Spring 2013 Syllabus…

COMS 326-Web Production

Instructor: **Bob Stepno**

email: rstepno@radford.edu
phone: 540-831-6220
office: 704 Fairfax, F-104

Coms326-02: 5-6:15 p.m., M-W
Coms326-01: 5-6:15 p.m., T-Th
Porterfield 173
office hours: Mon-Thurs 3:30-4:30 p.m.
 -- or by appointment

For up-to-date information, check each week at http://www.radford.edu/rstepno/326

Overview

As a prerequisite to this class, most of you have had a course in "Digital Imaging." Think of this one as the follow-up -- a course in "Digital Imagining."

When the computer, "data processing," "word processing," the Internet, the World Wide Web, the digital camera and the cell phone were invented, few people imagined how they would all converge in the online-media world we have today. Few of the millions of people who use the Internet every day understand how the World Wide Web came about, the standards that hold it together, how websites are created, what tools are available to build them, and the real secret that allowed this most powerful of communication media to blossom so rapidly.

Whether you plan to create Web sites for a living, inform the world of your cat's activities for fun, or just want to understand how they fit into our media culture, the goal for this course is to build on what you already know, correct any misconceptions you've had about Web design being rocket science, introduce a variety of tools Web producers use – and prepare you to find new tools to meet your needs in a very exciting online future.

Today's sophisticated Web productions are still sometimes one-person operations. Others are team efforts -- involving writers, researchers, editors (of text, audio and video), programmers, graphic designers, multimedia producers, photographers, social-networking specialists and marketing departments. With that collaborative spirit in mind, you will be encouraged to share what you learn and make this class a creative "studio" experience.

You won't learn to do everything in one course, but you should learn to keep learning. This class will help you evaluate what's out there, start to sketch a roadmap for further study, begin (or continue) building your personal Web portfolio, and start imagining the future and your part in it.

Formal course description:

Web Production (3)
Instruction and practice in designing interactive World Wide Web sites for the mass media. Course also introduces Web aesthetics, digital imaging and other applications for the web. Prerequisite: MSTD 130, COMM 230 and MSTD 226 or ITEC 225. (Both MSTD and COMM are now "COMS")

Texts, Equipment and News

Books:
 • Basics of Web Design: HTML5 & CSS Author: Terry Ann Felke-Morris. http://webdevbasics.net
 • Virginia DeBolt: Adobe Dreamweaver CS5 or CS6 Classroom in a Book (recommended)
 • Web Style Guide by Patrick Lynch & Sarah Horton (recommended). http://webstyleguide.com
Hardware:
 • A USB storage device – memory stick, SD card, portable hard drive etc. – to backup your work.

Lists of readings, additional supplementary texts, library reserves and e-books, downloadable software and useful Web sites will be linked to the course home page, http://www.radford.edu/rstepno/326

(During the first two weeks, read the introductions and first few chapters of both books, browse the professor's Web site, and read Web designer Jason Cranford Teague's essay "Everyone is a Web Designer" at http://bit.ly/1vA9wg)

Become a Web Information Addict:

It is terribly easy to make *terrible* Web pages, but not hard to make pretty good ones. As part of the work in this course, you should develop an eye for Web pages that work, that meet the needs of their audiences, or that surprise us with new ways of doing things. Few people 20 years ago expected a world of digital media quite like the one we have with You Tube, Facebook, Google and Amazon. At the same time, a number of online media ideas that looked good at first faded away quickly.

Not only will you learn to plan, design and code Web pages in this class, you should start keeping up on new developments in Web technology by becoming regular users of Web sites *about* the Web, industry publications, blogs, podcasts and Twitter feeds. Subscribe to the RSS feeds of zines and blogs like Smashing Magazine, PaidContent and TechCrunch. Learn the jargon, history and people of the Web, including names like Tim Berners-Lee, Marc Andreesen, Craig Newmark, Khoi Vinh and Adrian Holovaty.

