

Art of the Web (DSGN 234)

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DSGN 234-401

Meeting Times: Monday and Wednesday, 2 – 5 PM EST

Remote

Professor

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Remote Workspace/Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/7047994536?pwd=RThBZ0oyWHd5M2RZcmFNQUVwUFJHUT09>

Class Site

<http://arts21.labud.nyc/>

Course Description

In this introductory digital design class, we'll unpack the history of the internet and develop a framework for crafting memorable interactive experiences. We'll start with a close study of the evolution of the internet – its origins as a read-only experience to the highly visual and expansive network of today. We'll dissect the social conditions and cultures created online and consider the changing responsibilities of the online space. The idea of “scrolling too far” and research are important aspects of the class and we'll facilitate an environment that encourages outside interests, experimentation, and learning to teach yourself. We'll continually address the metaphor web design as architecture.

While we'll explore developing content and tools for publishing online, it's important to note that this is not a computer science course. Everything we explore will be done through the lens of graphic design, visual culture, and critical thinking.

Readings

Readings will be posted on our agenda on a weekly basis. For each reading, you're required to post a response question to our [evolving reading response document](#).

Example Readings (Check agenda for up to date list)

- Olia Lialina discusses visibility and network portraiture on the World Wide Web on Art Forum – Olia Lialina (2020)
- How Social Justice Slideshows Took Over Instagram – Terry Nguyen (2020)
- Typography and the Screen – Loretta Staples (2000)
- Ten Myths of Internet Art – Jon Ippolito (2002)
- A Handmade Web – J.R. Carpenter (2015)
- The Web's Grain – Frank Chimero (2015)
- In Defense of Poor Image – Hito Steyerl (2009)
- New Ways of Seeing – James Bridle (2019)
- Black Goopy Universe – American Artist (2018)
- Charles Broskoski: The Story Behind Are.na on Co-Matter (2019)
- Exclusive Design – Vasilis van Gemert (2019)
- The Tyranny of Terrazzo Will the Millennial Aesthetic Ever End? – Molly Fischer (2020)
- Glitching the Master's House: Legacy Russell and Momtaza Mehri in Conversation on Frieze (2020)
- The Hidden Life of an Amazon User – Joana Moll (2019)

Learning Outcomes & Objectives

This course aims to familiarize students with the practice of graphic design across digital platforms, to develop an understanding of the evolution of the internet and its impact on visual culture, to understand the process of completing a project from research to presentation, and to understand the necessary design tools for a modern workflow. In this class, you'll learn to think critically about your own work and the world it exists in. You'll learn to develop your own research interests and a methodology for making graphic design.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Learn to give and receive feedback effectively
- Present your ideas clearly and visually
- Use interaction to extend a narrative
- Develop your perspective and visual style
- Curate and create original content
- Contextualize your work with the past and present
- Develop a professional skillset

- Begin to develop and understand a fluid and personal process

Units

Past – Community & Self Expression (Weeks 1–8)

- Hyperlinks
- Net artists
- Early internet history
- Early social networks
- Browser as canvas
- Self publishing
- Digital images
- Typography and the screen
- Setting up and starting a new project
- Tools (code editor, inspector)
- HTML/CSS basics
- Digital design software
- CSS animations and selectors
- Layouts, positioning
- Researching a project
- Creating custom content (videos, illustrations, etc.)
- Presenting our work

Present – Systems & Responsibility (Weeks 9–15)

- Systems and tools that already exist (Learning from them, differences and benefits of creating your own system vs using an existing one.)
- Interfaces & prototypes
- Shareable content, clickbait
- Censorship and regulation. Free speech?
- Accessibility — what does this mean and how can you maintain a visual point of view without isolating audiences? When do you choose who the audience is?
- Decentralized web
- Digital design process
- Research
- Multi-page systems
- Programming using basic user interaction
- Animations
- Putting a website online

- Documenting work (digital, print)

Students Will Be Assessed On Three Primary Items:

Research and process: Students are expected to develop their projects through research and experimentation. Students should develop an independent habit of organizing themes and visual references and develop a personal library. Rather than landing on one idea right away, students are encouraged to experiment through form, typography, and content.

Presentation: Each project will end in a final critique and have presentation check ins throughout. Students should always be prepared to discuss their ideas and have an organized and visual presentation ready to go at the start of class.

Critique: Attendance to critiques is mandatory, and students are expected to actively contribute during their own and their peers' presentations.

Materials and Supplies

- Laptop/Computer
- Camera
- Phone
- Software: Git/GitHub, Sketch or Figma
- Internet connection

Projects

News Room

Graphic design and journalism have an interesting relationship, especially as news have become increasingly more visual and distributed online. The way we consume is no longer dependent on a single source – news come to us in Tweets, in memes, and of course, on news sites. As graphic designers, we have the opportunity to visualize current events and help shape what is shared and remembered.

