

Syllabus

JMS 302: Hacking the Media, Fall 2014
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:25-10:40 a.m., CCJ 131

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Office: CCJ 109
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Office hours: By appointment, open-door policy

Course Description

The course prepares you to be “hackers” in the sense of one who explores and delights in the workings of computers and stretches the capabilities of available software and hardware. You will learn how to program for the web (including the mobile web). To accomplish that end, you will use HTML5 and CSS to make pages look like you want. You will use JavaScript for basic interactivity in the browser. And you will learn Ruby, a powerful interpreted programming language, to do more heavy-duty work and—more importantly—to learn some fundamentals of programming. The goal of this course is *not* to provide all the skills necessary to become a working programmer, but to provide enough knowledge to understand existing web and mobile implementations and modify them to meet specific needs, and to provide a foundation for you to have meaningful dialogue with technologists in media (or other) organizations.

Required Resources:

Learn to Program by Chris Pine, ISBN: 9781934356364

HTML and CSS: Design and Build Websites by Jon Duckett, ISBN:
9781118008188

JavaScript and JQuery: Interactive Front-End Web Development, By Jon
Duckett, ISBN: 9781118531648

Optional Resources:

Consult these resources for extra help or additional information:

[Code Academy](#)

[StackOverflow.com](#) (great resource for getting unstuck)

[The Bastards Book of Ruby](#) (Journalistic Applications) by Dan Nguyen

[Knight Digital Media Center Tutorials](#)

[Pro Git](#) by Scott Chacon

Software and Tools

The lab computers are setup with the basics you will need. You may use your laptop, but you are on your own (especially if you work in Windows).

Google Chrome

Brackets

Aptana Studio 3 or RubyMine

Terminal or iTerm

Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives

You should leave this class with a working familiarity in the following areas:

- Create and style an interactive web page using HTML and CSS
- Add functionality to the webpage using JavaScript and jQuery
- Use the command line to perform basic programming tasks, including running Ruby scripts and using git to version control your files
- Use basic programming to connect to common APIs to retrieve and manipulate information, interact with multimedia content, etc.
- Publish your work to the web
- Understand web documentation and use various online resources to find solutions to coding problems

Class Preparation & Approach

- This class will require careful reading before each class session. **Do not fall behind.** We will cover a significant amount of material in this class. Some of it will require mere familiarity; some will require mastery. Class attendance is important to distinguish between the two.
- Make **comprehension**—not completion—your goal with all exercises. Try to complete any and all exercises, including optional ones, but take the time to understand what's going on.
- Be prepared for problems—**overcoming problems** one of the ways you learn the most about programming. Don't be afraid to ask questions, in or outside of class. If you have a question, it's likely others have it too. If you feel lost, you probably have a classroom full of people right there with you. The key thing is to persist—use your professor, online resources, your texts and your classmates (when allowed) to find your way out.
- Computers require you to pay very close **attention to detail**. Many commands must be entered precisely as instructed—a missing comma, an extra space, and an unclosed tag can make your program fail to run or to run with unexpected (wrong) results. Your layouts and code should also look detail-oriented. Take the time to make your work look precise and polished. Coding style matters—indent your nested code and tags, etc.

Class Attendance and Participation

Class attendance is required. Excused absences must be discussed with the professor in advance. If you are absent (excused or not), *it is your responsibility to deliver assignments before the beginning of class*. Two unexcused absences will reduce a student's semester grade by one letter grade. Three late arrivals or early departures (by more than 5 minutes) constitute an absence. That 5-minute window may shrink as the semester progresses.

Just as important, you are expected to be fully present and participatory in class. Your phone should be off or on silent. Your laptop should be closed unless you are asked to use your computer (yes, take notes on paper). Emailing, texting,

instant messaging, and web browsing (unless sanctioned) during class time is not acceptable and may result in immediate grade deductions.

Course Grade

Your semester grade will be based on the following:

Quizzes, participation & weekly assignments	25% (250)
Midterm	25% (250)
Final	25% (250)
Class projects	25% (250)

Grade Scale

90-100 = A
88-89.9 = B+
80-87.9 = B
78-79.9 = C+
70-77.9 = C
60-69.9 = D
59.9 and below = F

Course Material

Lectures and other material will be posted to GitHub:

<https://github.com/timreganporter/JMS-302>. You should review the posted notes after each class (they will generally be available the day after class, if not before).

Submitting Work

You will also need to maintain your own GitHub account and public repository, named JMS-302, and post your work there. In your JMS-302 repository, create a folder named “exercises.” Within that, create folders for each class period’s work (class_1, class_2, etc.) and folders for each week’s assignments (week_1). Make sure you put files in the appropriate place and commit your work on time.

Browser Compatibility

Your work will be evaluated using the current version of Google Chrome on the Mac (unless otherwise stated), and you should code your projects for correct rendering and behavior in that environment. Code must be submitted to the GitHub, unless otherwise noted.

Deadline and Extra Credit Policy

In keeping with the Department of Journalism and Media Studies policy, work turned in after a deadline earns a zero. Deadlines are critical in all media industries. Missing deadlines is not tolerated professionally and leads to termination. Late submissions will not be accepted. Each late assignment will be given a zero with no opportunity to make-up the work or raise the grade. In

addition, extra credit assignments will no longer be given. There is no extra credit in the world of professional media.

Waiting until the last minute to submit assignments electronically increases the possibility of technical malfunctions contributing to missed deadlines. “My Internet was down” or “computer messed up” are not acceptable excuses for lateness. It is your responsibility to work out any technical problems ahead of time. Just as you would in a paid position, use your imagination and find a way to make it happen, even in the face of technical difficulties.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism on any assignments is grounds for immediate failure of the course and may result in disciplinary action by Mercer University. All suspected violations of the University Honor Code will be forwarded to the Honor Council. Any code from sources other than your brain must be credited.

Students with disabilities

Students with documented disability must inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. If you are not registered with Disability Services, the instructor will refer you to the student support services office for consultation regarding documentation of your disability and eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/504. In order to receive accommodations, eligible students must provide each instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form from Disability Services. Students must return the completed and signed form to the Disability Services office on the third floor of Connell Student Center. Students with a documented disability who do not wish to use accommodations are strongly encouraged to register with Disability Services and complete a Faculty Accommodation form each semester. For further information please contact Disability Services at 301-2778 or visit the website at <http://www.mercer.edu/stu/support/swd.htm>