**Fundamentals**

**of**

**Interactive & Data Journalism**

**Fall 2015**

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## Course Description

This three-credit course introduces students to conceptualizing and producing content across multiple platforms--from Web sites to tablets and mobile devices-- by exploring essential concepts, tools and interactive story forms.

This course explores how the news industry is adapting to new technologies and ways to map or illustrate data and news. Students will also explore ways to add interactivity to audio and visual storytelling.

More specifically, this course introduces students to the basics of HTML/CSS and a touch of JavaScript.They'll also leverage existing frameworks, libraries and content management systems (WordPress). We'll explore all these tools and technologies within the journalistic context of pitching, reporting, producing data and interactive-rich news packages.

The course covers fundamental technical skills that will serve as the foundation for your interactive work at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism.

## Course Learning Objectives

## Students will leave this course with experience in:

* Understanding how journalism is produced on the Internet
* Creating a basic HTML page
* Manipulating that HTML page's design using CSS
* Building a portfolio site using WordPress
* Using an FTP client to publish content online
* Incorporating external javascript libraries to create basic interactions
* Understanding how to use data responsibly and effectively
* Learning the math required to effectively analyze data
* Producing basic maps and charts that convey information clearly
* Reporting and producing stories with data and interactivity
* Crafting good questions to ensure they get useful technical assistance when they need it

## Instructor

I’m Chris Kirk. I grew up in Chicago and studied journalism and political science at Northwestern University. I first picked up some Web development skills in high school and made my first news apps in college. I’ve worked at Yahoo building hyperlocal news products and at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette making news apps. Since 2012 I’ve worked as the interactives editor of Slate.com. My work is known to be whimsical, fun, or argumentative, and I consider my best work a combination of all three. I’m probably best known for the [Adele Dazeem Name Generator](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/low_concept/2014/03/john_travolta_called_idina_menzel_adele_dazeem_what_s_your_travolta_name.html), which set Slate’s all-time traffic record, perplexingly warranted a New York Times article about it, and ushered in an era of frivolous and not-very-smart name generators. I also engineered Slate’s [Friday News Quiz](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_slate_quiz.html), the [2014 Outrage Calendar](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2014/12/the_year_of_outrage_2014_everything_you_were_angry_about_on_social_media.html), Slate’s [Gun Deaths](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2012/12/gun_death_tally_every_american_gun_death_since_newtown_sandy_hook_shooting.html) project, the [Gerrymander Jigsaw Puzzle](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/map_of_the_week/2013/08/gerrymandering_jigsaw_puzzle_game_put_the_congressional_districts_back_together.html), and the [*Game of Thrones* Graveyard](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/television/2014/04/game_of_thrones_deaths_mourn_dead_characters_at_their_virtual_graveyard.html) (show spoilers!). Feel free to learn more about me at cperryk.com.

## Office hours

## I’ll hold office hours every week by appointment. To set up an appointment, email me at [cperryk@gmail.com](mailto:cperryk@gmail.com). I’m still determining the time and place and will update this syllabus once I have.

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## Assignments & Due Dates

### No. 1 - Data graphic or chart

Pitch due: Friday, Sept. 25 at 10pm

Final due: Friday, Oct. 2 at 10pm

### No. 2 - Mapping

Pitch due: Friday, Oct. 9 at 10pm

Final due: Friday, Oct. 15 at 10pm

### No. 3 - Journalistic portfolio using WordPress

Draft due: Oct. 30 at 10pm

Final due: Nov. 13 at 10pm

### No. 4 - Paper prototype of an Interactive feature

Draft due: Dec. 11 at 10pm

Showing: During class week 15.

## Grading Rubric

### For all assignments

In assessing students' work, the instructor will focus on the following factors applicable to all assignments (specific criteria for each assignment will be detailed later):

* Process: Were the drafts iterated and improved based on faculty feedback?
* Quality and Shine: Is it executed with skill and subtlety, and has it been edited well and polished?
* Organization and Presentation: Is it presented clearly and in a professional manner suitable for an audience?
* Effort and Application: Has the work been prepared with careful thought and attention to detail, and does it take appropriate advantage of the relevant tools?
* Punctuality and Completeness: Is it on time and complete, and does it fulfill the assignment?

