

Course Description

Throughout the past decade, the convergence of digital images, sound and text has resulted in the emergence of interactive digital media. Integrated through powerful tools, these elements allow us to convey ideas and artistic expression in ways never before possible. This course is an introduction to the principles of designing for this new form of communication, focusing on the delivery of creative content. It is geared toward students without substantial experience in digital media, but skilled in their respective artistic fields – painting, writing, sculpture, film, animation, theater, music, etc. Students work with industry-standard software tools, developing the basic skills and design concepts necessary to successfully bring their creative visions to this new medium.

This is not a Web development class – it is a course in the foundations, tools, and techniques of interactive design. Course topics include concept development, information design, interface design, interactivity, motion graphics, digital audio and video, technical design, and project management. The class sessions will feature a combination of lectures, demonstrations, technical labs, critiques and guest lectures. Students will complete design/tech assignments and related readings, and will be expected to contribute to the class's weekly discussions and critiques.

Prerequisites

Familiarity with the Macintosh computer required. No programming experience required. No graphics software experience required, although experience with Photoshop is helpful. Core software will include Adobe PhotoShop, Macromedia Dreamweaver, and Flash. The course will also introduce Macromedia Director, digital video effects, QuickTime and QuickTime VR, and sound editing software.

Who Should Take the Class?

Students with an interest in and curiosity about interactive media design and development. Students from a broad variety of disciplines are encouraged to apply – after all, it's called "**multimedia**" for a reason! People with visual design backgrounds, as well as those without, can all contribute to and benefit from the class.

Course Structure

The course will be divided into four 3-week segments covering the 12 remaining weeks of the term, plus Final Project Presentations the last week. Each 3-week segment will focus primarily on one area of interactive design. Each 3-hour class meeting will include a lecture, demonstrations/presentations, and lab/critique. There will also be some guest lectures. Sean Dack, our TA, will offer 2 to 3 Lab hours at a regular time each week so that you can bring in questions and issues for answers and assistance. The specific day and time of these hours is TBD. I will be available mostly through e-mail. Toward the end of the semester, I will be in the Lab at hours TBD to help with final projects.

I will be encouraging collaboration throughout the class – get cozy with your classmates and learn each others' interests and areas of experience. You will be asked to team-up with someone for at least one of the assignments.

I'm still honing the syllabus and reading list – more to come on those next week.

Here are some thoughts on how to get the most out of the class:

(Thanks to Jennifer Fuchel, Assoc. Prof., New England School of Art and Design)

- ALL questions are useful questions.
- Ideas are hard to come by - if you are struggling with finding ideas for the projects to come, don't be hard on yourself. Think of things that are part of your everyday life, your kids, your dog, your walk to class or work, the things that really drive you crazy about your neighbors, the dream you had last night, etc. Discipline yourself to write and sketch anything that comes to mind. Plan brainstorming sessions with your classmates.
- Even computer gurus don't know all the answers - a program like Adobe PhotoShop is incredibly deep and rich - there are always many routes to a solution and perhaps an infinite number of outcomes. Gurus do know that if they don't have the answer, someone else might - so they ask.
- Frustration is an extremely important part of the learning process; your brain is in the act of reforming itself, creating new synapses, building new connections. Let it happen for a while, then save your documents, leave the Lab, get a cappuccino and lie in the grass for 20 minutes. Then, go back to the Lab and try it again.
- Don't be shy - talk to me, the TA, other instructors, other students, a passerby. Chances are, others are experiencing, or have experienced, very similar feelings to your own.
- Buy reference books. The "Visual QuickStart Guides" series from Peachpit Press are generally excellent and approachable for getting started.