**DIGM-243: Web Authoring II**

**Week 03**

**Defining your style**

It is important to make sure that the visual style of your site remains consistent and matches your site goal. One you have your wire frames completed it is time to start working on this visual design, Here are some things to keep in mind.

**Branding**

As you produce your website you need to remember that what you are doing is branding yourself. The quality of the design of your site is just as important as the quality of the work that it displays. From the logo to the spelling, everything about this site will define who you are and how much attention/pride you take in your work.

**Color**

At this point you should have a strong grasp on Color Theory, and be able to choose a set of harmonious colors that will work with your vision / goal. How you use color is just as important as which colors you choose.

**Texture**

To texture or not to texture? Some people go for the minimal look by only using HEX based color for their backgrounds arguing that it speeds up their access time. While this is a valid argument, it does not really address the goal of the site. It is possible to create small transparent texture tiles that can overlay any background color and upgrade the look of the site with minimal download time.

* <http://designfestival.com/the-cicada-principle-and-why-it-matters-to-web-designers/>

**Typography**

Wordpress uses a lot of text; menus, taglines, side bars, content, etc.. Because there is so much tech you should spend some time thinking about how you want this text to be displayed. Font stacks, line-height, color, hover states; all of this has an effect on how the viewer interacts and responds to your design.

Two of the most important aspects to consider are font face and vertical rhythm. I will be showing you how to install and serve your own custom typeface using the @font-face rule in CSS3. You can search for @font-face kits. The most popular site is fontsquirrel.com with a bunch of pre-made kits, if you have a font that is opensource, fontsquirrel will generate all the fonts and css you need.

Vertical rhythm is about how your fonts line up on a vertical grid. This is tricky to accomplish on the web, even for seasoned professionals. Luckily there are some online calculators that make this easy...

**Vertical Rhythm Calculators**

* <http://lamb.cc/typograph/>
* <http://drewish.com/tools/vertical-rhythm>
* <http://topfunky.com/baseline-rhythm-calculator>

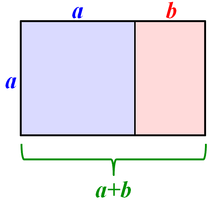
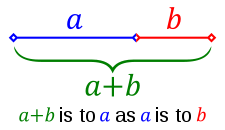
**More Resources:**

* <http://net.tutsplus.com/tutorials/html-css-techniques/six-ways-to-improve-your-web-typography/>
* <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/01/27/css-typographic-tools-and-techniques/>
* <http://type-a-file.com/>

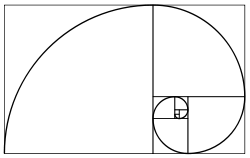
**Visual Style**

Color Texture and Typography all combine to create your visual style. How will you apply these to your page elements? What is the overall concept of your design? And how do these combine to make a cohesive whole?

With typography we discussed vertical rhythm. When you convert your wire frames into design comps you need to consider horizontal rhythm or column layout. A lot of web designers use The Golden Ratio (Wicked WordPress Themes, p. 39).



This method has been used since Pythagoras and Euclid in ancient Greece and plays off the basic ratios as seen in nature.



There is a css framework that builds upon this called *The Golden Grid* (<http://code.google.com/p/the-golden-grid/> ) than can help you maintain the aspect ratio in your column and typographical layout.

While this class is focused on the desktop there is no denying the growth of mobile devices and the wide range of screen sizes. There is a CSS framework call LESS that includes media queries for multiple screen sizes (992, 768, 480, and 320). This dynamically changes your layout based upon the size of the user's screen (without javascript). This is method is called Responsive Design because it responds to device screen size.

* <http://lessframework.com/>
* <http://www.aripalo.fi/lessguides4/>
* <http://blogs.sitepoint.com/responsive-web-design-with-html5-and-the-less-framework-3/>

One good way to get started on your comps is to find a theme that you will be revising or using as your framework ,and edit the css to remove all colors and imagery. Make sure all text is black and all background colors are white and add a 1px black stroke to all the main sections. Then using a plugin for firefox like ScreenGrab (http://www.screengrab.org/) you can create an image of the entire page (even the non visible area) that you can then bring into the image editing software of you preference to use a a template to design upon.

