Advanced Web Design & Content Strategy

FACULTY OF INFORMATION & MEDIA STUDIES GRADUATE COURSE

Western University

Course: FIMS 9733b, Advanced Web Design & Content Strategy
Lecturer: Mark Rayner
Contact: OWL Messenger strongly preferred. Otherwise, email:
              marayner@uwo.ca or DM me on Twitter: @markarayner
Time: Asynchronous, Optional Q&A Zoom: Tuesdays, 1-1:45pm
Location: OWL, and Zoom for in-person consults (by appointment)
Websites: OWL & http://pixelguild.ca

Description

In this online studio course, we will learn the theory and discipline of content strategy while engaging with advanced web design and development techniques. We will code responsive websites by hand and then move into creating themes and more robust dynamic websites using Wordpress installs on a virtual machine.

Prerequisites

LIS 9723 or MJCOM 9104 or demonstrated ability in the form of a well-designed static website. This is an advanced web design course, so I assume you have a facility with HTML5 and CSS, file structure, and a comfort with learning new technology.

Objectives

This course has several objectives, apart from the important goal of helping you acquire more advanced web design techniques. We will also learn about the discipline of content strategy, which is an all-encompassing approach to creating content that will serve users. You will learn more about:

- user experience design
- information architecture
- metadata & keywords
- content management

- HTML5 and CSS
- search engine optimization (SEO)
- Google analytics
- CMS (Wordpress) design

Evaluation

Exercises (10%) will be based on the number of exercises you have completed -- note, lessons and tutorials are not graded, only the exercises, listed on OWL under "Assessments". For the most part, these are pass/fail exercises (if you complete the exercise — even imperfectly — you get the points). However, they must be posted to your webpage by the deadline or you will not receive the points. Ensure you also include the correct URL in OWL.

Responsive Site (20%)

Create a simple responsive website of at least six pages. The static site does not require content – you can use dummy text instead. It should include:

- A persistent navigation that works on both mobile devices and computer screens
- Properly written HTML5 and CSS (capable of validating)

- Semantic structure to the dummy text
- A logo and five images that scale responsively (these do not have to be original)

Post the static site to publish server at: publish.uwo.ca/~username/responsive

Due date: Feb. 28 (11:55 pm)

Content strategy document (25%)

Write a content strategy document for your proposed final website. Things to include in your document:

- Core strategy statement – how your content will meet the needs of the audience while addressing the business goals of the organization or individual.
- Communications plan – include your core strategy, audience analysis, key messaging (or framing), creative direction and optionally, competitor analysis.
- Information architecture – this should include a blueprint and wireframe(s), and optionally, you can include page tables as well.
- Keyword analysis and/or controlled thesaurus for writing/editing your content
- Content audit and/or content map – if you plan to repurpose content, where is it coming from and what will you have to do with it to have it fit into your core strategy. Original content should be described (or written) and assigned to the blueprint.
- Promotional strategy – how do you plan to increase awareness of your content, beyond SEO? Possible tactics include: PPC advertising, social media campaigns, SEM, grassroots activities, speaking, etc. This is theoretical – you don't have to actually follow through on this part of the plan.

Please submit as a single PDF on OWL.   **Due date: Mar. 7 (11:55 pm)**

Website Production (45%)

Produce the website that you have envisioned, proposed and designed. The site will be hosted on Wordpress and will use a child theme that you have created yourself. You can use as many plugins and widgets as you like, but keep in mind we will measure load time as one of the factors for success. A complete marking criteria will be provided on the class website, but the following factors will weigh heavily in the final mark:

- originality and effectiveness of content
- content that is written for the web
- download times & compatibility
- design of the child theme
- ease of use & user experience

Due date: Apr. 16 (11:55 pm)

Deadlines, lateness penalties and bonus marks:

Note that except for the final assignment, all the deadlines are set for **Sundays at 11:55 pm**. If you need some extra time to complete assignments, that's not a problem, but please ask me well before the due date. Assignments that are late will be penalized at 5% per day. For Website Production, sites cannot be accepted after the 10th.

Texts, Readings & Support:
Please check the class website for a suggested reading schedule. I recommend reading the entire book, but you will need to finish chapters 1-9 by the reading week. The textbook is on reserve in the Grad Library. I have included additional resources on OWL in the weekly readings.

Content Strategy for the Web   (*CS*)
By: Kristina Halvorson, Melissa Rach. New Riders; ISBN: 0321808304

Statement on Academic Offences
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Support Services
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Western's "Health and Wellness" http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Tentative Schedule (this is subject to change)

Week:	Class/Lab	Assignments Due
1: Jan. 11-17	Introductions, Why content strategy? Lab: HTML5 & CSS Refresher	
2: Jan. 18-24	Lecture: Information Architecture Lab: Floats and positioning	
3: Jan. 25-31	Lecture: Understanding your audience & marketing Lab: Simple responsive design	
4: Feb. 1-7	Lecture: SEO and keyword analysis Lab: Media query and responsive nav	
5: Feb. 8-14	Lecture: User experience (UX) Lab: Using Frameworks	
Feb. 15-21	**Reading Week**	
6: Feb. 22-28	Lecture: Accessibility Lab: Accessibility exercise	**Responsive site**
7: Mar. 1-7	Lecture: Content management Lab: Setting up Wordpress	**Strategy doc**
8: Mar. 8-14	Lab: Wordpress structure & basics Lab: Templates	
9: Mar. 15-21	Lab: Setting up a child theme & customizing	
10: Mar. 22-28	Lab: Adding functionality to child themes	
11: Mar. 29- Apr. 4	Work Time	
12: Apr. 5-11	Work Time	
13: Apr. 10-16	Work Time	**Site Due**

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the *Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak* and *Attawandaron* peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).