](#)
Clagnut, [Compendium of Color Tools](#)
SiteProCentral, [Color Scheme Chooser](#)
Sherwin Williams, [Color Preservation Palette](#)
Practicum: Photoshop/Colorizing

Tuesday,
March 7

— **Reading: Design**
Katrin Eismann, *Photoshop Restoration and Retouching*
Robin Williams, *Non-Designers Web Book*, Ch. 10–11
Internet Visits: Useful Image Techniques
Cameron Moll, [That Wicked Worn Look](#)
Paula Petrik, [Scholarship on the Web: Managing Engravings](#)
Practicum: Photoshop/Engravings

Tuesday,
March 14

— **NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK**

Tuesday,
March 21

— **Presentations: Image Assignments**
IMAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE

Tuesday,
March 28

— **Internet Visits: Accessibility**
Joe Clark, [How Do Disabled People Use Computers](#)
Human Factors, [How a Blind Person Will “See” Your Page](#)
Disability Rights, [Inaccessible Website Demonstration](#)
Mark Pilgrim, [Dive into Accessibility](#)
Paul Bohman, [An Accessible Method of Hiding HTML Content](#)
Practicum: Photoshop/Advanced Stuff

Tuesday,
April 4

— **Reading: Information Architecture**
Steve Krug, *Don't Make Me Think*
Robin Williams, *Non-Designer's Web Book*, Ch. 6–8
Internet Visits: Design
Jakob Nielsen, [Guidelines for Visualizing Links](#)
Luke Wroblewski, [Visible Narratives](#)
Carole Guevin, [Visual Architecture: The Rule of Three](#)
Douglas Bowman, [A Design Process Revealed](#)
Practicum: Photoshop/Advanced Stuff

Tuesday, April 11	—	<p>Reading: Interactivity James Paul Gee, <i>What Video Games Have to Teach Us</i> Internet Visits: Josh Brown et al. Forum: History & the Web (GMU online) ASHP, The Lost Museum Adgame, Historic Tale Construction Set British Library, Turning the Pages Practicum: Interactivity Tools</p>
Tuesday, April 18	—	<p>Presentations: Design Assignments DESIGN ASSIGNMENTS DUE</p>
Tuesday, April 25	—	<p>Reading: Games as Learning James Paul Gee, “Learning by Design: Games as Learning” (online) Playing: The Game’s Afoot Cyan, <i>Myst IV: Revelation</i> Discussion: <i>Myst IV: Revelation</i></p>
Tuesday, May 2	—	<p>Presentations: Web Projects WEB PROJECTS DUE (preliminary)</p>
Tuesday, May 9	—	<p>WEB PROJECT DUE (final) SELF-EVALUATION DUE</p>

description

This course is designed as an intensive exploration of the adaptation of history to a digital environment. Although the central goal of the course is development of an original, digital history project of professional quality, the course will also examine “best practices” in digital history, the problems and possibilities inherent in digital history, and issues in information, technical, and aesthetic design. In particular, the course will tackle the problems of creating interactivity and community. Be aware that this class is both a history and media course. In other words, we will begin by thinking (and writing) about good history and then proceed to learning the tools and techniques to bring history into digital form. Be also mindful that any digital work is a collaborative venture, so be prepared to both aid others and ask for help for yourself.

books

The texts (of one kind or another) serve three purposes: 1) to provide you with the background in several areas that might be relatively unfamiliar to historians; 2) to introduce you to some texts that are intended to promote some “left brain” thinking or provide inspiration; and 3) to furnish you with a modest technical, reference library. We will discuss some of the books briefly, some in depth, and some not at all, but they all should be read either *in toto* or in small bites. In addition, you are required to obtain a copy of the game, *Myst: Revelation*. Except for *Myst* (which can be obtained at a reasonable cost from an on-line vendor or as a demo download), all the books are available at the campus bookstore.