I do my own Web learning "in public," using Twitter (as @bobstep) to share news bits that come my way and storing bookmarks to useful pages at http://delicious.com/bstepno. When I have time, I write longer news items in the blog http://stepno.wordpress.com and other sites linked to my home page, http://stepno.com

For a start at developing your own Web reading, try the technology sections of some "old" media, including *The Wall Street Journal (http://wsj.com)* and *The New York Times (http://nytimes.com).* Explore online standards like Wired (*http://wired.com*) magazine, Slate (*http://slate.com*), and the O'Reilly publishing company's pages (http://oreilly.com). Locally, see what's doing at *New River Voice* (http://newrivervoice.com), *The Collegiate Times* at Virginia Tech (http://collegiatetimes.com), *RU Today* (http://rutoday.radford.edu), *Whim* (http://ruwhim.com) and *The Tartan* (http://thetartan.com).

What You Will Learn

By the end of the semester, you should have learned how to do most of these things…

- make basic HTML pages
- install them using SSH, SFTP and your network share
- make a reusable template for similar pages
- plan and organize multi-part sites
- use effective headings
- use lists
- use tables and iframes
- use internal (relative) and external (explicit) links
- take snapshots of your screen
- crop, resize and optimize images for Web use
- embed inline images
- link from images as well as text
- write effective headings and summaries
- write clear, concise and accurate documentation
- create menu systems for multi-page sites
- test and evaluate the usability of pages
- think critically about new Web techniques and tools
- use embedded and external Cascading Style Sheets
- employ CSS to create multi-platform pages
- embed audio, video or multimedia players in your pages
- use metadata and Search Engine Optimization techniques
- find and use low-cost or free software and site hosting services
- find and share even more tools and tricks on your own

Depending on the time available and the experience and interests of the class, we will at least touch on: the Unix and OS-X operating systems; "semantic Web" issues of usability and accessibility; open-source and free software; and advanced tools for creating dynamic and interactive pages, including Flash, Javascript, WordPress and other Content Management Systems, and a variety of "Web 2.0" services.

Schedule changes & e-mail

The assignment calendar may be altered to take advantage of special campus events, speakers, breaking news and other opportunities. ***Changes in the schedule will be announced in class, by e-mail, and on the Web. Check your Radford.edu e-mail and my website often.*** If you use another e-mail account, forward your Radford mail to it.

If you have questions of any kind, stop in during office hours or send me a note at *rstepno@radford.edu*. I have other e-mail accounts, but that is the one I use for all course-related mail. I check it several times a day, but rarely after 9 p.m. or before 9 a.m.

I may not be able to respond to all mail individually. If you have an especially good question, I may write back to the entire class or discuss it at our next class meeting.

E-mail as user-interface

Your first "information design" lesson: When you send e-mail, think of the "Subject" line as part of your story. Make it an informative headline, not just a label. Make it specific. Mail that is unnamed, vague or generic is easy to miss, or mistake for spam.

When you write to the professor, please put your **name, course number (326-1 or 326-2) and topic** in the "Subject" line.

- **Not:** "Hey prof!" or "Weekly assignment"
- **Preferred:** "JBrown, 326-2, Zen garden assignment" or "JSmith, 326-01, dog ate my computer"

Being here: Attendance, Assignments and Deadlines

My attendance policy is inspired by professional media organizations: You are expected to come to every class, arrive **on time**, and deliver your work **on deadline**. When you're here, be here: No e-mail, Facebook, texting, online gambling or off-topic Web browsing, please.

I know there are good reasons to miss class, so don't bother with doctor's notes or written apologies. BUT after the second week of class, when add-drop changes are over, **if you have more than three absences** for any reason come see me. Your grade for the course may be reduced by one letter for each absence after the third, unless you show that you have kept up with both the in-class and homework assignments. After four or five such absences, we should talk about your withdrawing from the class. In the event of a flu outbreak or other emergency that keeps classes from meeting, we will "meet in cyberspace" using online systems and e-mail.

You will have online or on-paper exercises in almost every class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what they were and do them on your own.

If you know in advance that you will miss a class, see me to arrange a catch-up assignment. If you miss a class, check my website and contact a classmate for assignments. I may not have a chance to answer "tell me what I missed" e-mails on Tuesday or Thursday, but I will attempt to update an "exercises we did in class" list on my Web page. If an assignment was done in class or due as homework the day you were out, submit it electronically and bring a printed copy to the next class you attend for full credit.

