

# Advanced Web Design & Content Strategy

## MIT 3664B (Winter 2024)

FACULTY OF INFORMATION & MEDIA STUDIES | Western University

**Times:** Class: Monday, 2:30 - 5:15 pm  
Tutorials: *online, asynchronous*

**Location:** FNB 2070 & Online (OWL, YouTube)

**Lecturer:** Mark Rayner

**Contact:** Please message me on OWL  
Office Hours: after class on Monday, or 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

### Course Structure:

This is actually a hybrid class. The lectures and discussions are in-person. But I've moved all the technical tutorials online to OWL because frankly, they are better than trying to lead everyone in a class setting. That also means we have lots of time for individual help during the class.

*In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change.*

## Deadlines

- Everything is due by 11:55pm on Monday nights, via OWL.
- If you're having trouble meeting the deadlines, **please talk to me instead of ghosting the course**. I want you to succeed! (**I highly recommend you do the exercises week-by-week; it's difficult to catch up if you get behind.**) Also note, there's a bit of a grace period on the deadlines except for the quizzes, so if you're a few minutes late, don't freak out.
- Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty 5%/day
- Late assessments with academic consideration require the student to work with the Academic Advising unit in their Faculty of registration; once that has been approved, students need to contact the instructor to arrange for an alternate submission date.

## Evaluation

### Exercises (10%)

This grade 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. 26 (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](http://publish.uwo.ca/~username/responsive)

**Due date: Mar. 4 (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. 18 (11:30 pm)**

### **Website Production (40%)**

Produce the website that you have envisioned, proposed and designed. The site will be hosted on Wordpress. Ideally, it will use a child theme that you have created yourself, or a Gutenberg theme that you have modified and customized. 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. 8 (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 9 without an INC.

**Note:** there is a 10% bonus if you can submit your site by March 25 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)

<b>Week:</b>	<b>Class/Lab</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
Jan. 15	Introductions, Why content strategy? Lab: HTML5 & CSS Refresher	
Jan. 22	Lecture: Information architecture Lab: Floats and positioning	
Jan. 29	Lecture: Understanding your audience & reaching them Lab: Simple responsive design	
Feb. 5	Lecture: Search engines, SEO and keyword analysis Lab: Responsive layout with responsive nav	
Feb. 12	Lecture: User experience (UX) Lab: Using W3C Framework	
Feb. 19	Reading Week	
Feb. 26	Lecture: Accessibility Lab: Work Period	<b>Exercises</b>
Mar. 4	Lecture: Working Content Management into Strategy Lab: Wordpress (WP) setup, Introduction to WP	<b>Responsive Site</b>
Mar. 11	Lab: WP Appearance tools in Classic & Gutenberg	
Mar. 18	Lab: Customizing themes in Classic & Gutenberg	<b>Strategy Doc</b>
Mar. 25	Lab: Creating Child Themes	
Apr. 1-8	Work Periods	<b>Site</b>

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

# NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2024

## 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 [Academic Calendar](#).

## 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 [here](#).

## Plagiarism

Students in this class are reminded that plagiarism – using another's work, ideas, or words without giving credit -- is a serious scholastic offence. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of generative artificial intelligence to create content that is submitted as one's own.

**Students who use AI-content generators (such as ChatGPT) to complete assignments without attribution or permission from the instructor are committing a scholastic offence.**

All required 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

### [Academic Accommodation](#)

Students with disabilities work with [Accessible Education \(AE\)](#) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

### [Medical Consideration](#)

Students who have medical grounds for academic consideration for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth **10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Advising office of their home Faculty (for FIMS students this is [Undergraduate Student Services](#)).

Students are required to provide

documentation in the form of a [Student Medical Certificate](#). It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if consideration is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or during office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Advising office.

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 must be submitted to the Academic Advising office of a student's home Faculty.**

## Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Advisor.

If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire, or some other exceptional crisis, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation. Students seeking additional bereavement leave should contact their Academic Advisors with valid documentation.

## 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 Advisor. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

## Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone

through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). The gender-based violence and survivor support case managers are located in Thames Hall (3114-3127 office suite.) To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

## Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of supports.

## SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

[FIMS UGSS](#): *academic advising; career services*

[Psychological Services](#): *Information about accessing mental health supports*

[Medical Services](#): *Student health related services*

[Office of the Registrar](#): *Financial Information, Timetable, Exam Schedules, Academic Calendar Information*

[Academic Support and Engagement](#): *Central Academic Supports, including Writing Centre, Learning Development, Transition and Leadership Supports, and Careers and Experience*

[Accessible Education](#): *Assessment and recommendations for students with disabilities*

[Accessibility Information](#): *Information to help support barrier free access, including floor plans, accessible washroom locations, service disruptions etc.*

[Indigenous Student Services](#): *Includes information about financial support, indigenous self-identification, orientation, and tutor support*

[Western International](#): *Information and support for international students and students seeking to go on exchange*

## FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS Undergraduate programs now have the following class average policy: **First year courses required** for entry into a FIMS module (MIT 1020E; MIT 1025F/G) have an expected course average between 68-72%. **Second year required courses** (MIT 2000, 2025, 2100, 2200, 2500) have an expected course average between 70 and 75%. The **third year required course** (MIT 3100) is expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%. **Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.**

## 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.