Carrie Brickner, *Web Design on a Shoestring*
Katrin Eismann & Steve Simmons, *Photoshop Restoration and Retouching* (3rd ed.)
Edward Tufte, *Visual Explanations*
Robin Williams, *Non-Designers Web Book* (3rd ed.)
Charles Wyke-Smith, *Stylin' with CSS*
Steven Heller, *Don't Make Me Think* (2nd ed.)
James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*

blog

Blogs have become an important element on the web and something that you've already done in Clio Wired. Rather than have a group blog or design a blog from the ground up, you'll be doing something a bit different. Because you'll need a blog that has a photo album, I'll recommend two options. (Why not one of the free services? Because I have experienced enormous problems with downtime, trolls, and spam in previous semesters.)

You can obtain a Plus-level subscription to Typepad, a blog. The cost is \$8.95 per month or roughly \$27.00 for the semester (the cost of a modest textbook). The best thing to do is sign up for a free trial; this will furnish you with a month's free service. At the end of the semester, you can cancel your subscription. Or, you may discover that you like blogging so much that you retain your subscription. The advantages of TypePad are ease of use and the option to customize your design.

Alternatively, you can use [Movable Type](#) or [WordPress](#) software. Both are free, but the installation of the software is challenging, and you will need to contact your ISP to ensure that the necessary software is in place. Movable Type will install the application for you for a \$40.00 fee, but you will need to arrange to have CGI and MySQL in place. Be aware that most free web page areas do not support CGI or MySQL or charge extra. George Mason does have a site license for Movable Type, but the university's policy on who can install MT and WordPress and what servers are eligible is unclear. I do not recommend either of these options unless you have some solid computer skills and access to a sophisticated ISP, but there may some in the class who can avail themselves of the MT or WordPress options.

software & internet browsers

Because this course will introduce you to standards-based, accessible design, you will need several browsers to test your web work. This, of course, brings me to the good news and the bad news. Standards-based design is, on the whole, much more tractable than its predecessor, convoluted table-based design. The XHTML code is much easier to write and cleaner. The bad news is that Internet browsers carry the baggage of the Browser Wars and, as result, interpret CSS, the web presentation language, in a number of different ways. What to do?

You should download or obtain the several different browsers. Mac people should acquire Safari (latest version), Explorer 5.2, and Firefox 1.5. Wintel folk should obtain a copy of IE 6.0 and Firefox 1.5. Opera is also good and available for free. If you elect to use Firefox, there is a handy plugin, Web Developer Tools, that provides a means to look at your CSS in different ways. Mac users face a particular difficulty. Mr. Softie has discontinued IE for the Mac, so it will remain frozen at 5.2. But 85 percent of the world uses some flavor of IE for Windows. For Mac users there is [BrowserCam](#) (\$), a friend's PC, or an email to a classmate requesting a site check. Wintel people face a different problem: their dominant browser is not standards-compliant. Should they focus entirely on IE, they will develop some poor habits. In the end, the best practice for historians working on the web is to design and preview on a standards-compliant browser and correct for the IE family; for our purposes this means using Firefox, Safari, or Opera as our primary browser.

Since we will be working extensively with CSS, you might also find a dedicated CSS editor handy. [StyleMaster](#), a cross-platform product from WestCiv, is a good bet. [CSSEdit](#) for the Mac is also intuitive and easy to use. There are undoubtedly other CSS editors available for Wintel folks.

requirements

There are four preliminary, one major assignment, and a blog required for the course. All of the assignments should be part of a website (a web portfolio) that includes a home page and navigation to the various assignments. At the conclusion of each assignment, the link to the assignment should be forwarded to the instructor for inclusion on the instructor's course page. This site should be separate from your final project, although elements of the preliminary assignments may appear in your final project. In addition, you are required to make one post to your blog each week as well as one comment on another's post each week. Those who make more than one comment will have their names writ in heaven, e.g. the gradebook. Reference your comment by furnishing a text link (Comment on [Steve's Post, #2: Loving Design](#)) in your own blog to the permalink of the post.

The course assignments will be weighted as follows: (1) CSS Assignment (15%); 2) Type Project (15%); 3) Image Project (15%); (4) Design Project (15%); (5) blog—including posts and comments (15%); (6) final project (25%); and (7) a self-evaluation (1 page, typed, single-spaced) assessing your performance in the course (not graded but required).