Class Cancellations

If class is cancelled because of a winter storm, flu outbreak or other emergency, it is your responsibility to check my course Web page for any assignment and schedule changes – and **do the work**.

Want to know if a class is cancelled?

In addition to local television and radio stations, information about classes being canceled and administrative offices closing due to inclement weather will be available from the university switchboard by calling 831-5000 or on the university's Web page.
If you are confused by conflicting announcements, you may call the switchboard for clarification. The switchboard will update information on the day of the closing by 6 a.m.

More info: http://www.radford.edu/weatherpolicy.html

Important Note About Disability Services

If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with the Disability Resource Office (DRO). The DRO is located in Room 32, Tyler Hall, telephone 831-6350. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper DRO forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

The Radford University Honor Code

By accepting admission to Radford University, each student makes a commitment to understand, support, and abide by the University Honor Code without compromise or exception. This class will be conducted in strict observance of the Honor Code, which reads as follows:

I do hereby resolve to uphold the Honor Code of Radford University by refraining from lying, from the stealing or unauthorized possession of property and from violating the Standards of Student Academic Integrity.

Those Standards of Student Academic Integrity are spelled out in the Student Handbook. **McConnell Library** has related material online: **http://lib.radford.edu/tutorial/X/learn.asp**

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will result in a grade of "F" for the assignment and a course grade of "D" or "F" in addition to university disciplinary action.

Assignments and Grading for COMS 326

- Site-review assignment (cumulative midterm project & home page), 25%
- In-class assignments and exercises (updated home page, Tools, DW, media pages, etc.), 25%
- Quizzes and/or class presentations, 15%
- Final project, including proposal, external site, and self-evaluation, 35%

The first project will be a multi-part report on a major theme or topic in Web content or technique, such as the use of multimedia (video, animation, slideshows, sound, etc.) as a storytelling device. The project's goal is to demonstrate the coding techniques and design concepts learned during the first half of the course, and to explore cutting-edge Web technique at the same time.

Quizzes will test your knowledge of Web design issues and terminology gained from the course books, tutorials, class discussions and visiting speakers.

The final project will be to design a working website using all of the competencies covered in the course. The site can be for an organization, individual or business. A preliminary proposal, site map, class presentation and self-evaluation of the project may be part of the grade. A detailed assignment sheet is on the professor's website and will be updated before the mid-term.

The calendar on the following pages will be available in expanded form online, with weekly textbook readings, links to online demonstrations and tutorials, and site-building tasks to be accomplished.

COMS 326 Web Production *-- Spring 2013 Schedule*

The sequence of topics is approximate. This calendar applies to both sections of the class. Textbook chapters in the right column are for reference. Specific tasks/deadlines will be announced in class and online, based on group progress.

Week 1	1/21 -25	Introductions to the course, the lab, Windows, Macintoshes, Unix and each other… Make simple pages using plain text editors and screen-captures. Basic tools: Working with HTML using simple text editors (Notepad on PCs, TextEdit on Macs); comparing Unix, Windows and the Macintosh. Finding free or cheap tools… http://www.evrsoft.com/ http://www.textwrangler.com/ Your first HTML tags: See links in left margin of http://www.radford.edu/rstepno/326	Felke-Morris (F-M) Chapter 1 Internet and Web Basics (F-M) Chapter 2 Web Page Structural Basics Because technical skills in this class vary, DO work ahead, and concentrate on textbook exercises that are challenging.
		Photoshop refresher: cropping to specified dimensions; saving for Web. Screen capturing and review of imaging concepts, file types, file compression. Make a page using Unix. Using HTML tutorial sites: • http://www.w3schools.com • http://www.html.net Discuss evolution of Web standards, tools, and alphabet soup… from Unix, FTP, SSH, HTML, XHTML, XML, CSS and RSS to Apache, LAMP, Javascript, and Ajax. Why HTML5 and CSS are important.	(F-M) Chapter 3 Hyperlink Basics Review/Preview (F-M) Chapter 6 on images Work on: Home page Tools page images
Week 2	1/28 -1/1	Polish the pages you started last week. Explore more tools. Tip for more content: Explore videos and tutorial sites, then write a paragraph on your home page in response, discussing what kind of Web projects you are interested in exploring in more detail, as a user, (midterm-project) reviewer or professional producer… Site types, audiences, and some history, from Arpanet to Googlezon. http://www.albinoblacksheep.com/flash/epic The power of hypertext and semantic markup**:** Watch and read about "Web 2.0 is Us/ing Us" • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE • http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/?p=84 • http://www.mediafire.com/?axhbjnmw4yn	DreamWeaver CIB (DW) Chapters 1-3 (F-M) Chapter 4 Web Design Basics (F-M) Chapter 5 Cascading Style Sheets Basics Work on: Home page Tools page (midterm proposal)

