Chris Lindgren

Assistant Professor of Technical Communication & Data Visualization

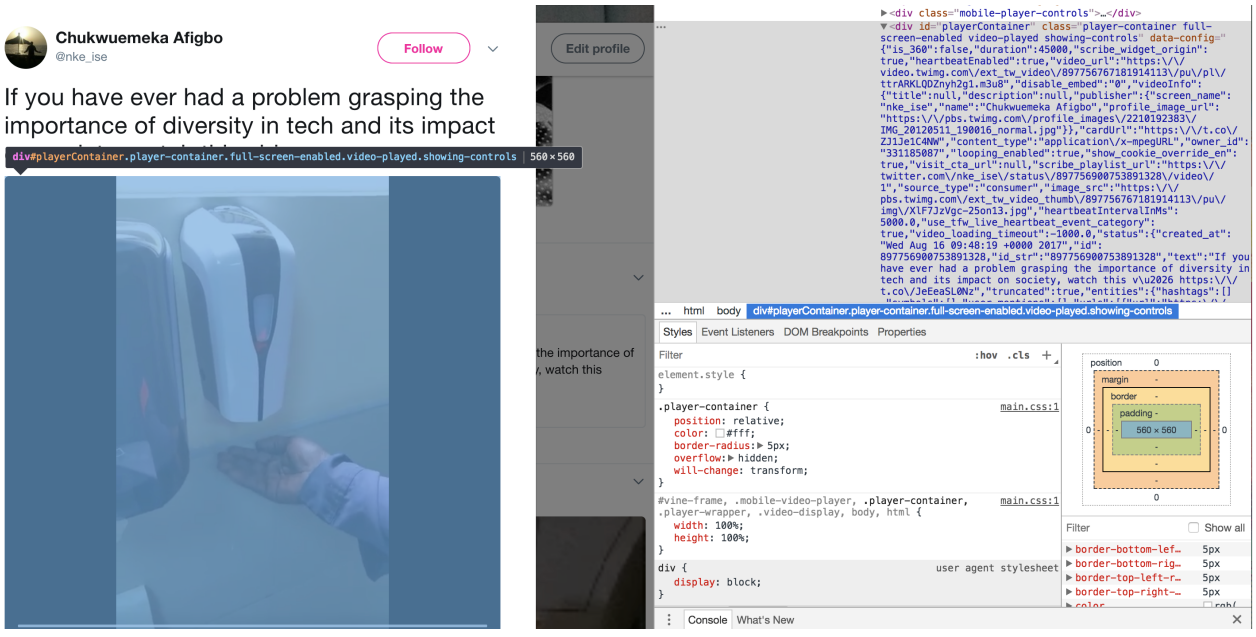
Shanks Hall, #207, Virginia Tech

Email

Twitter

Github

Overview



Caption: Screen capture of a composition window on Twitter.com with the Inspect element feature open. Note the amount of data / textual modes linked to the video. Link to the pictured tweet.

Welcome to ENGL 3844 – Writing & Digital Media! In this course, I introduce fundamental

Welcome to **ENGL 3844 — Writing & Digital Media**! In this course, I introduce fundamental practices and emerging theories of writing *with and for* digital media. We will learn basic authoring in web-development syntaxes, critical interpretation of online sources, social media management, and topics of computational abstraction for writers. This course is production-heavy, but we will come to a more enriched understanding about how such skills and technologies are always linked to communities and their knowledges, biases, and values. Accordingly, I categorize the learning objectives as follows: Production and Conceptual.

Production objectives

The following production-based objectives cover designing and developing a website that meaningfully integrates text, images, audio, and video conducive for a particular genre, audience(s), and purpose(s).

- Independently produce digital media, including photos, images, sound and video.
- Collaborate with others to create digital media including photos, images, sound and video.
- Recognize and use basic computational authoring syntaxes of `.html` & `.css`.
- Recognize and use copyleft resources to produce digital media.

Conceptual objectives

You will explore and subsequently examine the multiple audiences interceding across your networked writing lives. The conceptual objectives involve examining how traditional modalities of written communication have been intertwined with digital and computational modes of writing. For example, how might our conception of writing change if we understand URLs as texts? Or the data that networked devices and social media collect on users as texts? Or digital images and their formats as texts with organized values and signs? Essentially, *what can we learn about written communication and audiences of texts if we understand digital data – their formats, structures, and content – as texts*?

- Inventory digital media technologies and appraise their influence and import over time.
- Learn how digital data are written and used as texts for a variety of audiences.
- Develop a critical awareness about writing *as* digital media and *shaped by* digital media.

VT Principles of Community

- ✓ Diginity & Value
- ✓ Civility & Sensibility
- ✓ Diviersity & Difference
- ✓ Prejudice & Discrimination
- ✓ *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve)

Course Materials

Texts

All texts will be provided via links on this site's schedule. Some will link to PDFs that I upload to Google Drive. Other texts will be outbound links to the Web.