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**What is a Theme?**

A Theme defines how the user will see your site's content. It controls how the content is presented. You have options in choosing themes:

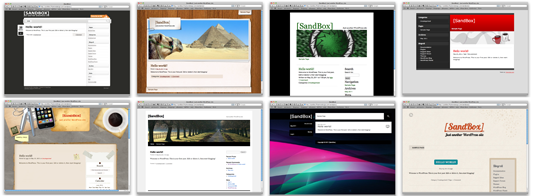
* use one of the default themes
* install one from the WP Directory
* purchase one from a vendor
* used a framework as a parent theme, and design your own child theme
* design your own

With Themes you control the styling of your WordPress site from the style and design to what content shows up on each page. Each Theme has its own set of template files which WordPress uses to display the information, both that you code into the site by hand and information stored on the database such as Posts and Pages.

One of the best ways to understand themes is to find a pre-made theme that is similar to the layout that you want, install it, then start modifying it to look exactly the way you want.

**GOLDEN ORDER of Wordpress site modifications:**

1. **Dashboard (easy, point and click)**
2. **CSS (medium, style sheet edit)**
3. **PHP (changelling, php code modifications)**



**Finding Themes**

The official **WordPress Theme Directory** can be found at http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/. Or you can go to the appearance/themes section of your WordPress install then click on the Install Themes tab on the right. This page allows you to search the WP Theme Directory and download and install the theme all from within the admin.

There are a lot of WordPress Theme vendors that also offer both free and paid themes depending upon the functionality of the theme and sophistication of the design. Some of the most popular sites are:

* [woothemes.com](http://woothemes.com/)
* [themeforest.com](http://themeforest.com/)
* [studiopress.com](http://studiopress.com/)
* [elegantthemes.com](http://elegantthemes.com/)

There are also wordpress theme development frameworks. These are built to be used as parent/child themes. Some argue that these speed up development time by allowing you can focus on the design and have to worry about the functionality. Again, some are free, and some require a fee.

* [Thematic](http://themeshaper.com/thematic/)
* [Carrington](http://carringtontheme.com/)
* [ThemeHybrid](http://themehybrid.com/)
* [Whiteboard](http://whiteboardframework.com/)
* [Thesis](http://diythemes.com/thesis/)
* [Sandbox](http://www.plaintxt.org/#sandbox)

Whiteboard is my (Troy) favorite as it uses the LESS Framework so it has built in media queries.

h5 theme by jeff starr

<http://digwp.com/2009/07/free-html-5-wordpress-theme/>

**Hold the Presses!!!!**

This just in:

**Free HTML5/CSS3 WordPress 3.1+ Theme With Responsive Layout: Yoko**

* <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2011/06/07/free-html5-css3-wordpress-3-1-theme-with-responsive-layout-yoko/>
* <http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/yoko>

I am starting to play with it and I think it may take precedence over Whiteboard. Look out!

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**Homework:**

**Read:**

**Beginning PHP and MySQL: From Novice to Professional, Fourth Edition**W. Jason Gilmore  
[New York] : Apress, c2010  
<http://proquestcombo.safaribooksonline.com.ezproxy2.library.drexel.edu/9781430231141>

Read the following chapters minimum:

* Chapter 1. Introducing PHP
* Chapter 3. PHP Basics
* Chapter 4. Functions
* Chapter 5. Arrays
* Chapter 9. Strings and Regular Expressions
* Chapter 10. Working with the File and Operating System
* Chapter 12. Date and Time
* Chapter 13. Working with HTML Forms

**Build:**

Update your WordPress content:

* Update your WP website with at least three meaningful post.

Create Design Concepts (thumbnail sketches, etc..) for your site.

**Submit:**

URL to new WordPress installation that you will be using for this class.

*http://www.domain.com/wordpressfoldername/*

URL to your complete Design Concepts. NOTE your design concepts will be reviewed and graded next class.