Week 3		More than a dozen HTML tags… looking at the fine print… using "view page source" as part of the way the Web was woven… adding links… Reading comments.	(F-M) Chapter 5 Cascading Style Sheets Basics
			(F-M) Chapter 6 Web Graphics and Multimedia Basics
		Centering, margins, padding etc. http://www.easywebtutorials.com/html-tutorial/lessons/tables.html	
	2/4-8	Why CSS is important See http://csszengarden.com	(F-M) Chapter 7 More CSS Basics
		Styles for link coding and menus… Discuss testing, browser wars and cross-platform issues. Structure, form, content, usability & accessibility… More CSS…	(F-M) Chapter 8 CSS Page Layout Basics
		POSSIBLE QUIZ	Finish Tools page, update home page
Week 4	2/11-15	Dreamweaver – The user interface, site definition and layouts Documentation, comments and debugging; CSS tools in Dreamweaver	(DW) Chapters 1-5
		Capture screens and write criteria list for midterm	Midterm proposal
Week 5	2/18-22	Dreamweaver - Modifying layout with CSS; Navigation links	Note: DW Ch.6 templates are used in later chapters, but there are workarounds.
		Begin sample site in Classroom in a Book chapters 4 & 5; do not publish the book's exercises on the public server. Instead, pick the most interesting or useful *tools and techniques* within Dreamweaver and take notes so that you can gradually create your own page *with and about* them.	DW Chapter 8 Images DW Chapter 9 Nav F-M Chapters 3-4
Week 6	2/25-3/1	**Midterm project: Deadline Noon Saturday 3/2**	(F-M) Chapter 9 Table Basics (DW) Chapter 7 Tables
Week 7	3/4-8	**POSSIBLE QUIZ** Present and discuss each other's projects; discuss multimedia styles and techniques. Revise pages. Sharing and Web 2.0 tools: Wikis, Ning, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, RSS feeds, podcasts & more.	(F-M) Chapter 6 & 11 Multimedia Basics DW Chapter 10 & 11 Start multimedia page
		SPRING BREAK Come back with preliminary ideas for your final project!	

Week 8	3/18-22	Final-project brainstorming: Types of sites, audience needs, working with clients. Using audio and video files on your pages; MP3, Quicktime, Adobe Flash and HTML5 alternatives	(F-M) Chapter 10 Form Basics (F-M) Chapter 12 Web Publishing Basics
Week 9	3/25-29	Dreamweaver *DW Classroom In a Book* sampler page	
		Final Project proposal draft online by Friday, in HTML, with relevant links. (Separate page or part of home page.)	
Week 10	4/1-5	Discuss project proposals & gather information for project	Post "Multimedia" and "Dreamweaver CiB" pages, then move on to the final project full-time.
		POSSIBLE QUIZ	
Week 11	4/8-12	Make a site-structure map for final project.	Final four weeks are primarily open lab, with discussions of projects in-progress and new Web developments.
		Design and menus project	
Week 12	4/15-19	Work on project page layouts, templates. Share discoveries and problems with classmates.	
		Post first draft of final project before leaving for holiday	
Week 13	4/22-27	Final Projects	
Week 14	4/29-5/3	Final projects	
		Post sites to an external server and present to class Final pages: Self-evaluation e-mail, "what I'd do next?" page.	
Exam Week		EXAM WEEK Final project revision due at exam time. Both COMS 326-01 and -02 scheduled exam periods will be available as open labs for final revisions.	
		MW 5 exam 5 p.m. Mon. May 6 TT 5 exam 5 p.m. Tues. May 7	All projects should be complete by noon on Wednesday, May 8.

