COMM 275: Web Design & Usability
TR 10:00am-11:15am
SOC Building Room 003

Loyola University of Chicago
School of Communication
Instructor: Alan Perry
aperry11@luc.edu
Office Hours by Appointment

Course Description

Web design and usability are vital to clear and effective communication on the web. In the not too distant past, familiarity with web design and usability was limited to professional graphic designers and computer scientists. However, recent trends (social media, open source software, blogging, and more) have made web design and usability both a more common and more democratic activity.

This course will explore the design and usability of websites from several perspectives: how they look (aesthetics), how they work (navigability and usability), and how they are made (tools and software). Lectures, demonstrations, and in–class lab time will introduce students to the creative tools and software that power contemporary web design and usability. Emphasis will be on using a variety of tools and resources to meet one's own goals, rather than achieving the level of expert in any one piece of software. We'll also be looking at myriad sources to inspire our design and usability: compellingly–designed websites as well as the work of photographers, print designers, publishers, theorists, and artists.

Knowledge Goals

After the conclusion of this course, students will be expected to demonstrate theoretical and/or applied knowledge of the following:
> Design practice applied to Digital and Internet-Based Media
> How font, color, and form ascribe meaning
> Contemporary Content Management Systems (CMS) such as WordPress, Wix, SquareSpace, and Weebly, and developer-oriented concepts like HTML and CSS
> Web graphics design and aesthetics
> Adaptation to new and constantly-evolving digital media tools

Texts & Course Materials

> A domain name strongly related or identical to your first and last name or brand (~$15 per year)
> Readings as assigned and made available via Sakai
The suggested text for this class is the following:

Krug, Steve. (2014). *Don't Make Me Think Revisited*. New Riders.

SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is subject to change to better fit the goals and needs of the course.
Any changes will be announced in class as soon as possible.

Part 1 – Introduction to Web Design & Usability

WEEK 1
Jan 14 Introductions & Syllabus Review
Jan 16 **Lecture:** A Brief History of the Internet

WEEK 2
Jan 21 **Lecture:** What is a website? What is hosting and what is domain registration? How do you find a domain name? **Domain Name Research & Registration Assigned**
Jan 23 **Lecture:** Content Management Systems Overview; **CMS Research & Analysis Assigned**

Part 2 – Content Management Systems & Search Engine Algorithms

WEEK 3
Jan 28 **Workshop:** WordPress & Wix
Jan 30 **Workshop:** SquareSpace & Weebly

WEEK 4
Feb 4   **Lecture:** User Experience (UX); **Website Critiques Assigned**
Feb 6   **Reading:** Don't Make Me Think, Chapters 1 & 2; **Lecture:** The F-Scan and Writing for the Internet

WEEK 5
Feb 11 **Discussion/Workshop/Brainstorming:** What a website name communicates
Feb 13 **Reading:** Don't Make Me Think, Chapters 6 and 11; **Lecture:** Organizing Information

WEEK 6
Feb 18 **Due:** Website selections for group discussion; **Discussion:** Website critique
Feb 20 **Due:** Domain Name Research & Registration; **Lecture:** Presenting yourself online; **Final Project Proposal & Project Assigned**

WEEK 7
Feb 25 **Lecture:** Basic Color Theory, Palettes, Fonts, & Shapes
Feb 27 **Lecture:** Usability Testing

WEEK 8
Mar 3   Spring Break – No Classes
Mar 5   Spring Break – No Classes

Part 3 – Web Design Aesthetics

WEEK 9
Mar 10 **Workshop:** Adding some spice to your website with HTML + CSS part 1
Mar 12 **Workshop:** HTML + CSS part 2

WEEK 10

Mar 17 Proposal Presentations Group A
Mar 19 Proposal Presentations Group B

Part 4 – Building A Website

WEEK 11

Mar 24 **Studio/Work Day** – Group A Meetings – Wireframes/sketches due
Mar 26 **Studio/Work Day** – Group B Meetings – Wireframes/sketches due

WEEK 12

Mar 31 **Studio/Work Day** – Group A Meetings – Major aesthetic choices made
Apr 2   **Studio/Work Day** – Group B Meetings – Major aesthetic choices made

WEEK 13

Apr 7   **Studio/Work Day** – Group A Meetings – Content has been populated
Apr 9   **Studio/Work Day** – Group B Meetings – Content has been populated

WEEK 14

Apr 14 **Studio/Work Day** – Meetings As-Needed – Usability has been checked via friends/family
Apr 16 **Studio/Work Day** – Meetings As-Needed – Usability has been checked via friends/family

WEEK 15

Apr 21 **Work-in-Progress Lightning Presentations** – Group A
Apr 23 **Work-in-Progress Lightning Presentations** – Group B

WEEK 16 – FINALS WEEK

Projects

Content Management System Platform Research & Analysis Essay – 10 points

Assess and analyze the different CMS platforms available to you. What are the pros and cons of each? Experiment with their systems. What kind of clients are they designed for? What is their pricing plan? Do they support custom coding (HTML/CSS)?