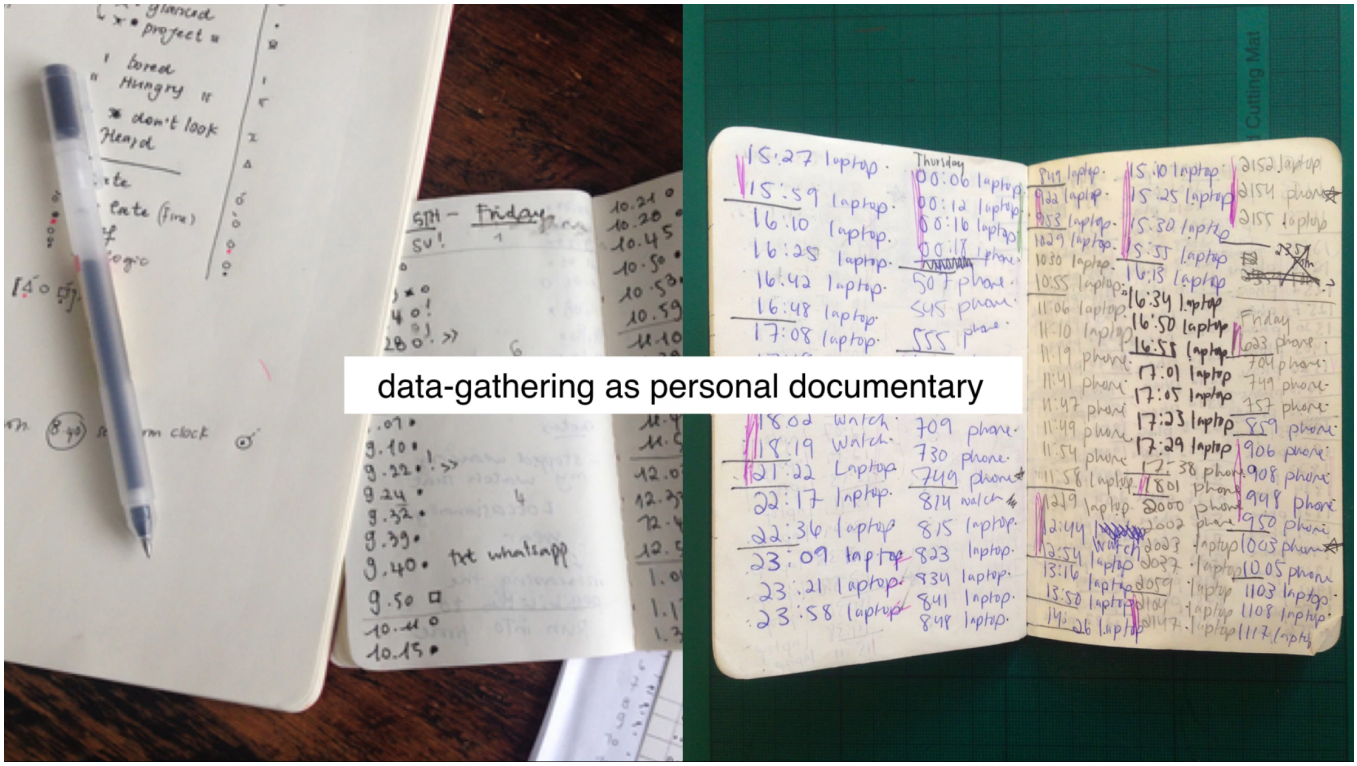
Tools

- Laptop computer (during class; let me know if you do not have access to a laptop). Be sure to have the means to log into your account vis-a-vis the 2-factor authentication.
- VT-affiliated Google Drive: Used for organizing and sharing work files.
- Image / Visual Production: Inkscape & GIMP
- Video editing: Windows Movie Maker (Windows, built into Windows XP SP2 or greater, Vista or Windows 7: Microsoft Update: Live Essentials) & iMovie (Mac, built into OS 10.x).
- Sound editing: Audacity
- Code editor: Atom (Mac/Win), TextWrangler (Mac), Notepad++ (Win)
- Github account & desktop application

Projects

Data-Story Sub-Projects	Points (1000 Total)
Data Collection	100
Single-Page Site Wireframe	50
SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics) Data Visualization	200
Video Production	200
HTML5 / CSS3: Developing Your Data Story as a Single-Page Website	350
Class Participation	100
Total	1,000

Data Collection for Your Data-Story



Timeframe: 08/28/2017 – 09/25/2017
Points: 100

Data Visualization for Your Web-Bound Data-Story

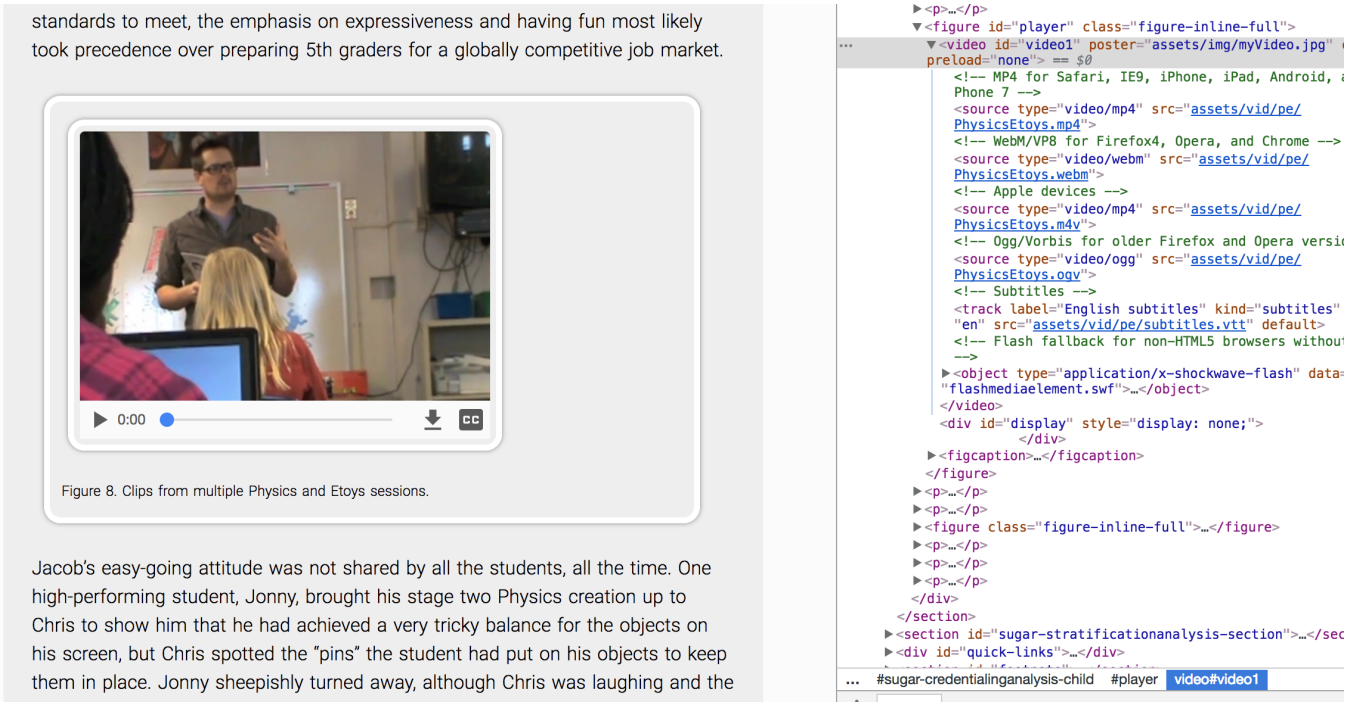
Timeframe: 09/25/2017 – 10/16/2017
Points: 200

