

HIST 697 2012 history & new media



History 697
Spring 2012
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M 7:20-10:00
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and by appointment
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schedule

Monday,
January 23

— Housekeeping & Introduction
Internet Visit: Getting Started
lynda.com, [Layouts with CSS \(3h 33m\)](#)
Practicum: Building a Web Page

Monday,
January 30

— Reading: The How & Why of Design?
Golombisky & Hagen, *White Space is Not Your Enemy*
Lecture: Dan Cohen: Vision Series: The Future of History, 7:00 pm, Concert Hall
Internet Visits: Digital History, Humanities & Design
Donald Norman, [Attractive Things Work Better](#)
J. Fogg, [How People Evaluate a Web Site's Credibility](#)
Madeline Elish & Wendy Tettien, [Acts of Translation](#)
Stephen Ramsay, [Who's In, Who's Out?; & On Building](#)
Practicum: Building a Web Page, Pt. 1
BLOG URL DUE
LAST DAY TO ADD



Tuesday,
January 31

LAST DAY TO DROP W/NO TUITION PENALTY

Monday,
February 6

— Reading: Typography 1
Ellen Lupton, *Thinking With Type, 2nd ed.*
Film Viewing:
Helvetica (iTunes, Amazon, Netflix rental)
Internet Visits: Typography
lynda.com, [Typography for Web Designers \(6h 25m\)](#)
Practicum: Building a Web Page, Pt. 2
PORTFOLIO HOME PAGE DUE

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|------------------------|---|--|
| Monday, February 13 | — | Reading: Typography 2 Zoe Gillenwater, <i>Stunning CSS</i> Internet Visits: Typography lynda.com, Webfonts First Look (3 h) Practicum: Building a Web Page, Pt. 3 |
| Monday, February 20 | — | Presentations: Type Assignments TYPE ASSIGNMENT DUE |
| Friday, February 24 | — | LAST DAY TO DROP |
| Monday, February 27 | — | Reading: Images & Color Robin William, <i>Non-Designers Photoshop Book</i> Internet Visits lynda.com, Photoshop CS5 for the Web (5h 59m) David Shea, Photographic Palette Ideabook, Tip Sheet: Color Strategy Clagnut, Compendium of Color Tools W3C, HTML Color Names ColorSchemer, 140 Named Colors Practicum: Photoshop Basics/Colorizing |
| Monday, March 5 | — | Reading: Images & Problems Robin William, <i>Non-Designers Photoshop Book</i> Internet Visits: Images & Image Techniques lynda.com, Photo Restoration with Photoshop Paula Petrik, Scholarship on the Web: Managing Engravings Errol Morris, “Case of the Inappropriate Alarm Clock,” Parts 1–7 Cameron Moll, That Wicked Worn List Practicum: Photoshop/Engravings |
| Monday, March 12 | — | NO CLASS–SPRING BREAK |
| Monday, March 19 | — | Presentations: Image Assignments IMAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE |
| Monday, March 26 | — | Reading: Visualizations Edward Tufte, <i>Visual Explanations</i> Internet Visits: Accessibility Joe Clark, How Do Disabled People Use Computers WebAim, Screen Reader Simulation Paul Bohman, An Accessible Method of Hiding HTML Content Practicum: Photoshop for Print |

| | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Monday, April 2 | — | Reading: Information Architecture Golombisky & Hagen, <i>White Space is Not Your Enemy</i> (reprise) Internet Visits: Design Lawrence Lessig, How Creativity is Being Strangled by the Law (video) Hans Rosling, Debunking Third-World Myths (video) Jakob Nielsen, Guidelines for Visualizing Links Luke Wroblewski, Visible Narratives Carole Guevin, Visual Architecture: The Rule of Three Practicum: Useful Photoshop Techniques |
| Monday, April 9 | — | Reading: Interactivity ASHP, The Lost Museum Josh Brown et al. History & the Web Practicum: Interactivity Tools |
| Monday, April 16 | — | Presentations: Design Assignments DESIGN ASSIGNMENTS DUE |
| Monday, April 23 | — | Presentations: Web Projects WEB PROJECTS DUE (preliminary) |
| Monday, April 30 | — | Presentations: Web Projects INDIVIDUAL PROJECT DUE (preliminary) |
| Monday, May 7 | — | INDIVIDUAL PROJECT DUE (final) SELF-EVALUATION DUE |

description

There are many ways that a class such as “Creating History in New Media” might be structured. It might emphasize database design and deployment; it might concentrate on creating visualizations, or it might stress the uses of interactivity. This iteration of the course emphasizes visual communication—both graphic design and information architecture—for the web. By its nature the class is an applied history course in which the twin goals are to gain familiarity and facility with the design tools and concepts that underpin digital history design. As a result, the 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. Finally, the course will experiment with what interactivity might bring to digital history.

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 “right 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. All the books are available at the campus bookstore.

Edward Tufte, *Visual Explanations*
Robin Williams, *The Non-Designer's Photoshop Book*
Kim Golombisky & Rebecca Hagen, *White Space is Not Your Enemy*
Zoe Mickley Gillenwater, *Stunning CSS3*
Ellen Lupton, *Thinking with Type*

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 like Blogger? 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 two weeks of 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 WordPress, a free blogging application. You can do one of three things: install WordPress at your own ISP, sign up for a blog at WordPress (free), or use a Wordpress hosting service (\$). The WordPress application is free, but the installation of the software can be challenging on your own ISP, and you will need to contact your ISP to ensure that the necessary software is in place. Be aware that most free web page areas do not support CGI or MySQL or charge extra. I do not recommend doing your own installation 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 this venue. In the past, students have signed on with WordPress or other inexpensive hosting service.