### For Discussions

* Preparedness: Has the student completed the work necessary in preparation for the discussion (viewing assigned video, completing assigned reading or tutorial)?
* Participation: Was the student engaged in the discussion (both paying attention and participating)?

### For In-class Exercises

* Effort: Did the student try to complete the exercise to better understand the lesson at hand?
* Participation: If the exercise involves collaboration, did the student contribute?

## Assignment Values

Grading for individual assignments is based on the level of professionalism of the finished work:

* A being professional quality work with minimal editing required.
* B being good quality student work.
* C being unsatisfactory work.
* F being atrocious, unacceptable work.

Grading for the class as a whole will be based on your overall performance, with the weights of assignment and other grades as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Percentage Value** |
| Readings & Quizzes | 10% |
| In-class participation/professionalism | 15% |
| Platform Development | 15% |
| Static Data-viz assignment | 15% |
| Interactive Data-viz assignment | 15% |
| Paper Prototype | 15% |
| In-class exercises | 15% |
| **TOTAL** | **100%** |

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## Plagiarism and Copyright

It is a serious ethical violation to take any material created by another person and represent it as your own original work. Any such plagiarism will result in serious disciplinary action, possibly including dismissal from the CUNY J-School. Plagiarism may involve copying text from a book or magazine without attributing the source, or lifting words, code, photographs, videos, or other materials from the Internet and attempting to pass them off as your own. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions about how to distinguish between acceptable research and plagiarism.

In addition to being a serious academic issue, copyright is a serious legal issue.

Never "lift" or "borrow" or "appropriate" or "repurpose" graphics, audio, or code without both permission and attribution. This guidance applies to scripts, audio, video clips, programs, photos, drawings, and other images, and it includes images found online and in books.

Create your own graphics, seek out images that are in the public domain or shared via a creative commons license that allows derivative works, or use images from the AP Photo Bank or which the school has obtained licensing.

If you’re repurposing code, be sure to keep the original licensing intact. If you’re not sure how to credit code, ask.

The exception to this rule is fair use: if your story is about the image itself, it is often acceptable to reproduce the image. If you want to better understand fair use, the Citizen Media Law Project is an excellent resource.

When in doubt: ask.

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## Week-by-Week

### Week 1 - Overview

* Presentation of wide-ranging set of examples that showcase the use of coding and design to enhance storytelling.
* Introductions
* Syllabus review

**Prep for Week 2:**

* Read: Analysing data is the future for journalists | The Guardian <http://bit.ly/1hCx1Qq>
* Read: Why Math Matters | Poynter <http://bit.ly/1MKYvOL>
* Complete this [assessment](https://www.classmarker.com/online-test/start/?quiz=ajn55a91fdf80b1f)

### Week 2 - What's the story in the dataset?

* Exploring data sets
* Download to Excel
* Basic Excel tutorial, including various formulas, pivot tables.
* Numeracy (Normalize, Percentages, Rates)
* What's the story?

**Prep for Week 3:**

* Read: Design Principles for News Apps & Graphics - ProPublica <http://bit.ly/1hCxa69>
* Which chart or graph is right for you? | Tableau Software <http://tabsoft.co/1MKZ1fK>

### Week 3 - Charts & Graphs | Design Principles for Web/Mobile 1

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**Charts & Graphs**

* Types of charts
* When charts work and when they don't
* Datawrapper

**Design**

* Typography
* Space

**Prep for Week 4:**

* Read: Using Web Maps to Tell Your Story | ArcNews <http://arcg.is/1MKYElg>

### Week 4 - Mapping Data 1 | Design Principles for Web/Mobile 2

**Maps**

* When to map data
* Organizing information spatially
* Fusion Tables

**Design**

* Grouping
* Hierarchy
* Color

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**Prep for Week 5:**

* Logistics:
  + Install sublime (trial)
  + Github account (free)
  + Codepen account (free)
  + jsfiddle (free)
* Read: Should journalists learn how to code? They already do. (And yes, they should) | Online Journalism Blog <http://bit.ly/1hCy3eY>

### Week 5 - Intro to HTML/CSS 1

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* Why learn HTML/CSS?
* Hello World page
* <p>More text in multiple paragraphs</p>
* <br>
* <h1>Title</h1> and other Headings
* Href links
* Inline styling with CSS
* External styling
* margins
* padding
* border
* Uploading to hosting service

### Week 6 - Intro to HTML/CSS 2

### 

* Id v. Class
* Float
* Fonts
* Color

**Prep for Week 7:** TK

### Week 7 - Mapping Data 2

* Taking the HTML/CSS we've learned, we customize mapping with CartoDB

WordPress

* Discuss domain names and how to purchase them.

