

Advanced Web Design & Content Strategy

DC 3306B & MIT 3663B (Winter 2022)

FACULTY OF INFORMATION & MEDIA STUDIES | Western University

Times: Asynchronous
Optional Synchronous (live) help session: Tuesday, 1:30-2:30 pm

Location: Online (OWL, YouTube, Zoom)

Lecturer: Mark Rayner

Contact: I strongly prefer you message me on OWL.
Email: marayner@uwo.ca or DM Twitter: @markarayner

Office Hours: Zoom or telephone, by appointment

Description

In this 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. Because this is a more advanced course, I will expect you to have a good understanding of file structure, HTML5 and CSS.

Prerequisites

MIT 2570 or DC 2203 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. You will also need to understand the basics of good web design, such as what makes for good user experiences (usability), and how to write for the web.

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 a holistic approach to creating content that will serve users. You will learn more about:

- ♦ user experience design
- ♦ information architecture
- ♦ metadata & keywords
- ♦ content strategy
- ♦ content management
- ♦ HTML5 and CSS
- ♦ search engine optimization (SEO)
- ♦ CMS (Wordpress) design

How the course runs (for now)

My theory is that if we're going to be online, let's do it properly. So, for now the course is "asynchronous," which means that we won't meet as a group at a particular time. Instead, you'll determine your own schedule for working through course activities and materials so that you can meet the course deadlines.

That said, I have set up **an optional regular Q&A that I'll hold on Zoom from 1:30-2:30pm on Tuesday afternoon.** (We can go a longer if there's lots of questions or a lively conversation.) This time is optional, which means you don't have to attend. But my

hope is that we can help one another with common questions in real time each week, and I'll start off each session with a little demonstration from the lessons.

Deadlines

I've set all the deadlines for Tuesday night at 11:55pm. If you need some extra time, or you get behind, please contact me so we can figure out a way to catch you up. I'd note that you really don't want to fall behind. It's very similar to a language course, in the sense that weekly practice and lessons helps you build up the skills you need to be successful. (Advice from a guy who failed a correspondence course in Italian in his fourth year.)

If you have an SRA, get your assignment/exercise done 48 hours from the deadline. And note: SRAs cannot be used for the exercises. You have six weeks to complete them. (Though again, **I highly recommend you do them week-by-week**, but I don't want to stress you out with a constant barrage of deadlines.) Also note, there's a bit of a grace period on the deadlines, so if you're a few minutes late, don't freak out.

A note on the pandemic

I have been adulting for a long time, and I've found these have been a crazy and difficult couple of years, so if you're having problems and need help, please ask. I promise I will be patient and compassionate!

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. Please ensure you also include the correct URL in OWL.

Due date: Feb. 15 (11:55 pm)

Responsive Site (25%)

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: Mar. 1 (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 a blueprint.
- Promotional strategy – how would you plan to increase awareness of your content, beyond SEO? Possible tactics include: PPC advertising, social media campaigns, SEM, grassroots activities, speaking, etc.

Please submit as a single PDF on OWL.

Due date: Mar. 8 (11:30 pm)

Website Production (40%)

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 widgets and plugins 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:

- ♦ originality and effectiveness of content, including SEO
- ♦ content that is written for the web
- ♦ download times & compatibility
- ♦ design of the child theme
- ♦ ease of use & user experience (UX), including responsive design

Due date: Apr. 5 (11:55 pm)

Lateness penalties and bonus marks:

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 April 8.

Note: there is a 5% bonus if you can submit your site by March 29 at 11:55 pm!

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).

Tentative Schedule (see OWL)

Week:	Class/Lab	Assignments Due
Jan. 10-16	Introductions, Why content strategy? Lab: HTML5 & CSS Refresher	
Jan. 17-23	Lecture: Information architecture Lab: Floats and positioning	
Jan. 24-30	Lecture: Understanding your audience & reaching them Lab: Simple responsive design	
Jan. 31- Feb. 6	Lecture: User experience (UX) Lab: Grids and responsive nav	
Feb. 7-13	Lecture: Accessibility Lab: Accessibility & Work Period	
Feb. 14-20	Lecture: The Discipline of Content Strategy Lab: Work Period	Exercises
Feb. 21-27	Reading Week	
Feb. 28 - Mar. 6	Lecture: Search engines, SEO and keyword analysis Lab: Wordpress setup, , structure & customizing basics	Responsive Site
Mar. 7-13	Lab: Setting up a child theme	Strategy Doc
Mar. 14-20	Lab: Wordpress templates & plugins	
Mar. 21-27	Work Period	
Mar. 28-Apr. 5	Work Periods	Site

Note: please consult OWL for exercises, readings, videos & self-help tutorials

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2022

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

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_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments, including take-home exams, in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment

for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate or equivalent documentation, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwo.com/mentalhealth/>

SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Mental Health

Support:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Accessible Education:

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Accessibility

Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support

Centre:

<http://writing.uwo.ca/>

Learning Skills

Services:

<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>

Academic Learning and Support for Online Learning:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/types/academic-and-learning-support.html>

Indigenous Services:

<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

Western International:

<https://international.uwo.ca/>

Career Centre:

<http://careerexperience.uwo.ca/>

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar**. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.