

Art of the Web (DSGN 234)

Art of the Web
DSGN 234-401

Meeting Times: Monday and Wednesday, 1:45 – 4:45 PM EST
Zoom on Mondays, in person on Wednesday in ADDM 020

Professor
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Remote Workspace/Zoom
<https://zoom.us/j/7047994536?pwd=RThBZ0oyWHd5M2RZcmFNQUVwUFJHUT09>

Class Site
<https://artf21.labud.nyc>

Course Description

In this introductory digital design class, we'll unpack the history of the internet and develop a framework for crafting memorable interactive experiences. We'll start with a close study of the evolution of the internet – its origins as a read-only experience to the highly visual and expansive network of today. We'll dissect the social conditions and cultures created online and consider the changing responsibilities of the online space. The idea of “scrolling too far” and research are important aspects of the class and we'll facilitate an environment that encourages outside interests, experimentation, and learning to teach yourself.

We'll mix language from graphic design and journalism to develop thoughtful narratives that come to life through interaction. Understanding the difference between a topic and a story is equally important in both disciplines, and we'll apply this thinking to a variety of screen-based projects.

While we'll explore developing content and tools for publishing online, it's important to note that this is not a computer science course. Everything we explore will be done through the editorial lens of graphic design, visual culture, and critical thinking.

Readings

Readings will be posted on our agenda on a weekly basis. For each reading, you're required to post a response question to our [evolving reading response document](#). The readings are listed underneath their corresponding unit below.

Learning Outcomes & Objectives

This course aims to familiarize students with the practice of graphic design across digital platforms, to develop an understanding of the evolution of the internet and its impact on visual culture, to understand the process of completing a project from research to presentation, and to understand the necessary design tools for a modern workflow. In this class, you'll learn to think critically about your own work and the world it exists in. You'll learn to develop your own research interests and a methodology for making graphic design.

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

- Learn to give and receive feedback effectively
- Present your ideas clearly and visually
- Use interaction to extend a narrative
- Develop your perspective and visual style
- Curate and create original content
- Contextualize your work with the past and present
- Develop a professional skillset
- Begin to develop and understand a fluid and personal process

Units

Unit 1 – Typography and the Screen

We'll explore the early origins of the internet and the world wide web and explore how it was used and what it looked like. We'll take a look at early text-based social networks and the visual language of "digital folklore." Typography will be introduced as well as the evolution of web typography, and we'll explore how language support impacted the usage of international alphabets.

- Early internet history

- Hyperlinks
- Net artists
- Early social networks
- Self publishing
- HTML and CSS
- Tools (code editor, inspector)

Project: Explainer

Readings:

- A Vernacular Web – Olia Lialina (2005)
- A Handmade Web – J.R. Carpenter (2015)
- Typography and the Screen – Loretta Staples (2000)
- The Crystal Goblet – Beatrice Warde (1930)
- Drowning the Crystal Goblet – Matthew Butterick (2016)
- What's 'Crystal Goblet' in Korean? – Jiwon Lee (2011)
- The Web's Grain – Frank Chimero (2015)

Unit 2 – Mixed-Media Storytelling

Graphic design and journalism have an interesting relationship, especially as news have become increasingly more visual and distributed online. The way we read is no longer dependent on a single source – news come to us in Tweets, in memes, and of course, on news sites. As graphic designers, we have the opportunity to visualize current events and help shape what is shared and remembered. In this unit, we'll work on the difference between a topic and a story and think about how language, interactivity, and mixed media can communicate an immersive narrative.

- Browser as canvas
- CSS animations
- CSS Layouts
- Researching a project
- Accessibility
- Visual narratives
- Design process
- Mixed media (video, audio, illustration)

Project: Fan Page

Readings:

- Can The Internet Be Archived? – Jill Lepore (2015)

- How Social Justice Slideshows Took Over Instagram – Terry Nguyen (2020)
- In Defense of Poor Image – Hito Steyerl (2009)
- Black Goopy Universe – American Artist (2018)
- Dark Patterns in Accessibility Tech – Chancey Fleet (2019)
- Exclusive Design – Vasilis van Gemert (2019)

Unit 3 – Systems, Inputs, and Responsibility

Today the world wide web is 32 years old. Since its origins, the web has evolved in numerous ways that are increasingly political and constantly being rethought. In this unit, we'll look at contemporary issues within the internet, communication, and security and think about how our design practice can help inform a more mindful and thoughtful online experience.

- Research process
- Interfaces & prototypes
- Users and audiences
- Data
- Censorship and regulation

Projects: Building on an Interface, Personal Data

Readings:

- Chapter 2 from Data Feminism – by Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein (2020)
- What a Line Can Say: Investigating the Semiotic Potential of the Connecting Line in Data Visualizations; in Data Visualization in Society – Verena Elisabeth Lechner (2020)
- Glitching the Master's House: Legacy Russell and Momtaza Mehri in Conversation on Frieze (2020)
- New Ways of Seeing – James Bridle (2019)
- The Hidden Life of an Amazon User – Joana Moll (2019)

Students Will Be Assessed On Three Primary Items:

Research and process: Students are expected to develop their projects through research and experimentation. Students should develop an independent habit of organizing themes and visual references and develop a personal library. Rather than landing on one idea right away, students are encouraged to experiment through form, typography, and content.

Presentation: Each project will end in a final critique and have presentation check ins throughout. Students should always be prepared to discuss their ideas and have an organized and visual presentation ready to go at the start of class.