Wireframes for Your Data-Story

Timeframe: 09/12/2017 – 09/30/2017

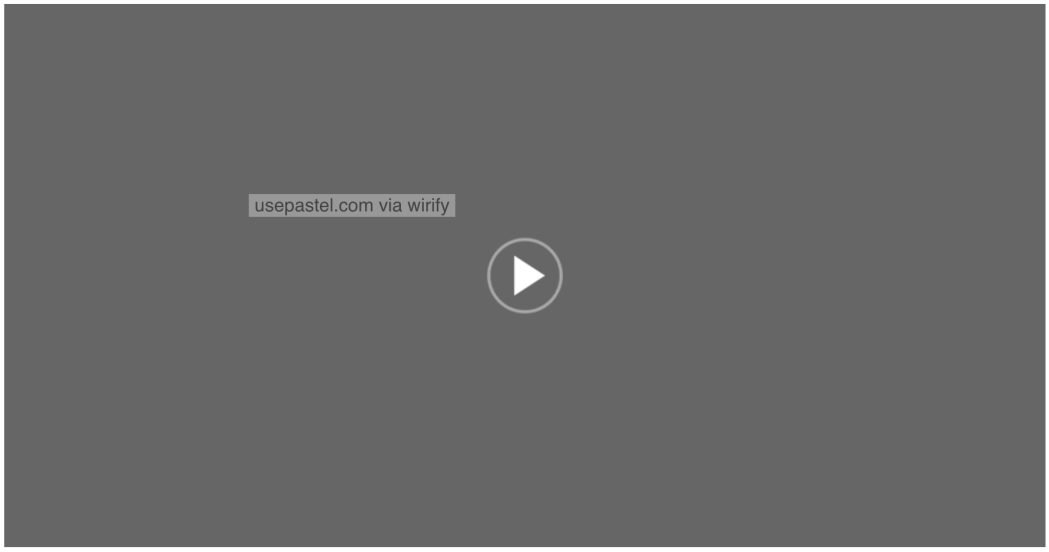
Points: 50

Video for Your Web-Bound Data-Story



Timeframe: 10/23/2017 – 11/13/2017
Points: 200

HTML/CSS: Developing Your Data-Story



Timeframe: 11/13/2017 – 12/20/2017
Points: 350

Participation Memo: *Ut Prosim*

Timeframe: 08/28/2017 – 12/20/2017
Points: 100

Data Collection for Your Data-Story

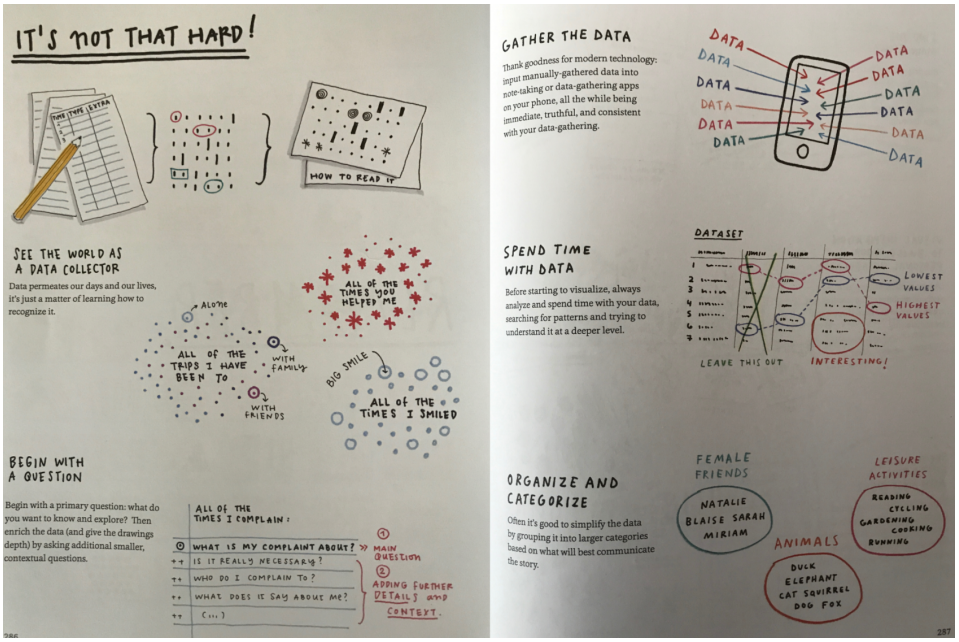
Timeframe: 08/28 – 09/10
Points: 100

Description

We are living in a society that uses digital technology and media to collect, organize, and analyze data about a multitude of ourselves. In this class about writing and digital media, we will respond to this datafication with a project that challenges you to learn how to produce digital media and examine how data are integral texts within our everyday communication activities. Accordingly, you will collect the data necessary to complete all of the subsequent media projects in this course. To guide this process, we will all share the following broader research question: What writing practices do we participate in visibly and invisibly? From there, each of you must choose and refine a particular topic as a mode to explore one of your own prominent, networked writing practices.

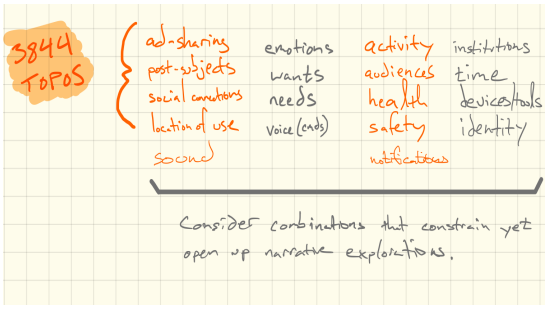
The main point of this data collection is not statistical insight nor applying quasi-experimental design strategies, but to explore, examine, and gain insight into your writing practices and how digital media and data permeate it. In doing so, we will try to understand how digital media performs and communicates much more than what we may have originally thought.

General process



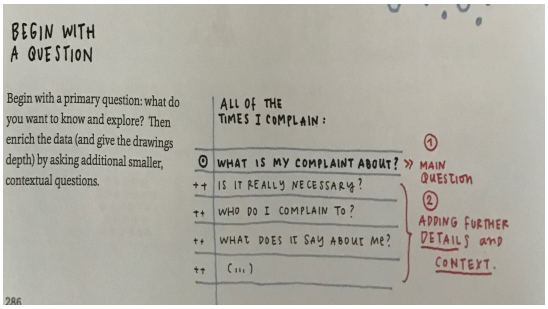
