Quick Links

- Class Activities Folder on Google Drive
- AirTable Template
- o Schedule

o Policies

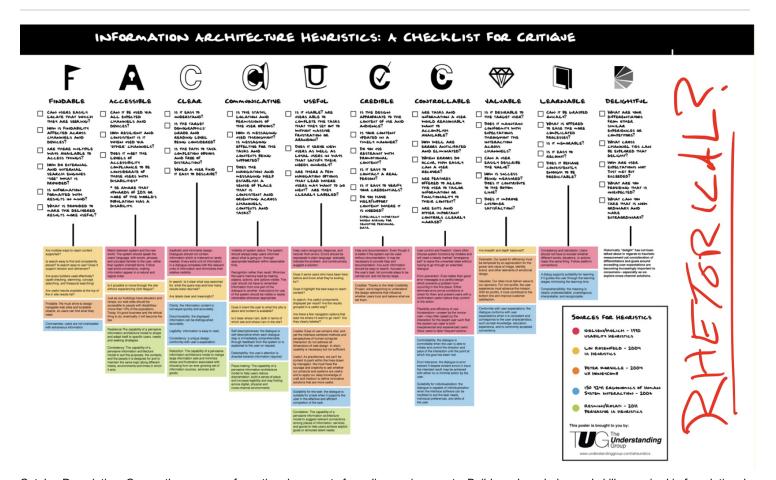
Instructor: Dr. Chris Lindgren Course Location: 360 Shanks Hall Class Hours: T/Th 2:00pm - 3:15pm

Office: 207 Shanks Hall

Office Hours: Th 11:00am - 12:00pm, or by appointment

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Description



<u>Catalog Description</u>: Covers the process of creating documents for online environments. Builds on knowledge and skills acquired in foundational Professional Writing courses. Involves production of websites from scratch, starting with low-fidelity mockups and advancing to formatting layouts adaptable to the diverse screen sizes of computers and mobile devices. Focuses on a balance of structure (code), content (information), and format (presentation and design).

Specific Description: Rhetorical theories and practices are integral for professional and technical writers, because such theories can guide their methodologies for communicating across myriad contexts and situations. For example, rhetorician Miller (1984) initially theorized genres not as rigid and classified textual forms, but as "recurrent, significant action" (p. 165), which instigated an entire field of research in rhetoric and writing studies. By understanding writing rhetorically, any ensemble of texts should be understood in relationship to the people and their dynamic activities. In the industry domain of content strategy, professional communicators must assess an organizations broader agendas and divvy up content into manageable, goal-laden, and reusable "chunks." Wachter-Boettcher (2012) notes how this practice to analyze and break content into elements, types, and models is a fruitless exercise without understanding the goals of the people who produce the content and the audiences they intend to reach. These 2 agendas warrant a deeper synthesis, and this course provides us with time and space to start this process through engagement with the following questions:

- What is the relationship between rhetoric, genre, and content strategy?
- How can we integrate rhetorical theories with content strategy practices?

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· How can rhetoric foster socially responsible and responsive approaches to content strategy?

We will consider these questions by discussing the relationship between rhetoric and CS. Then, we will enact our ideas by extending CS methodologies with rhetorical theories, audit and analyze web content through rhetorical lenses, and apply our primary research findings to new prototypes.

As with other 4000-level courses, this course will be reading and writing intensive, and it will focus on our deep engagement with theoretical texts and CS practices.

Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate fundamental knowledge of rhetorical theories pertinent to content strategies;
- Demonstrate an awareness of rhetorical and ethical implications of content strategies;
- Demonstrate the application of rhetorical theories to develop a content strategy for a particular information-communication context;
- Understand and perform diverse professional and technical writing strategies that include fundamental web-destined content tools and skills:
 - Identify, assess, and improve upon content problems with content strategy methods (audits, testing, and scorecards), tools (spreadsheets and prototyping), and communication of solutions (final reports);
 - Design and create a prototypes with HTML/CSS based on recommendations derived from applied research.

Materials

Texts

All of the books below are made available digitally through the library for free. All other texts will be provided as PDF files available on Canvas.

