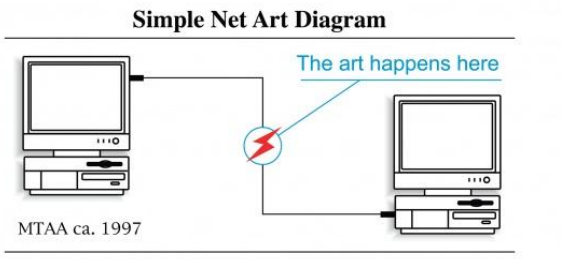
INTΞRNΞT ΛRT 1

MAAD 23631 (Autumn 2023)



The Web represents a grand emotional, sensory, and intellectual adventure for anyone willing to explore it actively. [...] For artists, ignoring the imperative to grasp the cultural implications of the Internet means risking irrelevance. [...] As human discourse adapts to its new home, everything we do and think as human beings will be and is being shaped by new values. [...] If it's ever fair to say that anything has "changed everything," it's fair to say so about the Internet. — Virginia Heffernan

Course Description

We generally accept that computers and the Internet evolved outside of fine art contexts, in fields like science and mathematics. That said, the history of these technologies is a history of creative individuals collaboratively shaping one of the most important narratives of our time, "the Internet is the great masterpiece of human civilization" (Heffernan). In this studio course, we'll learn what the Internet is, how it works, how it got here and how to engage with it as an artistic medium. This means we'll be learning how to craft it from code, specifically HTML (hypertext markup language) and CSS (cascading style sheets), but also studying its aesthetics, conventions and practices. We'll be drawing inspiration from various Internet art movements, from the net.art scene of the 1990s, to the digital folk art of GeoCities at the turn of the century, to the Web design and CSS art scenes of today. The goal of this course will be to cultivate our own piece of Internet art, informed by the research, discussions, exercises and experiments we'll make along the way.

where:	Crerar Library, CSIL 1 ;
when:	Weds, 9:30 AM - 12:20 PM;
professor:	Nick Briz ;
email:	nbriz@uchicago.edu ;
office hours:	*by-appointment-only* ;
class AI-TA:	https://netnet.studio ;

Learning Goals

- Foundational understanding of what the Internet is and how it works (specifically the Web)
- General background on various canonical and niche cultural figures, movements and ideas which have informed the development of Internet art
- Working knowledge of HTML and CSS, specifically how to hand craft works of Internet art as well as how to publish them on the Web

The Schedule

- Week 1: (09.27.2023): wtf is the Internet?
- Week 2: (10.04.2023): HTML && the World Wide Web
- Week 3: (10.11.2023): net.art: when artists discovered HTML
- Week 4: (10.18.2023): Digital Folklore: home pages vs profiles
- Week 5: (10.25.2023): Open Studio Day / check-ins
- Week 6: (11.01.2023): CSS Still Life
- Week 7: (11.08.2023): CSS Animations
- Week 8: (11.15.2023): Web Design: tropes, trends, techniques
- Week 9: (11.22.2023): JavaScript teaser
- Week X: (11.29.2023): Open Studio Day / check-ins

For more info regarding the schedule above, refer to the class canvas, there you'll find detailed notes on the homework assignments and topics being discussed each week.

Evaluation

- 25%: attendance and participation in class
- 25%: completion of all the assigned readings and interactive tutorials
- 50%: completion and submission of all the code assignments

Class Assignments

You will need to complete 3 coding assignments this quarter (available on the class canvas page), each worth 33% of your "assignment" grade. To receive full credit for these assignments they need to be published on the World Wide Web and turned in as URLs to their corresponding canvas submission pages. After you've submitted your assignment, I will review your code and either mark it as "complete" or, if I notice any issues with your assignment, mark it as "incomplete", in which case I will also leave you feedback requesting specific edits/changes I'd like you to make. You have until the end of the quarter to make the requested changes (although it's recommended that you don't wait until the last minute, but rather make the requested edits as soon as possible), once you've done that **do not resubmit the assignment**, simply leave a comment on the previously submitted assignment responding to my comment letting me know of the changes you've made. I will then review your updates and either mark it as "complete" or leave you more feedback requesting further edits.

Readings and Interactive Tutorials

Throughout the quarter you will be assigned readings for homework as well as interactive tutorials. Each of these have specific dates by which they should be completed. See the class canvas page for links and details.

Class Attendance and Participation

So much of what we're going to cover in class, both in terms of the theory and practice, can be gleaned through your own online research. The most valuable aspect of learning this material in the classroom, rather than on your own, is the chance for realtime interactivity with your professor and peers. I can not stress enough how important it is to come to class and take advantage of class discussions. That said, there are of course situations where you might not be able to attend class in person (family emergency, sickness, etc), in these instances make sure to communicate your absence ahead of time (over email) to ensure it is not counted against your participation grade.

Class Materials

In order to participate in this course you will need to have a decent computer (desktop or laptop with 8-16GB of ram or more) and a modern Web browser like Firefox, Brave, Chrome or others (**do not use** Internet Explorer or Safari, those are subpar browsers).

You will not need to purchase any additional materials for this class. We will be using an online code editor and hypermedia tutorial environment I built called `netnet.studio` to produce our work this semester. You will, however, need to create a free GitHub profile, we will be discussing in class how to connect your GitHub profile to netnet. (*if you are new to GitHub, consider signing up for the GitHub Student Developer Pack)*

If you have some experience in Web development already, and prefer to use your own code editor to create your work (like Atom, Sublime, or VSCode) you're welcome to do so. You will need to create a GitHub repo for each of the projects and publish them using github-pages in order to produce and submit the URL to the class canvas (speak with me after class if you are interested in using your own code editor)

All other class notes, videos and readings will be provided on the class canvas page && on `netnet.studio`.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of concepts, code, compositions, samples and/or other elements is strongly encouraged, so long as you leave clear attribution within your code via comments. Ensure that anything you copy is in some way transformed, either by creating a variation on the copied elements or combining those elements with other copied elements. NOTE: transformation/combination (however subtle) is not a substitute for attribution, but rather a requirement for all copied elements.

AI Policy

We're entering a new era of "Machine Learning" or AI. These algorithms are having (and will continue to have) drastic effects on every aspect of our society (including art). Today, artificial neural networks trained on troves of data (which are not always ethically sourced) can make "predictions" and create "hallucinations" (often with clear biases) that would have seemed like impossible sorcery just a few short years ago. In certain high stakes applications this can save lives, but it can also destroy them. In other contexts this biased hallucinatory predictive sorcery can be quite exciting, as is the case with media art. This technology, like many others that came before it (smart phones, the Internet, the computer) will most certainly change everything in our field, exactly how and to what extent is still anyone's guess. In the interest of collectively learning how to leverage its promises and minimize its perils, I encourage anyone interested to experiment with AI (beyond the tools covered in class) so long as you are transparent about what/when/how you use it and are willing to share your process/perspective on it in class.