Caption: Excerpt from Lupi & Posavec (2016, pp. 286–287) about how to conduct the basic steps to collect data.

Like any good project, this one begins with a simple, personal felt dissonance—a provocation that cannot be ignored. From there, you will do the following to complete your data collection:

1. 

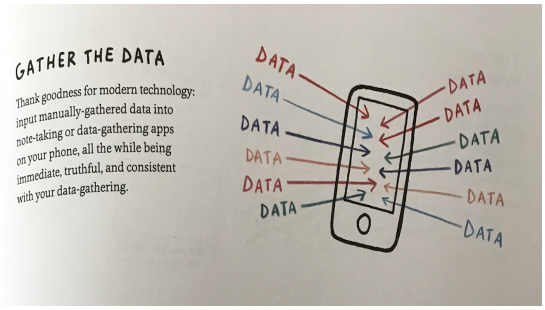
Consider & combine topos

Define the basic parameters of your study through an invention process that plays with topics of import.

2. 

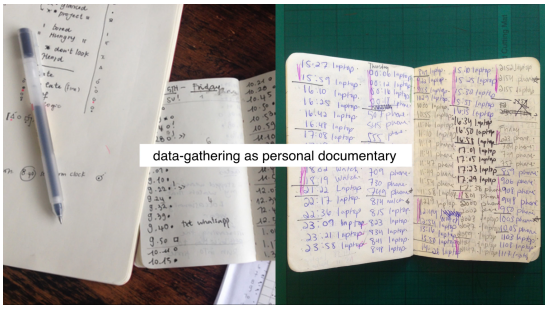
Distill your data-story topic as research question(s)

Refine the topical parameters of your study with a sharp set of questions.

3. 

Plan data-collection strategies

Learn how to create a balance of well-planned and creative set of techniques.

4. 

Collect your data

Gather the data with your well-planned set of techniques, leaving room for creative hacks along the way!

Your data set will serve as the inventive seed by which your narrative grows as you work through the next 4 sub-projects: 1) A data visualization created in SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics); 2) Wireframes to help you sketch out a plan for your data-story website; 3) Videos that draw out the contextual details and refined points of the narrative for your website; and 4) A single-page website that will tell the entire arch of your data story.

Rubric

The following rubric has been modified from Posavec's explanation about her own rules by which she assesses her data-work:

- Data integrity: Includes logging truthful changes, modifications, and/or omissions with data collection
- Consistently log your data in a Google Sheets spreadsheet every evening
- Contextualize data in spreadsheet with details / notes

- Follows basic clean data guidlines: Rows == Observation; Columns == Data-type of observation and/or Major Categories