- Bradshaw, J. L. (2018). Slow circulation: The ethics of speed and rhetorical persistence. Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 48(5), pp. 479-98. [PDF
- Brown, James, Jr. (2015). Ethical Programs: Hospitality and the Rhetorics of Software. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. [Read Online]
- Casey, Meghan. (2015). The Content Strategy Toolkit. Pearson. [I will provide scanned PDF copies of some excerpts and tools.]
- Hall, Erika. (2013). Just Enough Research. A Book Apart. [VT Online Safari Tech Library]
- Halvorson, Kristina. (2012). Content Strategy for the Web, 2nd Ed. New Riders. [VT Online Safari Tech Library]
- Jones, N. N. (2016). The technical communicator as advocate: Integrating a social justice approach in technical communication. Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 46(3), pp. 342-61. [PDF]
- McGrane, Karen. (2012). Content Strategy for Mobile. New York, NY: A Book Apart.
- Copy/paste McGrane, Content Strategy for Mobile into VT Library's "<u>Discovery Search</u>" Bar. The first result should provide a link titled "Available in Safari Tech Books Online".
- Miller, Carolyn. (1984). Genre as social action. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 70, pp. 151-167. [PDF]
- Schryer, Catherine. F. (1993). Records as genre. Written Communication, 10(2), pp. 200-234. [PDF]
- Wachter-Boettcher, Sara. (2012). Content Everywhere. Brooklyn, NY: Rosenfield Media. [VT Online Safari Tech Library]

Tools

- · Laptop computer
- · Use of your vt.edu Google Drive suite
- Web design prototyping:
 - o Atom text editor
 - o **Github Desktop** application
 - Mozilla Firefox web browser (It has the best layout tools out there.)

Assignments

Participation (10%)

The success of this class depends on your participation and open communication. Ten percent of your grade will be based on your contributions to class discussions and your engagement in class activities. Participation includes coming to class everyday, on time, and prepared, having completed the required readings and assignments, and ready for thoughtful and active engagement with each other. Participation also includes asking questions, attending office hours, sharing helpful links and media, providing thoughtful and productive feedback about the course, and engagement via email. All students are expected to participate in an active, open, and respectful manner, in small and large groups.

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Reading Responses (points integrated into each project)

For each set of readings, you will submit a 500-word response. For each response, you should include the following components:

- Brief summary (no more than one paragraph);
- · Discussion of 2-3 key concepts/ideas from the text;
- · At least two discussion questions.

Your responses will be graded based on the following criteria:

- Includes all of the components listed above (summary, key concepts/ideas, questions);
- Demonstrates a clear, thoughtful, and engaged understanding of ideas from the text(s);
- Draws connections between the assigned texts and other texts, events, and/or ideas;
- · Provides compelling and generative questions for discussion.

Content Strategy Report (15%)

In this 4-6 page report, you will craft a discussion of select concepts, frameworks, and practices that we have reviewed during these first few weeks of class. Your main goal is to choose a particular content strategy practice of interest to you. From there, your report will describe the recurrent problems, concerns, and goals involved with this practice in tandem with what knowledge and skills help content strategists accomplish such goals and alleviate certain problems. Then, your goal is to select 1-2 rhetorical concepts that you seek overlapping with this content strategy practices. By writing about your investment in this broad industry area, you can creatively consider potential new areas of engagement between rhetoric and content strategy. The below questions may help you start to consider your are of investment:

- What concepts and practices overlap between content strategy and rhetoric?
- How might I extend prior CS methodologies with rhetorical theories? That is, what new questions and inquiries does X rhetorical concept or framework provide CS?

Deliverables: Reading Responses, Draft Report, Content Strategy Report

Content Audit (20%)

Imagine managing the web content of a large organization: sometimes thousands of pages, teams of writers and developers, and myriad audiences. Due to these contemporary issue of scale, professional communicators increasingly need to craft more complex means to assess and plan how such content should be modeled and written. In this assignment, your team must develop a metric, translate into the spreadsheet template, and apply it to an audit of your website. Findings from your audit will be written up in the scorecard and guide your action for the following assignments: usability research, sitemapping, and prototyping.

Deliverables: Reading Response, Audit Spreadsheet, Content Scorecard

Research Method (20%)

In this assignment, your team will learn and apply some basic usability research to help refine some of the findings from your content audit. Teams will also learn how to manage their ideas, testing development, data, and analysis as a way forward into the final project. Teams will report their updated recommendations in an Action Brief.

Deliverables: Reading Responses, Project Management, Action Brief with Content Model & Sitemap, and Sketched Wireframes

Final Project (Prototype, Reflection) (35%)

For your final project, your team will define and craft a content model sitemap and design a prototype with HTML and CSS backed by findings from your research. The sitemap and prototype will be accompanied by a 2-3 page reflection paper that discusses the process of developing the prototype, which includes how texts in rhetorical theory and content strategy informed or supported that development. This reflection paper should cite sources from class, and you are encouraged to use and draw from your teams' previous Reading Responses to develop the written portions of this project. Quizzes will facilitate and ensure that you keep up with the HTML and CSS exercises.