**Prep for Week 8:**

* Buy a domain name appropriate for your professional portfolio.
* Sign up for hosting services (MidPhase)
* [Download](http://themeforest.net/item/zephyr-material-design-theme/9865647) Zephyr theme

### Week 8 - Portfolio Building 1

* Examples of effective journalistic portfolios
* 1-click install WordPress
* Screen options
* Posts v. Pages
* General settings
* Text v. Visual
* Cleaning up Word text
* Install theme and review basic set up using
* Gathering your material (bio, photo, best clips, contact info, social media accounts, idea of blog)

**Prep for week 9:**

* Write 150-word bio
* Headshot

### Week 9 - Portfolio Building 2

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* Set up portfolio with with gathered content

**Prep for Week 10: TK**

### Week 10 - Analytics, SEO & SMO

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* Understand social media metrics tools and techniques
* Understand web analytics tools and techniques
* Gain awareness of the importance of matching the metrics you’re tracking to the outcomes needed for your journalistic work

**Prep for week 11:**

Scooped by code » Nieman Journalism Lab <http://bit.ly/1NuhmhW>

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### Week 11 - Intro to Scraping Data

* Harness free tools and techniques to scrape websites and PDFs.
* Recognize how a web page structures and holds data, images and other information you might want to capture.
* Tap tools to analyze a page to determine how to scrape it.
* Scrape web pages with minimal coding.
* Transfer collected data to a CSV or Excel spreadsheet where it can then be analyzed.

**Prep for Week 12:**

### Week 12 - Adding Interactivity to HTML/CSS

* Simple Jquery -- fade; show; hide; etc.
* We'll explore how to hack basic JQuery plugins

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**Prep for Week 13:**

### Week 13 - Interactive Quizzes

* Why and how quizzes are an effective way of engaging audiences with a challenge to explore news and developments.
* Build a news quiz

**Prep for Week 14:**

### Week 14 - Paper Prototyping

* Create a plan for how to cover a major news event during the initial breaking news and ongoing coverage. Decide your team and the skills you need and what each of them will be doing.
* Plan an interactive project as part of your coverage and create a paper prototype or wireframe to explain your concept and how it will work.
* UX basics, the importance of demonstrating ideas before building
* You’ll present your idea in front of the class -- pretend they’re the editor of your publication -- in the final week.

**Prep for Week 15:**

* Organize and practice your presentations
* Read: Tips for Class Presentations <http://bit.ly/1MKZNJA>

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### Week 15 - Paper Prototype Showcase

* Each team presents their prototype in front of the class.

## Coaches

Coaches work one-on-one with students to guide them on projects and help problem-solve. Students are advised to consult a coach if they have tried something themselves and it hasn’t worked to their satisfaction.

**Kirsti Itameri, Design, WordPress, Illustrator, Photoshop, Social Media** – Newsroom. Office Hours: Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 pm or by appointment. Email: kirsti.itameri@journalism.cuny.edu

**Meghan Louttit, Interactive Storytelling, JavaScript, Jquery, HTML, CSS** - Newsroom, Office hours: Wednesdays 6-8 pm or by appointment. Email: meghan.louttit@journalism.cuny.edu

**Malik Singleton, Data Storytelling, WordPress, HTML, CSS** – Newsroom. Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 5:30-7:30 pm. Email: [malik.singleton@journalism.cuny.edu](mailto:malik.singleton@journalism.cuny.edu)

Nicholas Wells **Data Storytelling, HTML, CSS, R --**  Newsroom. Office Hours: Tuesday 6:00 - 8:30 *pm*. Email: Nicholasbwells@gmail.com

**Jue Yang, Data Storytelling, Data Analysis, GitHub, UI/UX, Information and Visual Design, Interactive Storytelling, JavaScript, jQuery, Python, Web Scraping, HTML/CSS—** Office Hours: Virtually and by appointment. Email:[**github.com/jueyang/call-me-maybe**](http://github.com/jueyang/call-me-maybe)