Critique: Attendance to critiques is mandatory, and students are expected to actively contribute during their own and their peers' presentations.

Materials and Supplies

- Laptop/Computer
- Phone
- Software: Git/GitHub, Sketch or Figma
- Internet connection

Projects

Explainer

At its best, the internet is a magnificent pool of information and knowledge. Let's contribute to it. For this assignment, think of something you'd like to teach the class to do and create a website for it. It can be small (how to tie a ribbon on a gift) or large (how to get the most out of your education?) but should exercise an editorial point of view and establish a visual system. Consider how to use language and form to establish a consistent tone of voice and direct a user through the process.

Due: 09/22

Fan Page

Fan pages were hallmarks of the early 'net. They represented a casual and spontaneous quality where users created ultra stylized environments to celebrate their interests. In many ways they are the design equivalent of a journalistic profile.

For this project, I'd like you to create a fan page for someone or something you deem deserving of the honor. The subject can be someone you know, or someone famous, but the best projects will highlight a personal interest on the subject matter, communicated visually in a new way. Often times this means that you have a connection to the subject. All assets on the site must be made by you (however, editing or collaging found assets in a meaningful way is OK).

This project is an editorial exercise and not a book report. Consider how you can communicate a facet of your topic that hasn't been addressed before as well as the content on it. Being specific is important. You could consider a question-and-answer style interview

The website should be contained to a single page, but you can think about what kinds of content (text, images, videos, animation) tell the clearest story. While we're looking to the past for this project conceptually, the design of the website should feel like it is from 2021 and designed with a contemporary design sensibility.

Due: 10/20

Building on an Interface

Are.na, a platform for organizing research, was created around the idea of generosity. Are.na aims to provide a healthy way of using the internet and to help users organize their research. For this assignment, we'll work within the constraints of an existing product (Are.na) and design and prototype a feature to it. We'll start by sketching out ideas, move into a higher-fidelity wire frame, and finally test out the feature in a Figma prototype that matches Are.na's existing design system.

Due: 11/03

Personal Data

Data is everywhere. It exists in many formats and is a powerful storytelling tool. Data visualizations often compliment the written word or use a combination of graphic design and statistics to extend a narrative. Many data visualizations are charts or bar graphs, but data visualizations can take any form. For this assignment, you'll develop a web-based visualization about either yourself or a community that you have access to.

As a class, we'll explore biases in data visualizations, algorithms and technology. We'll explore different ways of image-making and evaluate how our graphics can meaningfully tell a narrative. We'll explore the data collection process by collecting our own data and thinking through how to best organize it. We'll then use that data to develop a form that can be viewed in multiple formats and consider how the visualization tells different stories through interaction.

Due: 12/08

Assignments

Overview

We'll have four main projects and several exercises. Exercises are meant to be a space for experimenting with the code and improving our technical skillsets, almost like a programmed diary entry.

Reading Responses

Throughout the semester we'll have assigned readings to compliment themes and projects in the class. For each reading, we'll have an assigned discussion leader who will create a short presentation on the themes of the reading – please note, this is a design class, and the presentation should be both visual and informative. All other students are assigned the task of discussion participants and will provide a question or comment on a shared Dropbox Paper document prior to the start of class. Reading presentations can not be made up.

If you're the discussion leader you'll prepare a presentation (PDF, Google Slides, Dropbox paper) that:

- highlights the main themes of the reading
- explains the author's background and highlights their contribution to art, design, and/or the internet
- contextualizes the reading. What else was going on in the world at the time of its writing?
- presents a discussion question to guide our conversation

Exercises

Exercises are meant to be a space for experimenting with the code and improving our technical skillsets, almost like a programmed diary entry.

Schedule

Week	Activities
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1	09/01 Intros & Syllabus Code of conduct creation Slack channel set up HTML Intro
2	09/08 Reading presentation Exercise – Hello World due History of internet HTML intro Introduce P1 Explainer
3	09/13 Local links vs relative links HTML review Embedded content Small group discussion about hyperlink project What is internet art discussion Net art pioneer activity How to create a presentation of your work 09/15 Reading discussion CSS intro and online typography intro Web Typography Development in Non-Western World Deciding what font to use discussion Exercise: Interview
4	09/20 Figma intro Wireframes and content maps Design process Exercise – CSS name tag Small group meeting about projects 09/22 Goals of a critique discussion P1 How To Critique P2 Introduce Fan Page

5	<p>09/27 Discuss reading Image making techniques Exercise – Navigation activity Small group meetings</p> <p>09/29 Exercise – Hovering Small group meetings</p>
6	<p>10/04 CSS layouts – Flexbox Small group meetings</p> <p>10/06 Coding from Life</p>
7	<p>10/11 Project check in</p> <p>10/13 Project check in</p>
8	<p>10/18 P2 – Fan Page Critique</p> <p>10/20 P3 – Introduce Building on an Interface</p>
9	<p>10/25 In class activity</p> <p>10/27 Reading discussion What is research? Meetings</p>
10	<p>11/01 Reading discussion Present project ideas Responsive design</p> <p>11/03 P3 – Building on an Interface due</p>

11	11/08 P4 – Introduce Personal Data 11/10 Project Check in
12	11/15 Project Check in 11/17 Project Check in TBD Guest Speaker
13	11/22 JavaScript Intro
14	11/29 JavaScript Continues 12/01 Project check in
15	12/06 Project check in 12/08 P4 Personal Data Critique