Deliverables: Quizzes, Prototype, Reflection

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Week	Tuesday	Thursday
	Jan. 22 Overview	Jan. 24 - What is Content Strategy (CS)?, p. I
1 cs	Introductions, syllabus, and course expectations	 READ: Halvorson, K. (2012). Content Strategy for the Web, 2nd Edition. Chps. 2 (skim) and 3. [vt.edu library proxy link. Be sure to log into OneCampus before clicking on these links.] Wachter-Boettcher, S. (2012). Content Everywhere. Chps. 1-2 (skim), & 3 [vt.edu library permalink. Click on the Vtext finder button on the left-hand side of the interface.] DUE: Reading Response #1: Submit to Canvas. CLASS: Group Activity: "Plotting out CS" spreadsheet
2 cs	 Jan. 29 Rhetoric and CS, p. I READ: Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 70, pp. 151-167. Schryer, C. F. (1993). Records as genre. Written Communication, 10(2), pp. 200-234. DUE: 	 READ: McGrane. (2012). Content Strategy for Mobile. Chp. 3, "Adaptive content." Wachter-Boettcher, S. (2012). Content Everywhere. Chp. 6-8 (SKIM). Bergslien, B. (2015). The step before writing. UXBooth.

	Reading Response #2: Submit to Canvas	 Bjoran, K. (2016). Content strategy for website redesigns: A case study on Peacecorps.gov. <i>UXBooth</i>. UXBooth. A beginners guide to content strategy. (SKIM) Review recurrent problems across CS highlighted in this "cheatsheet": Information Architecture Heuristics Cheatsheet. DUE: Reading Response #3: Submit to Canvas
3 cs	 READ: Brown, J. (2015). Ethical Programs. Introduction. Bradshaw, J. L. (2018). Slow circulation: The ethics of speed and rhetorical persistence. Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 48(5), pp. 479-498. Jones, N. N. (2016). The technical communicator as advocate: Integrating a social justice approach in Technical Communication. Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 46(3), pp. 342-361. DUE: Reading Response #4: Submit to Canvas 	 February 7 - Content Strategy Report Draft READ: Review any necessary prior readings to help you write toward your report DUE: Detailed outline due in Canvas. Review the Content Strategy Report assignment for aims and details.
4	February 12 - Report Due + Introduce Audit READ: Review the next project: Proposal and Content Audit. I will notify you when I have updated the	February 14 - What are Content Audits? • READ: • Chapter 5 from Halvorson. (2012). Audit. Content Strategy for the Web.

assignment descriptions via email: most likely by Monday (02/11) afternoon.

DUE:

Submit CS Report to Canvas

- o McGrane (2012), Chp. 5-6.
 - To help guide your reading of these 2 chapters, first review this Content Inventory and Audit Criteria summary document. In part of your response, consider what to add to it or revise in it. I highly recommend reviewing your prior readings and responses to guide your thoughts. Be sure to cite where you base your suggestion in the text too.
 - Once you have something to add to this above document, please add a new row, or highlight and comment about the existing criteria.
- o Review Casey's <u>Content Audit spreadsheet.</u>
 - *Copy* it to your own Drive folder.
 - Take some time to figure out how it works in Google Sheets by plugging in values, etc.

• DUE:

- Reading Response #5: Submit to Canvas
- o Team Proposal: Submit to Canvas
- Sign up for a free <u>AirTable</u> account with you vt.edu email address. Your team will use this application to coordinate your work.

February 19 - Practice Auditing / Metrics

• READ:

- Flexible Content for Mobile:
 - Myhill, Chris. (2016). My beef with the hamburger menu. Just UX Design. [Outbound link to site]
 - Myhill, Chris. (2017). 8 amazing examples of mobile-first, responsive navigation. Just UX Design. [Outbound link to site]

February 21 - Auditing, cont'd + Scorecard

READ:

Read the Scorecard Report description.

DUE:

- Finalize your metrics.
 - Develop clear definitions for your criteria and the different scores for that criteria.
 - Print out a copy for me.

5 Au

- How to Meet WCAG 2 (Quick Reference)
 [Outbound link to WCAG site]
 - Review the 4 guiding principles, and note important considerations for accessibility.
- Review any notes, responses, and readings.