For this project, pick a current event that you're interested in. First study it, and then create a website that highlights your reaction to the event through a series of hyperlinks and mixed media.

Create a set of at least 10 links that work together to highlight your reaction to the event. Each page should have a different type of content ranging from text, imagery, or embedded content. While each asset should feel unique, all of the pages should feel like part of the same collection. Use the news story as a jumping off point and create a stream of consciousness exploration on the topic – similar to getting lost in a series of Google searches.

Fan Page

Fan pages were hallmarks of the early net. They represented a casual and spontaneous quality where users created ultra stylized environments to celebrate their interests. For this activity, I'd like you to create a fan page for someone or something you deem deserving of the honor. Consider what qualities of the person/object are most visual and descriptive. Embrace the person/object and design a website that fully embodies their spirit. All assets on the site must be made by you (however, editing or collaging found assets in a meaningful way is OK).

The website should be contained to a single page, but you can think about what kinds of content (text, images, videos, animation) tell the clearest story. While we're looking to the past for this project conceptually, the design of the website should feel like it is from 2020 and designed with a contemporary design sensibility.

News Room

Research a current event that you're interested in following. Follow it closely and document your research in an are.na channel. Think about the main details about the situation and develop a visual language that will support the content. Next, design a website to communicate the story and develop additional content (photos, illustrations, animations, writing) to help support the story.

Helpful App

Are.na, a platform for organizing research, was created around the idea of generosity. Are.na aims to provide a healthy way of using the internet. As a designer, you can craft experiences for users that influence how they spend their time and see the world. With this in mind, create a mobile application that is helpful in some way. Reflect on how you use the internet and where you see an opportunity for a complementary experience. As a class, we'll explore biases in algorithms and technology, and this project could be a way to respond to this theme. The only requirement is that your project is helpful to an audience larger than yourself.

Assignments

Overview

We'll have three projects and several exercises. Exercises are meant to be a space for experimenting with the code and improving our technical skillsets, almost like a programmed diary entry.

Reading Responses

Throughout the semester we'll have assigned readings to compliment themes and projects in the class. For each reading, we'll have an assigned discussion leader who will create a short presentation on the themes of the reading – please note, this is a design class, and the presentation should be both visual and informative. All other students are assigned the task of discussion participants and will provide a question or comment on a shared Dropbox Paper document prior to the start of class. Reading presentations can not be made up.

If you're the discussion leader you'll prepare a presentation (PDF, Google Slides, Dropbox paper) that:

- highlights the main themes of the reading
- explains the author's background and highlights their contribution to art, design, and/or the internet
- contextualizes the reading. What else was going on in the world at the time of its writing?
- presents a discussion question to guide our conversation

Exercises

Exercises are meant to be a space for experimenting with the code and improving our technical skillsets, almost like a programmed diary entry.

Schedule

Week	Activities
1	01/20 Intros & Syllabus Setting up our remote learning environment Code of conduct Slack channel set up
2	01/25 Reading presentation Exercise – Hello World due History of internet HTML intro Introduce P1 News Room 01/27 Local links vs relative links HTML review Embedded content small group discussion about hyperlink project
3	02/01 Goals of a critique discussion P1 News Room Critique 02/03 Reading discussion CSS intro and online typography intro Deciding what font to use discussion Exercise: Interview

4	<p>02/08 P2 Introduce Fan Page What is internet art discussion Net art pioneer activity How to create a presentation of your work</p> <p>02/10 Figma intro Wireframes and content maps Design process Exercise – CSS name tag Small group meeting about projects</p>
5	<p>02/15 Discuss reading Image making techniques Exercise – Navigation activity Small group meetings</p> <p>02/10 Exercise – Hovering Small group meetings</p>
6	<p>02/22 CSS layouts – Flexbox Small group meetings</p> <p>02/24 Coding from Life</p>
7	<p>03/01 Project check in</p> <p>03/03 Project check in</p>
8	<p>03/08 P2 – Fan Page Critique</p>

9	<p>03/15 P3 – Introduce Helpful App</p> <p>03/17 Reading discussion What is research? Meetings</p>
10	<p>03/22 Reading discussion Present project ideas Responsive design</p> <p>03/24 Exercise – Typography Activity 2</p>
11	<p>03/29 Project Check in</p> <p>03/31 Project Check in</p>
12	<p>03/29 Project Check in</p> <p>03/31 Project Check in TBD Guest Speaker</p>
13	<p>04/05 JavaScript Intro</p> <p>04/07 Project Check In</p>
14	<p>04/14 P3 – Helpful App critique with guest critic</p>
15	<p>04/19 P4 – Introduce final project</p> <p>04/21 JavaScript continued</p>

16

04/26

Web sustainability

04/28

P4 – Final project critique