1) css assignment (preliminary)

Part 1. Using an example from "McFly" at Project Seven, one of the examples from StyleMaster (if you purchased it), or other publicly available template, create a web page that includes your content. The page should contain a header, nav, content area, and footer. Once you have finished, revise the template, making, at a minimum, the following changes:

- replace the header graphic with one of your own as a background image
- alter the color scheme
- change the font
- float an image
- add a list
- add a new DIV with its own CSS style
- validation badges for XHTML and CSS

Part 2. Create a standards-compliant, XHTML/CSS home page for your portfolio that includes a header, footer, content area, and nav. Concentrate on creating a solid layout and visual identity for your portfolio site. You might want to discuss the process for Parts 1 and 2 in your blog.

2) type assignment (preliminary)

The goals of this assignment are to demonstrate that you are aware of word processing conventions, CSS, and can use type as both an element in information and aesthetic design. For this assignment, create a web page that includes (or takes into account) the following:

- title
- navigation
- subheads
- leading
- line length

- margins/padding
- a pull quote
- a rule
- an image
- endnotes
- a block quotation

Because this assignment is meant to underpin your final web project, it would be a good idea to think about your project's time period or subject and look for fonts that can contribute to the "look and feel" as well as the "legibility and readability" your project. One "page" of the project should be added to your web portfolio. You might find a good fonts at one of the following:

- [Adobe](#)
- [Fonts & Things](#)
- [The Font Fairy](#)
- [fonts.com](#)
- [Web Page Design for Designers](#)
- [Atomic Media](#) (very small screen fonts)
- [myfonts.com](#)
- [t26](#)
- [Pixel Fonts](#)
- [P22](#)
- [LTR](#)
- [Walden Fonts](#)
- [Scriptorium](#)
- [TexasHero.com](#) (historical script)
- [Letterhead Fonts](#) (19th century)

3) image assignment (preliminary)

The goals of this assignment are to demonstrate your mastery of image editing skills, color, and composition as well as the use of images to tell or illustrate a historical narrative. The narrative should be an account of the steps that you took to achieve the effects. Note that combining techniques in a single image is perfectly acceptable. For this assignment, create a web page that includes the following:

- a cropped & resized image
- a restored photograph
- a hand-colored photograph
- a vignetted photograph
- a matted engraving
- a "before & after" of *two* examples

One "page" of the project should be added to your web portfolio. Although there are any number of image sources, these are among the best:

- [HarpWeek](#) (Thomas Nast)
- [American Memory](#) ("pictorial envelopes" for engravings, nineteenth-century periodicals for engravings, photographs of all kinds)
- [National Archives](#) (images galore)
- [New York Public Library Digital Collection](#) (tons of good stuff)
- [Illustrated Envelopes](#)
- [stock.xchange](#)
- [iStockphoto](#) (\$ very good but very inexpensive)
- [Corbis](#) (\$\$ but doesn't hurt to look)
- [Veer](#) (\$\$ but doesn't hurt to dream)
- [Mary Evans Picture Library](#) (\$)

4) design assignment (preliminary)

The goals of this assignment are to demonstrate your understanding of design and its application to the presentation of history on web. To that end, choose a historical period or topic and develop a web page de-

sign appropriate to the period. For example, if you elect to do a colonial site, the fonts, layout, illustrations, colors, and layout should reflect the colonial period. In other words, compose a web page that integrates a design theme into its typography, composition, color, and layout so that it enhances the presentation of the historical content and creates a visual identity for a prospective site. The assignment should also implement correct typography and layout strategies. Once you have finished, add the page to your class web portfolio. You may find some design inspiration at the following:

- [CSS ZenGarden](#)
- [CSS Vault](#)
- [StyleGala](#)
- [Second Story](#)
- [Terra Incognita](#)

5) project (final)

The overarching goal for the major project is the creation of a modest, reasonably sophisticated history web site. First, the content should be solid and engaging. Second, the site should be clear in its purpose and potential audience. Third, the site should demonstrate standards-based, accessible design, including a print style sheet. In other words, the site should have passed validation tests for both its XHTML and CSS. Fourth, the site's design should also reflect knowledge of typography, layout, color, and graphic design. Finally, there should be some effort made toward interactivity or online community building.