To double-check the exam time for this course or other classes:
http://www.radford.edu/content/registrar/home/exam-schedule.html

The professor's website outline

The left column of the http://www.radford.edu/rstepno/326 course home page includes a menu of pages created for the course. They include class notes and demonstrations from past semesters, as well assignment sheets, and are in roughly the order that they will be useful. Some demonstrate pages you will be expected to create in your folder named "coms326," so their address is http://www.radford.edu/rstepno/coms326

Some will be discussed in class, others are there for your reference. Additional pages may be added and some will be updated during the semester, based on lab issues and class progress, including the final checklist.

COMS 326 pages

The website menu is in roughly chronological order.
— First two weeks
Review skills: —— Using MyRU Files
—— Macintosh tips   —— Screen Capturing & Images
New: Website building tools
—— Unix intro 1   ——— Unix 2 commands   ——— Unix 3 publishing
—— A dozen HTML tags   ——— Simplest page   ———Elephants of HTML

First drafts of these in the first week, but they are updated all semester.
——Student pages   ———1. Home Page   ———2. Tools Page

Weeks three through six CSS skills to improve those pages and for the midterm…
— Centering with CSS   — CSS Floats Divs, Pix, Captions   Menus with CSS

Questions will be answered throughout the semester.
FAQ File

Building and testing a mini "zine" reviewing websites…
Midterm Site Review Asmt   — Site Structure   — Fixing broken links & pix

Weeks five through nine
— Dreamweaver intro   — Dreamweaver at RU, links
— Using Dreamweaver CIB   — Moving Dreamweaver Menu

Adding skills while planning and completing final project… through exam week
— Dreamweaver Spry Tabs
— Visuals & multimedia   — Video & CSS
— Scrolling boxes

Last four weeks…
— Final Project Asmt— Final Project Topics— Web Hosting & CMS— Check-out Checklist (PDF)

Grading scale for projects

A: 90-100 percent. Work approaches professional-quality work – interesting site, attractive design, fully functional links and media including all assigned features.
B: 80-89 percent. Above average grasp of basics; may need some repair, but all assigned features are present; product is attractive, usable and on-time.
C: 70-79 percent. Shows a grasp of basic principles and has met most deadlines, but may have some broken links, clashing colors, slow-loading poorly-optimized images, or other bad design decisions.
D: 60-69 percent. Significant errors in coding or posting; incomplete, late or missing assigned features.
F: Fails to meet minimum standards. For example, major components broken or missing.

Time Requirement

Although this is a "lab" class, expect to work on projects outside of the classroom. In-class assignments and exercises, if not completed in class, must be posted in final form by 5 p.m. that Friday.

Digital Media Essentials

- Save documents early and often. They are your responsibility. Always have a backup of your work. Use your Radford network server space ("drive H"), e-mail or a USB memory stick.

- Be careful with Radford lab equipment and be considerate of other users. Report computer problems as soon as they occur and put a note on the computer to alert the next user.

- Use the computer to accomplish class assignments and exercises, **do not** drift into Facebook, IM, e-mail, texting, online gambling and unassigned Web browsing.

- Turn off your phone and put it out of sight while class is in session. Be *here*.

Your Teacher (this seems to require the third person):
Bob Stepno joined the Radford faculty in fall 2007 after more than 20 years as a writer and editor, then seven years as a teacher. He has worked for the nation's oldest (print) newspaper and one of its first online "newspapers." He received his doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in December 2003. Calling him "doctor" still makes him look around for someone wearing a stethoscope.

A note for you
Thank you for choosing this class. If you have questions that aren't addressed in this document—or in any class—come talk about it, or at least send me e-mail (which I usually check several times a day, seven days a week). After all, you're the reason I'm here!

Bob Stepno
rstepno@radford.edu
http://www.radford.edu/rstepno

-30- (used to mean "the end" in the newspaper business)
something like "</html>" on a Web page