WEB DESIGN

Fall 2014

CFA AR 581

Design for the Web

LEVEL	BFA elective
CREDITS	2
MEETS	Thursdays · once a week
DATES	Fall 2014
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	[confirm]
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	Mondays and Wednesdays 12–2; by appointment Thursdays before class

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Overview

Web design no longer means just designing a website. At one time a website was actually just called a webpage, but when it grew up it became a series of pages. A website is not a singular thing and when designing and building something for the web, what you make and what it is called is largely dependent on your needs.

As designers, shaping content for life on the web we now need to be considering a whole range of topics, whether we are coding or working with a developer. We will cover these topics over the course of this class.

The goal of this course is to introduce you to design for the web. This is not a class to teach you code or the full process of creating a website. We will approach web design through the lens of the graphic designer, and discuss how to design with code, technology, and trends in mind. You will be exposed to code through a series of code writing workshops but the focus is on design for the web.

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Learning Outcomes

Topics

- Components (websites, single page sites, apps & services, ecommerce)
- Web Typography
- Grids and Layout

- Responsive Design
- Introductions to HTML5 / CSS3
- Content Management Systems
- Browsers

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Course Structure

Class Rules

1. This class is a lot of work,
2. so work hard.
3. and be respectful. Yes to me, but also to your peers.
4. Make sure you show up,
5. and show up on time.
6. Work harder.
7. Part of this class is to do something you have probably never done, take chances.
8. Questions. Ask them. Often. Questions are ALWAYS beneficial to the entire class, not just the person asking.
9. Experiment. It's ok to break things. It can be fixed.
10. Collaborate.
11. Dish it out and take it.
12. Laugh. Don't Cry.
13. Be opinionated. Debate. Ask more questions.
14. Don't take it personally.

Visiting Lecturer — Code Workshops

We will be having a guest lecturer conducting the code workshops, covering HTML and CSS. The lecturer will be Evan Warner. Evan is a Senior Developer at Arnold Worldwide. Evan has also worked as a designer and is a graduate of Rhode Island School of Design.

> “It’s sometimes hard for me to decide whether I’m a designer or a developer at heart, because at any given moment I can look at the world through either pair of glasses. At times I find myself inspecting the code of random websites to see if the markup is semantically correct, and sometimes I’ll browse the aisles of liquor stores just to admire the shapes of bottles. Refactoring code and optimizing website performance brings great satisfaction to a particular part of my brain, and I notice and vocalize (with contempt) the overabundance of Papyrus in the world. I cannot imagine being one without the other, though, and my passion lies in the merging of the two disciplines. Imagining, strategizing, planning, designing, implementing, testing, populating, analyzing and maintaining a living, evolving website takes a broad range of unique but related skills that I’ve refined in the nearly 15 years since I first wrote a table tag.”

Communication

It is expected that you as a class will help and support each other throughout this course and others for that matter. That said, I am of course fully accessible in class, at my office, and via email: nickrock@bu.edu. Please do not use any other email address to contact me. All communication should go through my BU email address or via Basecamp.

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Projects

Project 01 — Autobiographical Representation

Individual · single-page site

You need a website. Not a portfolio site or a blog necessarily, but a website about you.

Our first project will be to design a single page, vertically scrolling, autobiographical site. This is not a typical biography, or documentation of your life. Choose a brief story to tell about yourself. Interesting facts, a hobby, a tv show obsession, a trip you went on, a story about an event that happened to you … the content is up to you, but it should be autobiographical in some way.

Just like your resume tells an abbreviated story about you, so should this page. The beautiful thing about designing this for web instead of print is that your page can be as long as you need it to be. It can be full color. It can use photos and videos. It can also change to fit the screen you are viewing it on.

Telling a story on the web is very different than telling a story in print, particularly on a single page. You need to consider the fact that you move vertically through the content and not horizontally. You can never see the entire page at once. Experience with the content is always through a distinct size and proportion viewport.

Getting started: Write out your story, gather your content in one place. Gather visual inspiration. Create rough wireframes (we will discuss this in more detail). Begin design and layout of the page.