attendance

By its nature, this is a small class and offers the participants a singular opportunity to learn new skills and new ways of thinking about history. The class also introduces its members to elements of new media production. As such, the class asks that you prepare for class and participate energetically. And you cannot participate without attending class, having read the material and, most important, worked on some of the techniques. Attendance is especially critical for the software practica in which you will be introduced to useful techniques and strategies.

a note on computer use

Computers are a great boon to historians. But, as with any technology, you must take steps to minimize the problems that computers inevitably cause—and, believe me, in a course like this, you will have problems. Do not expect to get through the semester without having at least one computer meltdown. Prepare for this well in advance. Back up your work and have “plan Bs” for obtaining computer use or software access, if your primary options fail you. I will not accept computer problems as excuses for missed assignments. (Oh, all right, maybe in this course there will be some latitude but not much.) You must also keep backup copies of submitted assignments either in electronic form or hard copy. You might wish to invest in a Zip drive for the purposes of archiving your material and transporting your projects.

Most, if not all, of the assignments in the course depend on your having access to a computer and an Internet account. Please obtain an internet account at the earliest available moment and become comfortable with the software and protocols. Should you work at home or off campus, learn how to do remote access so that you can be productive no matter your location. Although the university does not require the purchase of a computer, I would encourage you to consider the investment. You might also find a laptop handy if you are accustomed to a particular OS and web editor. Because of the nature of the course, you cannot depend on the university's public clusters or the availability of software. Your enrollment in the course indicates your interest in computerish things, and your tool set should reflect that interest.

late assignments

In a collaborative venture, punctuality is a virtue. Assignments that are not ready for presentation do not benefit from class members suggestions; late blog posts result in fewer comments and less exchange among participants. Generally speaking, therefore, assignments are due in your section meetings on the date indicated on the syllabus; blog posts are due at noon the day before the due date in order to give class members a chance to comment. Late assignments and blog posts will be accepted up to a week after the due date; 10 points will, however, be deducted. After the grace period, late submissions will receive a zero except in cases of documented and university sanctioned reasons.

grades

Grades, including +s and -s, will be assigned in the following manner. REMEMBER THEY REPRESENT AN EVALUATION, NOT A REWARD. To rephrase Smith-Barney, the investment folk, we do grades the old-fashioned way—earn them.

A—Outstanding work, complete mastery of the material presented, combined with some originality.

B—A solid command of the material with some gaps or mistakes in a basically sound assignment.

C—Some knowledge of the material; mistakes and confusion are acceptable if mixed with some understanding. Not a reward for attendance or effort.

D—An incomplete and minimal knowledge of the material, major confusions and errors.

F—A failure to present the material in a reasonably accurate and comprehensible manner.

I—There are no “incompletes” given in this course except in cases of bona fide and documented instances in accordance with the regulations of the university.

P—For a “pass” a “C+” average is required.

The nature of the course suggests that breaches of academic integrity will be difficult to accomplish. If, however, a class member engages in plagiarism or other forms of cheating, he or she will receive a zero for that assignment and an accompanied trip to the Dean’s Office to discuss further academic action.

If you receive a grade or criticism that seems unfair or if you desire further explanation, come and see me. If you come to argue for a better grade, come prepared to present your case in the most coherent and organized manner possible.

self-evaluation guidelines

Oftentimes, a letter grade does not reflect the effort that students put into a course, the amount a student has learned, or the skills that a student has acquired. A self-evaluation is one way of remedying this deficiency by illustrating and documenting your participation in the course from your perspective. This is the time to argue for yourself and put your best foot forward. In fact, it is in your interest to do the best job that you can on this assignment. The self-evaluation should be a one-page, typed single-spaced paper in which you address the following topics:

- I. Evaluation of your participation in the class
 - A. attendance
 - B. class participation
 - i. in-class contributions
 - ii. peer work
 - iii. class preparation
 - C. time devoted to the materials
 - i. blog
 - ii. assigned reading
 - iii. css assignment
 - iv. type assignment
 - v. image assignment
 - vi. final project
 - D. the ways in which you think you improved or not
 - E. the problems you encountered in your effort to complete the class assignments to your satisfaction.
 - F. what you would have done differently
 - G. some of the skills or knowledge that you acquired

- II. A general assessment of how you will apply what you have gained (or not) from the class in the future
- III. Other activities of a historical or new media nature that you participated in