Previous Next

Data Visualization for Your Web-Bound Data-Story

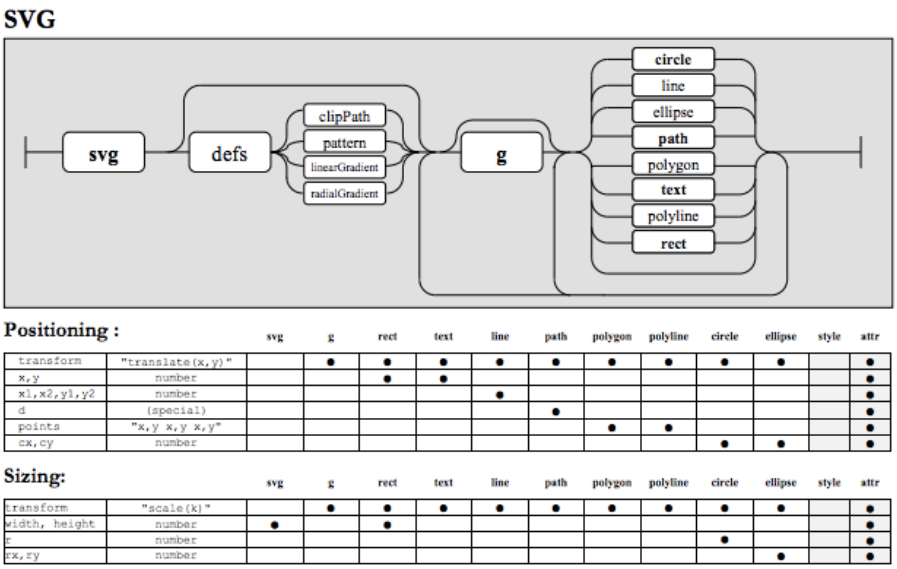
Timeframe: 09/25 – 10/16
Points: 200

Description

After collecting your data, you will analyze your data, developing categories and codes for you to visualize. You will analyze and explore your data in tandem with learning some basic visualization conventions. From there, you will make decisions about how you want to visualize your categories and their relationships.

We will all be using Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) to create our visualizations destined for your respective data-story websites. These markup, graphical objects have long since been around, but have made recent strides in functionality over the past decade in lieu of HTML5 documents. Consequently, SVG visuals have become integral digital media for web documents across design and content domains.

As a basic introduction, we will use the Inkscape application to create our draft visualization as a SVG file. We will learn about the basic SVG document structure (see image below), and prep it for our future data-story website.



Positioning :

		svg	g	rect	text	line	path	polygon	polyline	circle	ellipse	style	attr
transform	"translate(x,y)"		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
x,y	number			●	●								●
x1,x2,y1,y2	number					●							●
d	(special)						●						●
points	"x,y x,y x,y"							●	●				●
cx,cy	number									●	●		●

Sizing:

		svg	g	rect	text	line	path	polygon	polyline	circle	ellipse	style	attr
transform	"scale(k)"		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
width, height	number	●		●									●
r	number									●			●
rx,ry	number										●		●

Caption: Tree diagram of an SVG object's markup body (excerpt from [Cukier, 2012](http://www.jeromecukier.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/d3-cheat-sheet.pdf)).

General process

1. Learn about the basic data visualization conventions.
2. Explore and analyze your data.
3. Learn and choose what conventions help you tell your data-story meaningfully.
4. Sketch your data visualization.
5. Learn basic Inkscape skills and create your drawing as an SVG.
6. Clean your SVG for the web, making it semantically rich.

Rubric

- Data-Set and Data-Viz reflect each other: Overall design expresses the categorical relationships that you set out to emphasize
- Appropriate application of visualization conventions: Incorporates meaningful use of space and shapes to define and express your data story

- Ethically represents your findings: Data represents your findings without masking its flaws or creating an unbalanced relationship between datum.
- Legend articulates relationships clearly
- Incorporates contextual details that amplify your main narrative
- Semantically-rich SVG markup

Previous Next

Wireframes for Your Data-Story

Timeframe: 10/16 – 10/23
Points: 50

Description

In this sub-project, you will receive a light introduction into wireframing. By now, you should have a clearer sense about what data your are highlighting to tell your data-story. Accordingly, you will also now plan how to let your viualization guide your other choices to include video and textual content. TO do so, you will learn how to draw a wireframe to express a single-page layout conducive to your narrative.

Caption: Example of a hand-drawn wireframe (src: E M M E A L C U B O, Flickr.com, 2010).

General process

1. Learn about the basic conventions of single-page website and their variations.
2. Learn how to draw basic wireframes with a “mobile-first” mentality.
3. Draw your wireframe.

Rubric

- Wireframe makes meaningful moves for each of your site's narrative elements: visualization(s), video(s), textual content, etc.
- Conveys what content should be positioned differently for mobile screens versus larger screens.
- Annotates rationale for particular locations for content elements.

