Writing for New Media

Course Description

In this course, we consider the theoretical and practical aspects of new media. How do new media affect reading, writing, art, and communities? What are the potentialities of new media (including and beyond the worldwide web)? Have they been realized? What is the difference between hypertext and cybertext? How are they different from “physical” text, and how does the difference impact project design? And in a fundamental sense, What is new media? What is it good for? What is its potential as a form of mass media, and what other possibilities exist as a micromedia? Since this course seeks to enhance your understanding of your personal interests as well as introduce you to new fields, you should be ready to keep an open mind when developing projects and completing course assignments. We will cover a wide range of possibilities in new media that will suggest options in several areas:

- Business marketing and promotion
- Education, including humanities computing
- Art and creative writing
- Nonprofit and small business
- Social, political, and special interest groups

Textbooks and Other Materials

1. N. Katherine Hayles, Writing Machines: 0-262-58215-5
3. Lev Manovich, The Language New Media: 0-262-63255-1
4. A notebook to record class lectures, focused writing, and homework exercises.
5. A folder to collect course papers
6. Web server space (visit the Poly Help Desk or use your own)

Learning Objectives

1. Learn advanced HTML and related markup languages
2. Become an independent producer through use of reference materials
3. Communicate in writing about hypertext and new media
4. Practice techniques for working collaboratively on multidisciplinary teams
5. Provide a foundation for future study

Course Requirements

Attendance and Preparation: On-time attendance for the entirety of class meetings is also required. The careful preparation of assignments is also a strict requirements of the course. Assignments must be handed in on time in order to be counted for a grade, but all assignments are required to pass.

Homework Assignments: These additional assignments require about one hour of your time. I will check to see that they are done at the start of class.

Project: Every student will design a significant hypertext project during the semester. We will work on the project in stages. The project should respond directly to one of the client types above.

Quizzes and Exams: Quizzes are both announced and unannounced. The midterm is during our regular class meeting; the Registrar schedules the date and time for the final.

Reading Assignments: Most every day, there is a reading assignment due. These assignments range from the practical to the philosophical and are drawn from the major research in the field. We will discuss how
to read difficult assignments in class, but in general, leave plenty of time for reading, read assignment more than once before class, and take notes on what you read. Please make sure to bring the book or printout to class with you (it’s not necessary to print out tutorials).

Wiki Posts: I have set up a wiki on my website. Every time there is a wiki assignment, you should add a substantial article to the wiki (at least 500 words). This article will be something that is relevant to the class and also helpful to people learning to use hypertext.

Grading

Your final course grade will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wiki Articles</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Context report (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Paper prototype (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Proposal presentations (10%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Proposal letter (5%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Usability script (5%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Usability report (5%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final presentation with documentation (15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes, homework and spot-checks</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam (undergraduates) or seminar paper (graduate students)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Late assignments are read but they do not receive a grade. However, you must complete all assignments satisfactorily in order to pass the course. You should keep a copy of all assignments you hand in.

Assignments are scored out of their ultimate course value. The usual standards apply, 93-100 percent being equivalent to an A and below 65 meaning F. You are reminded that a grade of “A” is not given for work that is average: average work is given a “C” (between 72 and 77 percent). A “B” is given for above-average work and an “A” for excellent.

Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated and may result in punishment that includes failure of the course (see the policy outlined in the college’s Code of Conduct). You may not use notes or other materials during quizzes or exams unless so stated in the instructions. Please be advised that a person who allows someone to cheat (by allowing someone to see a test paper or communicating test questions, for instance) is just as guilty as the person who does the cheating and will be equally punished. By handing in assignments, quizzes, or exams, you attest that they are your own original work. You are reminded that to best combat plagiarism, you should close all source materials when writing. In addition, you must cite all sources outside of your own experience.

Tentative Schedule

January 23

Lecture: Key hypertext terms: associative, arbitrary, interactive, multimedia

Reference:
- W3Schools, “XHML Introduction” [http://www.w3schools.com/xhtml/xhtml_summary.asp]

Lab: markup basics
January 30
Homework: Browsing journal
Reading:
• Meyrowitz, “Hypertext - Does It Reduce Cholesterol, Too?”
Lab: coding an HTML page

February 6--Evaluation Paper Due
Homework: Discussion board
Reading:
• W3Schools, “CSS Basic” [http://www.w3schools.com/css/]
• Manovich, Chapters 1 & 2
Lab: cascading style sheets

February 13--Choose Project Area
Homework: Discussion board
Reading:
• Manovich, Chapters 3 & 4
Lab: Incorporating multimedia

February 20--Wiki Article 1 Due
Homework: Competitor evaluations
Reading:
• Manovich, Chapters 5 & 6
Lab: Color theory; using color

February 27--Hand in Context Report
Homework: Competitor evaluations
Reading:
• Krug downloads [http://www.sensible.com]
• Bordewijk & Kaam, “Towards a New Classification of Tele-Information Systems”
• W3Schools, “JavaScript Basic” [http://www.w3schools.com/js/]
Lab: Browser scripts (introduction)

March 5--Bring Paper Prototype
Lab: User testing (paper prototypes)

March 12--Graduate Students: Pick Paper Topic
Homework: Layout sketches
Reading: Krug, Chapters 1-5
Presentations: Project Proposal
March 26---Proposal Letter Due
Homework: Layout sketches
Reading:
• Levine, “In Search of the Holy Grial” http://www.alistapart.com/articles/holygrail
• Holzschlag, “Thinking Outside the Grid” http://www.alistapart.com/articles/outsidethegrid
• Blue Robot, “The Layout Reservoir” http://www.bluerobot.com/web/layouts/
• Krug, Chapters 6-9
Lab: Layout with CSS

April 2---Hand in Usability Script
Reading:
• Norman, “Three Levels of Design”
• Krug, Chapters 6-9
Lab: Information design

April 9---Graduate Students: Hand in Paper Proposal
Homework: MOO
Reading:
• Krug, Chapters 6-9
• Boutin “Search Engine Optimization” http://www.webmonkey.com/01/23/index1a.html
• Seda, “Winning the SEO Battle”
Lab: User testing

April 16---Wiki Article 2 Due
Homework: User testing
Reading:
• W3Schools, “Basic XML” (read at least intro, how to use, syntax, elements, browsers, viewing, and CSS) http://www.w3schools.com/xml/
• W3Schools, “RSS Basics” http://www.w3schools.com/rss/ Lab: Other markup languages

April 23---Usability Report Due
Lab: Programming for small screens
Presentations: Undergraduate final presentations

April 30
Homework: Discussion board
Reading: Hayles, Writing Machines

May 7
Graduate final project presentations / undergraduate final exam