A word about design. There are a number of designs suitable for history, but please avoid anything on a black or dark background with light or white type. Known as “reversing out” among graphic designers, this format is very difficult to read. If you elect to use TypePad or a WordPress template, avoid the special interest design or media designs unless you will be using the features of a media design template extensively. Be sure to enable comments and the RSS feed so that you can access your classmates’ blogs using a newsreader. This will save you an enormous amount of time. Or, you can simply use the “Students” list on the website.

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 at least two different browsers.

Mac people should acquire Safari (latest version) and Firefox (latest version); Wintel folk should also obtain the latest versions of IE. Both Opera and Chrome on both platforms are 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.

Wintel people face a different problem: their dominant browsers are not fully standards-compliant and don't implement the latest CSS options. (Note that IE 7.0 and 8.0 is much more standards-compliant, 70 percent of the Wintel systems are using IE 7.0 and 8.0 at this writing. Explorer 9.0 is almost fully compliant, but still has its problems with font embedding. Should historians use IE exclusively, they will develop some poor habits. In the end, the best practice for Wintel historians is to design and preview on a standards-compliant browser and correct for the IE family. So, for our purposes, Wintel folk should use the latest versions of Firefox, Opera, or Chrome as their primary browser, and Mac people should use Safari, Firefox, Opera, or Chrome.

software

Class participants will also need an image editor or access to an image editor. For those who envision using new media as an ongoing part of their history graduate work, [Adobe Photoshop CS5.5](#) is the *de facto* standard. For those who see their new media work as occasional, Adobe Photoshop Elements (10.0 for both Mac and Win) is an extremely powerful (and inexpensive) program that, except for some advanced color capabilities, has the same features as Photoshop CS5. If you use Elements, please understand that there will be some techniques that the software cannot manage. One of these is Zoomify.

Clio 2 students will also need an HTML editor. [Adobe Dreamweaver](#) has become the standard (and the one installed in the lab). Adobe products are available at Patriot Computer at an educational discount, but order early so that you will have software for the requisite class assignments. You may also wish to explore acquiring [Adobe CS5 Premium Suite](#); it contains both Photoshop CS5 and Dreamweaver5 as well as a host of other useful applications. There is, of course, a matching price tag. Those who envision using digital media in their professional lives should opt for the Adobe CS5 Suite

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. [Expresso](#) for the Mac is also intuitive and easy to use. There are undoubtedly other CSS editors available for the Wintel platform.

Finally, class participants will need to subscribe to lynda.com for the duration of the course. There are training videos on the site that are required for the course. (There are also lots of other good and helpful videos that you might find useful.)

requirements

There are four preliminary, one major assignment, and a blog required for the course. All of the assignments, except for the final project, should be part of the portfolio website that includes a home page and navigation to the various assignments. 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) Portfolio Home Page Assignment (10%); (2) Type Project (10%); (3) Image Project (10%); (4) Design Project (10%); (5) blog—including posts and comments (15%); (6) individual project (45%); and (6) a self-evaluation (1 page, typed, single-spaced) assessing your performance in the course (not graded but required).

1) portfolio home page (preliminary)

Create a standards-compliant, XHTML/CSS home page for your portfolio that includes a header, footer, content area, and nav (with the various assignments as menu items) from scratch or from a simple template. In other words, hand code a page. Usable, bare-bones layouts are available from the following: Stylin', LayoutGala, Dreamweaver, or

StyleMaster's Layout Wizard. (You can download the examples from the text, Stylin' from the Stylin' website.) Concentrate on creating a solid layout and visual identity (color scheme, font, images) for your portfolio site. Do not choose a layout that contains a lot of javascript, structures, or other items that you don't understand or appear to be mysterious. At a minimum, do the following:

- create an h1
- create subheads
- float an image in the text
- add some text with paragraphs
- add a list
- embed a font
- add a new DIV with its own CSS style
- validation badges for XHTML and CSS

Concentrate on creating a solid layout and visual identity from the template (color scheme, font, images) for your portfolio site. Keep it clean and simple. As you become more proficient with XHTML and CSS, you are welcome to edit or redo your portfolio design.

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
- a block quotation
- footer

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](#) (Wintel only)
- [The Font Fairy](#) (Mac mostly)
- [fonts.com](#)
- [myfonts.com](#)
- [t26](#)
- [Pixel Fonts](#)
- [P22](#)
- [Lettererror](#)
- [Walden Fonts](#) (\$ excellent historical fonts)
- [Scriptorium](#) (\$ broad range of historical fonts)
- [TexasHero.com](#) (\$ historical handwriting)
- [Letterhead Fonts](#) (\$\$ excellent historical and specialized fonts)

This year, we're going to do use webfont embedding to move beyond, the usual font suspects. The video on webfonts at lynda.com includes discussion of various foundries that produce webfonts and the sundry sources—open source (free), outright purchase, webfont services—that offer webfonts or webfont services.

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 *your* 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:

- [American Memory](#) (all sorts of stuff)
- [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 it doesn't hurt to look)
- [Veer](#) (\$\$ but it 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 design 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) individual 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.

policies

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.

students with disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

email

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information. If you don’t check your Mason account and have your mail forwarded, please be sure that your forwarding service is operational. Similarly, check your mailbox periodically to ensure that you have not exceeded your mail quota.

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.

academic Integrity

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

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. 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. portfolio home page assignment
 - iv. type assignment
 - v. image assignment
 - vi. design assignment
 - vii. individual 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