Previous Next

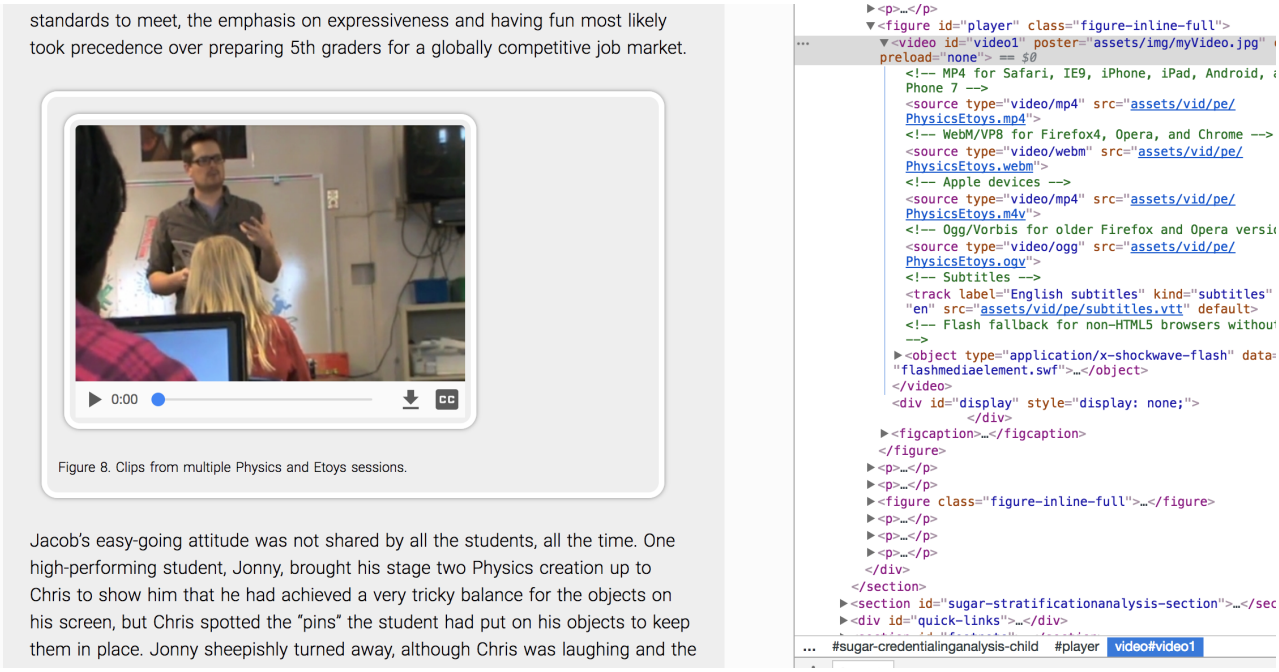
Video for Your Web-Bound Data-Story

Timeframe: 10/23 – 11/13
Points: 200

Description

Based on your wireframing plan, you will consider how to best use video media for the site. Will you use video to introduce your data story, emphasize a particular point, or perhaps provide interesting insights into the data that your collected? You must decide how your video will best serve your narrative.

You will use video editing software specific to your particular operating system. Based on your choice of editing software, you will be sorted into groups that are more conducive for sharing resources and strategies. In class, I will review some more generic conventions that will provide us common ground, but I will also have you form *ad hoc* groups to analyze the communicative moves made by videos used similarly to your own.



Caption: Example of HTML5 video element in use.

General process

1. Learn about some basic video composition conventions.
2. Learn how to seek out, analyze, choose, and adapt similar generic conventions to help you tell your data-story meaningfully.
3. Learn about basic video codec, file format, and HTML5 `<video>` issues and solutions, and then learn how to output video optimized for the web.
4. Create 3-5 minutes worth of video media, which can be split among more than 1 video.

Rubric

Your video(s):

- Aligns and amplifies the narrative thread of your data-story: Uses secondary research to deepen a particular finding highlighted in your data visualization.
- Demonstrate meaningful decisions about what rhetorical purposes your videos fulfill for your future single-page site.
- Demonstrate application of basic composition strategies: Rule of Thirds, meaningful cuts/transitions (on motion, similar elements, or narrative connection), and source material pertinent to narrative.