DUE:

- In presentation format, define and document your audit metrics. Teams should be prepared to share their metric work in front of the class (5-7 mins.; 3-5 for Q&A).
 - The first slides (1-2) should define some of your team's initial concerns about the website, thus far, as a means to rationalize and introduce your metric.
 - Be sure to include areas from our readings across CS and rhetoric into your criteria.
 - Meaningfully categorize (chunk) the different assessment criteria and discuss them with respective slides to walk us through your metric.
 - You can use the same tabulated format that Halvorson and myself use to present the *criteria name*, *description*, and *metric*. Please cite your sources back to the origins of the criteria.
 - Important: On the last slide, note any questions, concerns, and potential different criteria that your team is considering, but isn't quite sure about yet.

 Come prepared to translate your metric into your audit spreadsheet. I will review an example spreadsheet, and your team will have dedicated time in class to continue work on it in class.

February 26 - Audit Workday

• READ:

February 28 - Audit Work + Introduce Research

• READ:

None.

• DUE:

- Complete portion of audit work before class. Be sure that at least 2 people agree upon scoring of pages.
- ~15 minutes devoted to project management with AirTable; remainder of time to conduct audit work.

Review Scorecard template (See our shared Drive folder)

• DUE:

- Advancement on audit. If not done, almost complete.
- Class will involve 1) Discussion of my expectations with the Scorecard, and 2) Introduction of the next phase of research.

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March 5 - Audit/Scorecard Due + Just Enough Research, p. I

READ:

- Hall, J. E. (2013). Just Enough Research:
 - Chp. 1
 - Chp. 2 (Just Enough Rigor, Best Practices)
 - Chp. 3 (The Process, *Define the Problem*)

• DUE:

- o Submit Reading Response #6 to Canvas.
- Content Audit and Scorecard due in Canvas.

CLASS:

 We will review the next project description: Research Design and Project Management.

March 7 - Just Enough Research, p. II

• READ:

- o Hall, J. E. (2013). Just Enough Research:
 - Chp. 3 (Collect the Data, Analyze the Data)
 - Chp. 4
 - NNgroup. (27 Jul. 2018). When to use which UX research method. NNgroup [YouTube Channel].
 - NNgroup. (25 May 2018). <u>User testing: Why & How</u>. NNgroup [YouTube Channel].

• DUE:

Submit Reading Response #7 to Canvas.

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1 0 UR

March 19 - Research Review; Begin Designs

READ:

Revisit prior readings on usability testing

DUF:

 Based on your group's research problem, and current understanding of research approaches, use the worksheet provided in the last class to draft a complete script for your usability test.

We will workshop them in class and consider what logistics and supplies will be needed to carry this design out.

CLASS:

 I plan to provide a testing demo to help frame our workshop.

March 21 - Research Trials

READ:

As needed to prepare.

• DUE:

- Prepare materials for your scripted protocol. You will have an opportunity to conduct a trial test on a classmate.
 - Please account for the fact that you will be down 1 person for the trial.
 - Please try your best to be here for your team.
 - Post-trial, your team will consider how it went, identify difficulties, and revise your script and data management plan.
 - With about 10 minutes left in class, we will discuss as a class any insights, difficulties, questions, etc.

March 26 - Analysis Day #1

READ:

None

DUE:

- Completed at least 4 tests before class
- Manage and organize the data in your Drive folder, making it available for everyone.

• CLASS:

• I will provide teams with a worksheet to help you triangulate the data, i.e., build *chains of evidence*,

March 28 - Analysis Day #2

• READ:

None.

DUE:

Completed all 6-7 tests.

CLASS:

 Workshop time to continue analysis work, as well as log action items for content redesign based on the findings.

	to craft findings that you will write up in your report and use to develop your wireframes.	
1 1 UR	 April 2 - Gontent Models & Sitemaps ReadD: Read Sitemap project description Lovinger, Rachel. (24 Apr 2012). Content modelling: A master skill. A List Apart [blog]. Reread McGrane, Content Strategy for Mobile:	 April 4 - Wireframing and CM & Sitemap Read Wireframing & Action Report descriptions Pratt, Andy & Nunes, Jason. (2012). Interactive Design: An Introduction to the Theory and Application of User-centered Design. Rockport Publishers. Chp. 9. Buxton, Bill. (2007). Sketches are not prototypes. Chp 14 in Sketching User Experiences, (pp. 139-141). UXClub.com. Tips on sketching your wireframes [video, 4:45]. DUE: Finished draft of CM and SM in Sheets. Teams organize findings into redesign decisions with mobile/adaptive content strategy in mind. CLASS: Teams will have dedicated time to develop their sitemaps and wireframes.
1 2	April 9 - Action Report Draft • READ:	April 11 - AR Due + Introduce Prototyping • READ:

UR / PT	 Conduct informal landscape analyses: Review designs from existing websites in your domain in a similar fashion as we did in class. Use McGrane's best practices as your critical lens for design decisions. DUE: Draft action report complete with wireframes and sitemaps 	 Read the Prototyping with HTML & CSS description DUE: Submit Action Report, Sitemap & Content Model, and Wireframes to Canvas. Install Github (GH) Desktop, Atom code editor, Firefox web browser
1 3 PT	 April 16 - HTML READ: James, O. (2017). HTML & CSS are Hard Series. Introduction, Basic Web Pages, and Links & Images Supplemental: Duckett., pp. 20-38. DUE: Be sure to accept my invitation to the ENGL-4814. Follow the instructions in the respective homework repositories: Basic Webpages Links & Images 	 April 18 - HTML & CSS "Box-Model" READ: . James, O. (2017). HTML & CSS are Hard Series. CSS Box Model, CSS Selectors, Semantic HTML, and Web Typography Duckett. Chp. 10 - Introducing CSS. Focus on CSS selectors and syntaxes DUE: See the pinned repos on the GH org site: HW 3-5 Progress on content revisions for pages in chosen category Quiz in class on prior HW and today's HW
1 4	 April 23 - Web Typography Workshop Day READ: Review lessons and design practices. James, O. (2017). <u>HTML & CSS are Hard Series.</u> 	 April 25 - Flexible Layout Basics with CSS Grid ■ READ: Simmons, Jen. Basics of CSS Grid. Layout Land [YouTube channel]. (~15 minutes). ■ WATCH THIS FIRST!

Web Typography

DUE:

- Complete <u>HW 6 on Github</u> before class.
 - HINT: If you ever get stuck with your CSS rulesets for elements of which you want to overwrite the default element behavior, you can always inspect the element in the browser and see the default user agent styles. **wink wink**
 - Be sure to use all lowercase names for you files, so I can create a navigation menu for your beautiful renderings.
- Progress on content revisions for pages in chosen category

- Pay close attention to the subject of grid container-grid item relationships
 @ 3:40.
- (30 Jul. 2018). "<u>CSS Grid The Beginner's</u> <u>Guide</u>." freeCodeCamp.org [Medium.com blog].
 - Implicit and Explicit Item Placement, including content placement and spanning (pp. 1-13).
 - Grid gaps
 - Fractional units (fr)
- Supplemental, but super helpful!
 - Andrews, Rachel. <u>Grid By Example</u>: Numerous short code examples and descriptions.

DUE:

- HW 7 is up on Github!
- Quiz #2
- Progress on content revisions for pages in chosen category. Submit Google Doc with organized content copy in Canvas for points.

April 30 - Flexible Layout Basics, cont'd

• READ:

- o Brown, Dan. An introduction to CSS Grid Layout:
 - For Review: Part 1.
 - Some new skills: Part 2.
- (30 Jul. 2018). "CSS Grid The Beginner's Guide." freeCodeCamp.org [Medium.com blog].
 - Content positioning, including the Template Areas

May 2 - Adaptive Navigation Workshop

• READ:

Pickering, Heydon. (2016). Selection from Chapter
 6, "Navigation Region" in *Inclusive Design* Patterns. [Google Drive Link to PDF]

• DUE:

 Read and tinker with the following <u>Codepens in</u> <u>this collection</u>. (Sign up for Codepen with your

5 PT

	 "@Media Queries." CSS In-Depth. DUE: HW 8 is up on Github! If your team hasn't already done so, please plan your content revisions, so that you do not need to do as much work in a crunch later. CLASS: Review sandbox grid work among team members + invent questions to asks and review as class. 	Github account, if necessary.) Ecah demo is a template that uses some interesting design patterns that you might want to learn. There will be some quiz questions about their use of Grid and media queries to create a "mobile-first" design. Prep for Quiz #4 on CSS Grid with @media queries and Navigation Regions.
1 6 PT	May 7 - Wrapping up + Workday • DUE: • Teams have at least created basic framework	NO CLASS
1 7 fin	Tuesday, May 14 @ 11:59pm FINAL MATERIALS DUE • Final changes to your organization's site pushed to Github • Personal course participation memo submitted to Canvas	