List of CMS platforms:

- SquareSpace
- Wix
- Weebly
- WordPress
- and any others you may be able to find or are interested in/more suitable for your goals – please email me before starting if you want to explore this option!

Rubric:

	0-3	4-5
Pros and Cons	Student has not assessed the minimum amount of CMS platforms; student has not listed the benefits and drawbacks of each platform; student has not explored custom coding capabilities	Student has demonstrated a strong assessment of at least two CMS platforms; student has explored custom coding capabilities for the platform
Pricing Plan Description	Student has not demonstrated research into pricing plans for each CMS platform; prices are not listed or factually incorrect	Student has clearly demonstrated rigorous research into the pricing plans for each of the CMS platforms

Due: 300-word essay, not including images, that compares at least two content management systems

Website Analysis/Review – 10 points

Find 3 websites that you find interesting, visually appealing, or confusing to use. We will discuss some of these websites in class.
Rubric:

	0-3	4-5
Website URLs	Website URLs are not present, or are not functional	All 3 Website URLs are present and functional
Critical Analysis	Student has not demonstrated a critical analysis of the websites, and has instead only listed what they do or do not like	Student demonstrates a critical engagement with the websites, and has described a well-reasoned argument about what they find interesting, appealing,

		or confusing in the website's design

Due: 3 URLs and a 100-word review of each website

Domain Name Research & Registration – 10 points

Select and register a domain name for your website using one of the many domain registrars available.

Rubric: Is the domain name appropriate to your brand or strongly related to your name? Is the domain name professional? Have webhosting needs been addressed? (Pass/Fail)
Due: One domain name and a brief (max 100-word) writeup explaining your domain name and webhosting plan

Final Project Proposal – 10 points

A proposal for your personal website or a website for your real or imagined brand. Address the following:

- Who is the audience for this website (potential future clients, job recruiters, etc.)?
- What is the content management system you will use?
- What will the website content be?
- How many webpages will be on your site?

Also include a rough sketch of the overall website design and interactivity you envision. Include at least 2 pages, i.e. the home page and the about page. Including websites that you find inspiration in is advisable but will not count towards your assessment.

Rubric:

	0-3	4-5
Design Sketch	Design sketch is not present or is incomprehensible	Design sketch clearly shows a rough design of at least two pages
Content & Audience Considerations	Content has not been addressed and the audience is not clear or not critically investigated; no indication of estimated size of the website; proposed website does not demonstrate a challenge to student's capabilities	The audience is clearly described and student demonstrates evidence of strategies to capture audience's attention; content and website size estimates are obtainable yet challenging goals

Due: An in-class powerpoint presentation with at least 5 slides addressing all the above.

Final Project – 50 points

A fully-functional personal website or website for your real or imagined brand.

Rubric:

	0-4	5-8	9-12.5
Usability	Website is difficult to navigate and/or is broken in places	Website has some issues but is generally easy to navigate; information displays correctly most of the time	Website is very easy to navigate and demonstrates an attention to usability concerns
Design Aesthetics	Website has major aesthetic issues that must be resolved	Website has generally strong visual elements; colors are mostly harmonious and do not clash or make text difficult to read	Website is visually exciting and sleek; colors are harmonious and successful design choices appear intentional
Mobile Browser Compatibility	Website does not work on mobile device	Website works on mobile device, but greatly impedes usability	Website works on mobile device and can be intuitively navigated
Grammar/Structure	Text is very poorly structured and/or grammatically incorrect; presence of major spelling errors	Text is generally well-structured but font choices are inconsistent; only minor grammatical or spelling errors	Text is well structured and intuitively found; no spelling or grammar errors

Due: one finished website

Policies

ATTENDANCE/LATENESS

Attendance counts. If you miss more than 6 of the classes without an authorized excuse you will automatically fail this class. After two unexcused absences, your grade will begin to drop by 5 points for each absence. Missed work cannot be made up or excused except in the case of severe illness, death in the family, or religious holiday - these absences must be documented if you'd like to make up missed work. Documentation for a university-authorized absence must be cleared with the professor in advance. Come to class on time. Coming in late disrupts the class, and you'll likely miss important information. It is your responsibility to ask classmates for announcements you may have missed by arriving late. Arriving late repeatedly will bring down your participation grade.

ILLNESS

If you have, or think you have a cold or the flu (swine, bird or whatever) do not come to class. Do not come to class to tell me you are sick. Message me on Slack before class and contact the Wellness Center for advice - and get documentation! Ask a classmate for what you missed before you ask me.

DO NOT come back to class until you are fever-free for 24 hours!

PARTICIPATION

Attendance and lateness policies described above factor into your participation grade, and so does your contribution the community of learning in our classroom. Your participation in class depends on quantity and quality of participation. In this class, you'll attend lectures, discuss, work in groups, and provide peer review feedback to classmates. Your positive and substantive contribution to each of these class elements is expected for a passing grade - doing the bare minimum will earn you a bare minimum grade. Your physical presence in the room is less than bare minimum participation; participation includes attendance, attention, and attitude as well as substantive contributions. Leaving early, texting, checking facebook, chatting, sleeping, eating meals, and doing other non-class related work are distractions to you, me, and your classmates and will bring down your participation grade. If you need to leave class early, please tell me before class starts and sit near the door.