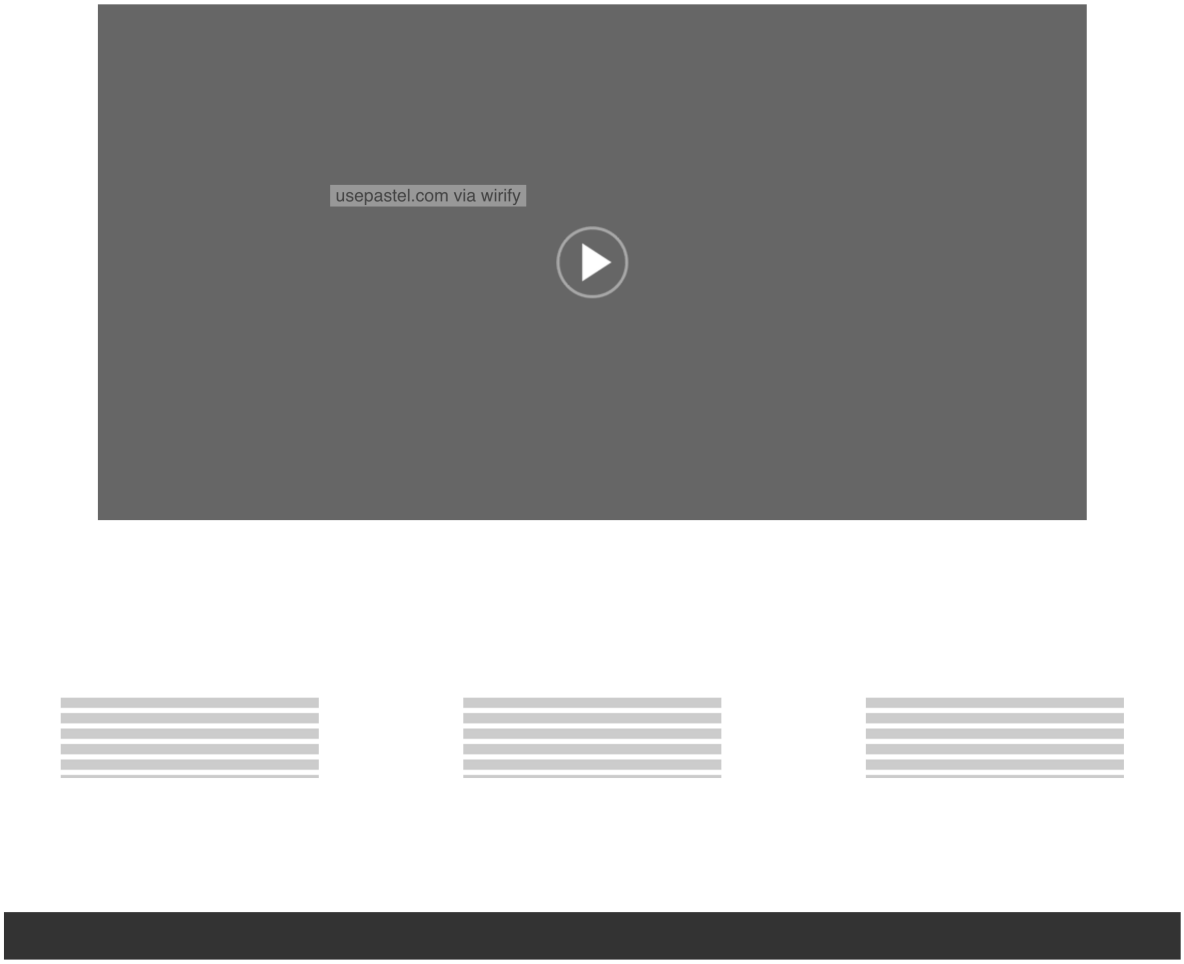
Previous Next

HTML/CSS: Developing Your Data-Story

Timeframe: 11/13 – 12/20
Points: 350

Description

In this final project, you will make decisions about how all of your media elements come together into a cohesive whole. You will learn about some fundamental elements – their relationships and behaviors – as you write web-ready content for a single-page website.



Caption: Wireframe example of a single-page website.

General process

1. Take your wireframe drawings and consider changes.
2. Learn how to use the Github App.
3. Learn about and apply basic architectural and naming conventions for a single-page website.
4. Learn about and apply basic HTML `<head>` elements, and the `<body>` with its block and inline elements.
5. Learn about and apply basic CSS element selection and styling & CSS `flexbox`.
6. Develop and refine your data-story narrative content.

Rubric

- Website amplifies a particular set of insights about your writing practices and how digital data are intertwined with it.
- HTML5/CSS3 flexbox grid is written cleanly (spacing, syntax, and structure) and has aptly named tags, IDs, and classes.
- HTML Markup:
    - Conveys knowledge of block-level vs. inline-level elements; and
    - Passes HTML5 validation test.
- CSS sheet:
    - Structure of document reflects hierarchy of HTML within sheet; and
    - Provides consistent commenting scheme.
- Simple and readable typography styles and hierarchy. Aesthetic matches your narrative.
- Integrates text, visuals, and videos in manner appropriate for intended genre, purposes, and audiences.

Previous Next

Participation Memo: *Ut Prosim*

Timeframe: 11/13 – 12/20
Points: 100

Description

In this final assignment, you must write a memo that reports on how you contributed to this class as a colleague. Prompts will be provided to help you develop material for this memo.

More TBA.

Caption: Head of the drillfield (src: R. Walters, Flickr.com, 2006).

Logistics

- TBA

Rubric

- Makes clear claims about personal and collegial participation in and outside of class
- Backs up claims with evidence
- Provides descriptive headings
- Adheres to memo formats, as listed below:
    - 1-2 pages, single-spaced, left-flush alignment, 1” margins
    - Complete top-matter with To, From, Subject, and Date lines
    - Clear separation between top-matter and body
    - Professional typographical choices between heading and paragraph text

Previous | Next

Schedule

Since no class dynamic is the same, I sometimes must make adjustments to the schedule. If this is the case, I will announce such changes in advance to help you adjust accordingly.

Project: Data Collection

Week 1 – Introductions & Audiences

Monday – 08/28: Review syllabus, projects, and policies

Readings

- None, since it is the first day

Assignments

- None, since it is the first day

Wednesday – 08/30: Introductions with your data-story curiousities

Readings

- Read the Data-Collection project
- Giorgia Lupi. (7 Nov. 2015). Data [are] about people. (You can skip the "Friends in Space" project: ~2:35-6:45)

Assignments

- Take notes about the main takeaways about the Dear Data project. Consider how you see me translating the Dear Data project into this course. Jot down some questions and comments to

share.

- Come prepared to introduce yourself today by sharing what you may end up studying and writing about this semester. Please note that this topic is not set in stone, but simply a curiousity to share.

Friday – 09/01: Learn about audiences in digital networked environments

Readings

- Gallaghar, J. (2017). Writing for algorithmic audiences. *Computers & Composition, 45*, pp. 25-30. [Link]
- Hill, Kashmir. (2017 Jul. 07). What happens when you tell the internet you are pregnant. Jezebel. [Outbound Link]
- Aldrich, Chris. (2017). The Facebook Algorithm Mom Problem. Buffo Socko [Medium.com Blog]. [Outbound Link]

Assignments

- Take notes about how Gallaghar defines the different types and properties or those types of audiences. After reading it, and the other 2 popular articles, consider the following questions for discussion: How are audiences digital media? And, how are digital media audiences?

Week 2 – Inventing Topics for Data Collection

Monday – 09/04: No class – Labor Day Holiday

Readings

- None.

Assignments

- None.

Wednesday – 09/06: Research Topic & Questions

Readings

- Research Invention Instructions. [Link]
- Writing Practices Handout. [Link]

Assignments

- Follow the directions on Research Invention handout. Write out 5 different main research questions that include 3-5 sub-questions.

Friday – 09/08: Data Collection Strategies

Readings

- Data-Collection Handout [Link]

Assignments

- Create a draft Google Sheets spreadsheet.