Topics we will cover with this assignment: Single Page Web Design · Wireframes · Grids · Web Fonts · Responsive Design.

Constraints: You must use a 12-column grid. Your design should be between 1140–1280 px wide.

Project 02 — Medium

Individual · six screens

What does it mean to read content on the web. We are reading on devices of all shapes and sizes that the content will adapt and change to fit. How can these experiences be the same, or how can they be different. For years written content on the web has been burdened with conventions of print and crippled with the constraints of the web. However, with the rise of responsive design, high resolution screens, nearly limitless typographic choices and more powerful code we are able to imagine new experiences that fit their intended medium.

For this project, you should take a piece of long form written content from medium.com and explore the design of this written content. You must use the text in its entirety, as well as included imagery. You may however add images to supplement the text if it doesn't contain any imagery.

In addition to the individual text, you must design a front page, or entry page. What does a page of many articles or writings for you to choose from look like?

Requirements: For the single writing page and the front page of multiple, you must create 3 versions: 1 for the largest scale resolution or desktop computer, 1 for a tablet view and 1 for mobile view. In total you will have 6 screens.

Considerations: Font choice — choose something available and accessible via web technologies · Images · Responsiveness · Commenting, sharing, saving or other interactivity.

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Assessment

Your grade in this class will be based primarily on the body of work you produce over the course of the class. In addition, the following specific points will be factored into your final grade for the course:

- **Attendance.** Attendance at each class is mandatory. This class moves quickly and only meets once a week. Class discussion and critique are not things that are easily made up and happen regularly. You must contact me in advance if you need to miss a class. Any unexcused absence will reduce your final letter grade. I reserve the right to determine what an unexcused absence is. If you are late, or absent you must follow up with me, as you will still be responsible for the work. I will not chase you down to catch you up. You should be scheduling appointments around your classes since you know your class schedule, and not the other way around.
- **Class Participation.** Part of the job as a designer is communicating effectively, on a design team, in a studio environment or with clients. You will be expected to be an active member of the class, particularly during critiques as all feedback is important. Discussion is an important part of the design process. If you are not participating regularly in the discussion you will be asked for your opinion.

You will not be graded on your projects individually. While we will have final critiques for each project, you may continue to work on an individual project and re-present the work at the semester final review.

Check-ins and Final Review

We will also be having 1 midterm check-in meeting, October 16, in which we will discuss your status in the class, to ensure that you all know where you stand and that we are all on the same page.

We will have a final review of work for the class. It will take place during our final class. I suggest that you also show your work as part of your semester end final reviews. After the class final review you will receive a letter grade based upon the following criteria:

- **A** — You demonstrate an advanced understanding of concepts presented and are able to complete work above and beyond suggested parameters.
- **B** — You exhibit a more than competent understanding of concepts presented and utilize these concepts in an articulate and noteworthy manner.
- **C** — You demonstrate a basic understanding of the information studied and apply this information to assigned problems meeting basic expectations but not going beyond suggested parameters.
- **D** — You exhibit limited understanding of the concepts and complete work below the level required for satisfactory performance.
- **F** — You demonstrate little or no understanding of course material, show little desire or motivation to complete the work or turn in incomplete projects.

Evaluation: Learning Objectives

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL 1 — UNSATISFACTORY	LEVEL 2 — COMPETENT	LEVEL 3 — ACCOMPLISHED
Process	Student struggles with defining problems, researching, generating ideas and / or developing concepts Student fails to participate in critiques Student doesn't employ any method of documentation of work Student fails to demonstrate research as part of the design process Student rarely uses research to develop content and ideas Student struggles to meet deadlines Student does not set goals or is unable to achieve stated goals Student struggles to balance workload	Student is able to define a problem, employ methods, develop concepts, research and develop concepts Student participates in critiques and is able to document work Student understands the value of thorough research in a graphic design process and is able to employ research into their design process Student understands value of goal setting Student is able to meet deadlines Student satisfactorily balances workload	Student shows thorough understanding of a graphic design studio process; is able to define a problem, employ methods of research and idea generation, develop concepts, critiques and documents work as a way of developing smart, informed and carefully considered solutions to design problems Student understands the value of thorough research in a graphic design process and consistently explores a variety of methods of gathering, collecting and documenting as a way of developing content and ideas Student manages time efficiently, sets and achieves goals and deadlines and is able to confidently balance a full studio workload
Master Key Principles	Student is unable to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals and principles of typography and layout as a way of communicating visual and written messages	Student has a basic understanding of the fundamentals and principles of typography and layout as a way of communicating visual and written messages and demonstrates these skills regularly in assigned projects	Student has an advanced understanding of the fundamentals and principles of typography and layout as a way of communicating visual and written messages and is able to employ these skills in inventive ways