CLASSROOM CITIZENSHIP

Students are expected to respect each other. When you enter a classroom, you are a member of a cohort - a community of learning. Your success depends on your neighbors' success. Learning is a collaborative effort - in discussion, group work, and even lecture, understanding is co-produced. Your questions and perspectives matter, and so do your classmates'. Treat each other with tolerance and understanding. The people you'll interact with in class are your peers and future colleagues. Strive to do better on your own, but also strive to help your classmates to elevate the level of conversation in the classroom. You are responsible for your own work, but you are also responsible to your teacher and

your peers - your positive substantive participation in discussion and group work is a valuable aspect of the class.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Use of technology in the classroom is encouraged! Bring laptops, smartphones, etc. Use note-taking software; use bibliographic software; use the Internet. Class topics are not bound to lecture, discussion, and the room we are sitting in. Take your discussion, questions, exploration online - look up definitions and more information as we discuss and share that with the class. With laptops, smartphones and other communication devices, you have a world of resources to help you learn - use them!

A Warning: Be respectful with your use of technology. Using technology is a skilled literacy and is a privilege - do not take advantage of this privilege. If you have a laptop or smartphone in front of you, expect to be called on to look up additional information. The presence of technology in the classroom does not give you an excuse to be physically present in the room but intellectually absent. If you are not using your technology as a learning tool relevant to this classroom, put it away. Technology can be a distraction to you, me and your classmates. You are here to substantively add to a community of learning. Texting under the table, using headphones to listen to music, messages or videos, giggling at facebook status updates, chatting, etc. during lecture, discussion, workshops, or any other in-class activity is rude! If I suspect that you are not using your laptop, smartphone, or whatever as a learning tool, I will call you out in class. Each time I have to call you out for using technology inappropriately in class, your participation grade will drop by a whole letter grade. If I have to call you out a second time you will be asked to leave the class. If I call you out a third time your technology privileges will be revoked entirely, which will make it very difficult for you to complete the course well.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of the course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g., failing to properly credit a source or using someone else's ideas without clarifying that they are not yours).

This is an academic community; being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse for not properly referencing your sources.

It is dishonest to:

turn in the same work for two classes without speaking to your profs first;

turn in a paper you have not written yourself; or copy from another student or use a "cheat sheet" during an exam, unless otherwise allowed by the course professor.

LATE WORK/ LOST WORK

Late work will not be accepted. Extensions will not be granted. Incompletes will not be assigned. Make-up work will not be assigned unless pre-arranged, or due to an authorized documented absence. If you anticipate you will miss an assignment, please discuss it with the professor early in the semester to arrange an alternative. You must give at least one week notice to arrange alternative exam/quiz locations and times. Save early, save often, and archive your emails. If an assignment is lost or you discover a discrepancy later in the semester, email documentation will be required (e.g., if you are sure you handed in an assignment that I do not have a grade listed for, be prepared to show me your dated original files or dated emailed work). Always double-check your emails when you send in assignments - all files should be PDFs; all links should be functioning. It is your responsibility to make sure I get your work - it is not my responsibility to tell you your file was corrupted, or your email bounced, or to remind you to hand in work.

GRADING

The grade given to average work on all assignments is a C. So, if you just complete the bare minimum for each assignment, expect to earn a C for your work. Grades of B or A indicate impressive achievement above the average. Grades of A in particular indicate especially exceptional work. Grades below C indicate inadequacies or errors in any or all of the grading criteria.

The grading scale is as follows:

A: 100-94

A-: 93-90

B+: 89-88

B: 87-83

B-: 82-80

C+ 79-78

C: 77-73

C-: 72-70

D+: 69-68

D: 67-63

D-: 62-60

F: 59-0

Percentage grades are rounded to the nearest whole number, not up. An 89.45 % is a B+, not an A-.

Students will receive comments and grades for each assignment. It is your responsibility to keep track of the grades you earn. I will not send you updates on cumulative grades. I will not send you warnings when you drop below some point value. I will not send you prompts to participate more or to work harder. Again, it is your responsibility to keep track of the grades you earn. The total points for the class and for the assignment are listed in the syllabus so at any point in the semester, you should be able to calculate an approximation of your grade easily. Students may meet with me during office hours throughout the semester to discuss their grades and comments.

If you would like a grade on an assignment reevaluated you must make an appointment to visit me during office hours. Bring the assignment, my comments, and a written explanation of how your work met the requirements of the assignment, and showed impressive achievement above the average. You have two weeks from the day I return the assignment to dispute my assessment of that work. After two weeks, I will assume you are satisfied with my assessment, and I will not reconsider the assessment for any reason. If you'd like to discuss a grade to clarify comments or get advice on improving in the next assignment, make an appointment for office hours and bring specific questions.

MANAGING LIFE CRISES AND FINDING SUPPORT

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a meeting with me during office hours. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa.

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;

- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml .

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.