Week 3 – Student Conferences

Monday – 09/11: No class – Attend individual conferences

Readings

- None.

Assignments

- Bring your draft research materials to your conference

- Bring your draft research materials to your conference.
- Come to the conference with at least 3 particular questions about your topic, questions, and collection strategies.

Wednesday – 09/13: No class – Attend individual conferences

Readings

- None.

Assignments

- Bring your draft research materials to your conference.
- Come to the conference with at least 3 particular questions about your topic, questions, and collection strategies.

Friday – 09/15: No class – Attend individual conferences

Readings

- None.

Assignments

- Bring your draft research materials to your conference.
- Come to the conference with at least 3 particular questions about your topic, questions, and collection strategies.

Week 4 – Data-Collection Week

Monday – 09/18: Come with problems, issues, questions, concerns.

Readings

- TBA

Assignments

- TBA

Wednesday – 09/20: Troubleshooting + *Ad Hoc* Help

Readings

- TBA

Assignments

- TBA

Friday – 09/22: Troubleshooting + *Ad Hoc* Help

Readings

- TBA

Assignments

- TBA

Project: Data Visualization

Week 5 - Data Exploration & Visualization Conventions

Monday – 09/25: Introduce the next project + Begin analysis of data.

Readings

- Visualization project page

Assignments

- Data spreadsheet due via Canvas submission

Wednesday – 09/27: Learn about basic data visualization conventions

Readings

- Kirk, A. (2016). *Data visualisation: A handbook for data driven design*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 157-211.

Assignments

- Pay close attention to Kirk's different types of charts (CHRTS). Figure out what CHRTS convention align with your data set. Choose 1 chart type and bring a list of 6-10 reasons (claims with evidence) that support your decision.

Friday – 09/29: Peer review of draft visualization

Readings

- None.

Assignments

- Bring a complete first draft (hand-drawn) version of your data visualization. We will be conducting a round of peer reviews within your respective dataviz groups.

More schedule items coming soon.

Policies

Grading & Project Policies

Revisions

Revisions are a major part of this course. You will receive feedback from your peers and myself, so you can revise the following projects for a better grade:

- Data Visualization
- Video(s)

Grading guidelines

- A: 100-94%, A-: 90-93%: "A" work exceeds basic assignment criteria in several ways.
- B+: 87-89%, B: 84-86%, B-: 80-83%: "B" work meets and exceeds basic assignment criteria
- C+: 77-79%, C: 74-76%, C-: 70-73%: "C" work meets basic assignment criteria.
- D+: 67-69%, D: 64-66%, D-: 60-63%: "D" work fails to meet one or more basic assignment criteria.
- F: 0-59%: "F" work is incomplete, not received, or fails to meet any basic assignment criteria.

Deadlines/Late work

Final drafts handed in after their due dates will be reduced half a letter grade, unless prior arrangements are made with me. After 2 days, the grade lowered a full-letter grade, and another full-letter grade for the third. A fourth day results in an automatic failure. However, life happens, and if you require extra time to complete your project, contact me prior to the assignment deadline.

Undergraduate Honor Code

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

> *As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.*

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/.

Learner Support

Students should feel free to approach the instructor with concerns or questions about special needs or considerations that fall outside of the services listed here. All information shared will be kept confidential. For complete information on student services at Virginia Tech, please see the Division for Student Affairs.

Concerns for their mental or physical well-being:

- Emergencies - Dial 911. Subscribe to campus alerts Emergency Warning System
- Personal counseling, including help with drinking, drug abuse, mental health, stress, sexual assault recovery - Thomas E. Cook Counseling Center, 240 McComas Hall - dial (540) 231-7473 or Cook Counseling Center
- Reporting sexual assault - dial 911 or Student Health Care Center - dial 231-7642 or Women's Center at Price House - dial 231-7806
- Health care appointments - Schiffert Health Center - dial 231-7642 or Health Care Website
- Legal concerns - Student Legal Services - dial 231-4720 or services website
- Technical: I can not provide technical support. VT specific technology support can be directed to 4Help via the Help Request Form or by calling (540) 231-HELP (4357).
- Accommodations for Special Needs: Any student who has been confirmed by the University as having special needs for learning must notify me in the first week of the course. For more information please refer to student services website.
- Academic Support Services: Any student requiring academic support should investigate the University's services. Service areas include: Student Success Center, Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program, Student Athlete Academic Support Services, University Academic Advising Center, and Office of Veterans' Services. There are orientation services for new graduate students and for new or transfer undergraduate students. For tutoring, visit the Office of Academic Enrichment - 122 Hillcrest - dial 231-8887 or their website For career

counseling, visit the Career Services, top floor Henderson Hall, - dial 231-6241 or refer to their website. For study skills advice, visit Thomas E. Cook Counseling Center, 240 McComas Hall - dial (540) 231-7473.

- The library has extensive help services, including services and guides for those using the library through the Internet. There are several methods to contact a librarian.
- Accessibility: Students will be provided access to educational materials, buildings, library, computer and classroom opportunities. Videos will have closed captioning. All lecture videos have audio. It is uncertain if the textbook or reading material outside of the textbook is offered in a braille version or on audio. Visually-impaired students may request that the instructor describe the required figures verbally and the images used in the video lectures. Students may request that their requirement to do the field delineation project, attend the field trip, and to lead WebEx sessions be waived, modified, or enabled. Review questions and exams may be presented in audio format upon request, and questions answered verbally by voice recording. More information about the university's Accessibility policy.
- Disability: The university provides services for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities and challenges should contact the university for course support.