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL 1 — UNSATISFACTORY	LEVEL 2 — COMPETENT	LEVEL 3 — ACCOMPLISHED
Authorship	Student struggles to generate, curate or develop their own content for assigned projects	Student is able to author and curate their own content for assigned projects Student is able to use and understand many tools, media and forms of communication	Student understands the role of the graphic designer in professional practice and the ability of the designer to help define, shape and also author the content of the work they create.
Design Agility	Student has limited grasp of tools and media Student is unable or has difficulty choosing appropriate technology, media or tool to successfully complete a design project	Student is able to use and understand many tools, media and forms of communication Students is explores problems through more than one form of media Student is frequently able to choose appropriate mode of technology and media to succesfully complete their design solution	Student exhibits a broad understanding of a tools, services and a full range of media and forms of communication by exploring problems using print, interactive, spatial and experiential, web, interactive, static and dynamic. Is able to choose appropriate mode of technology and media to successfully complete their design solution
History and Context	Student struggles to recall or identify major moments, works, and figures in design history.	Student is aware of major moments in design history and is able to recognize some major works and figures as well as some currently practicing designers	Student is able to identify and reference major moments in design history, major and important figures in design history, and currently practicing designers. Student is able to cross reference and make connections across

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL 1 — UNSATISFACTORY	LEVEL 2 — COMPETENT	LEVEL 3 — ACCOMPLISHED
Professionalism	Student has limited understanding of the vocabulary of the graphic design field and little to no understanding of related fields. Student unable to, or has difficulty presenting ideas in front of a group Student is unable to, or has difficulty expressing ideas in writing	Student has a basic understanding of vocabulary of the graphic design field and its related fields such as print production, web development and video production Student competently expresses ideas visually and verbally when presenting in front of a group and writing ideas and statements	Student has mastered and is fluent in the vocabulary of the graphic design field and its related fields such as print production, web development and video production

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Calendar

DATE	EVENT
Oct 2, 2014	Code Workshop 1 — HTML and CSS, Evan Warner
Oct 9, 2014	Code Workshop 2 — Evan Warner
Oct 16, 2014	Midterm check-in meetings
Oct 23, 2014	Code Workshop 3 — Evan Warner
Final class	Final review

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Materials & Tools

This class requires a certain toolset to adequately participate in and complete assignments.

Books

- Duckett, Jon. *HTML and CSS: Design and Build Websites.*
- Keith, Jeremy. *HTML5 for Web Designers.* A Book Apart.
- Cederholm, Dan. *CSS3 for Web Designers.* A Book Apart.

Services

You will need a Dropbox account (the free version should be fine).

Software

It goes without saying that you will need to have access to Adobe Creative Suite if you don’t already. I don’t expect this to be an issue, but wanted to be sure.

- **For code:** CodePen (web-based, with live preview); TextWrangler (free and fully capable); Coda (recommended full-featured software, built-in FTP). Others: TextMate, BBEdit, Espresso.
- **For FTP** (not necessary if you have Coda, Espresso, BBEdit): Fetch, Transmit.

Courseware

We will be using Basecamp again to consolidate class communications. You all will have access to our Basecamp site after the first class; this will act as a central portal for class discussion outside of class as well as a digital library of class resources, such as this syllabus, project briefs, certain readings as well as our class calendar.