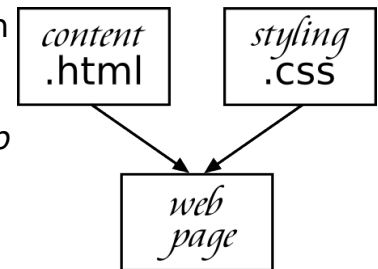## Part 0. XHTML Content versus CSS Styling

A web document has two aspects: *content* and *styling*.

The *content* consists of the words, possibly accompanied by images and other elements, that are necessary to convey the information and meaning of your web page.

Styling refers to the graphic or artistic design of the web page, such as the fonts, colors, or background images that you apply to a web page to make it look appealing. Note that you can change the fonts or colors without changing the meaning or information content of your web page.

In modern, high-quality web design, we want to *separate our content from our styling* so that we will be able to easily change the graphic design without messing up the content, or change the content without destroying the graphic design.

We achieve these goals by placing all of our content into an XHTML file with a "**.html**" extension, and all of our graphic design directives into a separate file with a ".**css**" extension. "XHTML" stands for *Extensible Hypertext Markup Language*. XHTML is the modern standard for world wide web documents. "CSS" stands for *Cascading Style Sheets* and it is the modern standard for graphic design on the world wide web.

The way that we connect the XHTML file with the CSS file is by putting a *link* into the XHTML file which tells the browser to read all of the graphic design information from the CSS file. The link tag in the first XHTML document that we are going to look at, **MyFirstWebPage.html**, looks like this:

<link rel="stylesheet" title="Default Style" href="**css/MyFirstStyleSheet.css**" type="text/css" media="screen" **/>**

Even though we have not yet discussed how tags work, you can see quite clearly that this **<link ... />** tag in **MyFirstWebPage.html** references a file called **MyFirstStyleSheet.css**, and this is how the browser knows how to connect the two files together, in other words, how to connect your content and your graphic

design.

The figure below should clarify how this works. On the left we see a screen shot of a web site with no CSS style sheet in use. In this case, we see the "plain content" using the browser's default internal style sheet.

The web page may, however, contain one or more **<link>** tags that point to CSS style sheets which describe the graphic design. Two alternate designs are shown. Note that the *content* has not changed, just the graphic design. The sample web images below are taken from http://csszengarden.com.

The *csszengarden.com* examples are of course very fancy. Nevertheless, in this workshop we are going to learn the basics of the XHTML and CSS technologies which will allow you to create very appealing and professional web sites with a lot less effort than you may imagine.