

GCOM 362 : Int. Creative Web Page Design

Spring 2009 | January 17 – May 20, 2009

Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:10pm

Rm: SCC Main Campus COS 108

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Office Hours: By email request

Class website: abidevisuals.com/362

GCOM site: scc.losrios.edu/gcom

GCOM Blog: gcomscc.blogspot.com

Design Education

Regardless of where it is seen, communication is the most vital aspect of graphic design. The best designers stay informed about trends, issues, inventions, and developments to help best facilitate their specific message to a specific audience within given limitations—financial, physical, or psychological. This holds especially true for web design, as standards, browsers and operating systems continue to evolve (along with people's sensibilities and attention spans.) So must a designer's ability to work with them.

Design education is a lifetime activity. Constant change will require constant renewal. It is not a career for a slow-paced, nostalgic person. To keep up with this fast-changing field you must approach the basic principles and practices with a flexible, curious mind.

A common misconception among people new to digital graphics is that computers make the process so easy and automatic that anyone can become a designer. They fear that because these digital tools have so many automated features, any person with little or no formal training can call themselves a designer and make money. (And believe me, they do!) You will see through the course of this class that simply owning Dreamweaver doesn't make you a web designer. Only through gaining a firm knowledge of the mechanics of presentational code, then using Dreamweaver to help put those in motion, will you begin to be able to navigate the many quirks and challenges the internet presents.

No software program can make intelligent design decisions, choose just the right color combinations or generate concepts and ideas. This is the domain of the professionally trained and talented artist. ***A software program is of no use if you have not developed good coding and design skills.***

A New Greener Approach:

The GCOM Department at SCC recently became the first community college in the U.S. to join the Designers Accord—an international coalition of designers, educators, researchers, engineers, business consultants, and corporations, who are working together to create positive environmental and social impact. As part of GCOM's effort, we are planning to implement more "sustainable" practices in the way we teach and run our program. (For more info on the Designers Accord, visit www.designersaccord.org)

Required Text:

Dreamweaver CS4: Visual Quickstart Guide

By Tom Negrino & Dori Smith

Publisher: Peachpit Press

ISBN-10: 0-321-50302-3

Stylin' With CSS (2nd edition)

By Charles Wyke-Smith

Publisher: New Riders

ISBN-10: 0321525566

Required Software

You must have access to the following software: Dreamweaver CS4 and one of the following: Photoshop, Illustrator, Fireworks, or other robust graphics editing program; Firefox web browser and one other web browser software (Safari, Explorer, Mozilla, Opera etc.) Access to both PC and Mac computers is recommended.

www.collegesoftware.org (click on the Adobe Student Software link.) has special pricing that is only for California Community College students and faculty.

Prerequisite

GCOM 361 with a grade of "C" or better or the equivalent.

Please be advised that knowing how to make original graphics in Web file format is a prerequisite. I can not provide graphics for you. You are responsible for getting appropriate graphics for your site and will be graded on the appropriateness of your graphics. It is nearly impossible to pass this class without meeting the prerequisite. Taking GCOM 360 (Graphics for the Web) concurrently will satisfy the prerequisite. I am happy to discuss your individual situation if you need advisement.

Goals and Requirements

Although we will review these concepts, these are some skills you will need *prior to the class* to do well in this class. If 3 or more of these concepts are above your skill level, you may need to take or repeat the beginning class, GCOM 361 or participate in additional reading and practice to catch up:

- Basic HTML (or at least be acquainted with the concept)
- Know how to make your own graphics
- The Dreamweaver Interface, how to upload and download, open, edit and save files
- Familiarity with the concept behind CSS

What you should be able to accomplish at the end of this class:

- Redesign an existing site
- Write a creative brief, and a project proposal
- Create a full, professional looking site that is search-optimized, accessible and functions on multiple browsers.

Attendance: Mandatory Attendance Required for the first class, midterm and last classes. Attending lectures will help make the most of your learning experience. If you miss THREE OR MORE classes, and have not discussed these absences with me, I may drop you from the class. You are still expected to turn in your assignments by email on or before the start of each lecture. Attendance is also used to weight grades at the end of the semester, meaning, if you ended up with a 79% in the class, but did every assignment and came to every class, you will most likely earn a B.

Assignments: Please keep a backup of all files that you upload, in the rare case that they are accidentally deleted. Also keep a copy of all our email correspondence where grades are noted, just in case there is a question at the end of the semester when final grades are assigned.

Class Policies:

No guests are allowed in class lectures — only registered students please.

If you are planning on missing a class (vacation, etc) you need to let me know in advance so that we can make appropriate arrangements for missed lessons/tutorials.

Feel free to tape record lectures, but your recording device must be compact and you must come to class early enough to set it up without disturbing the class—do not bring in your boom box to record lectures and do not interrupt the class to set up your recorder.

NO active phones, NO text messaging etc. in class.

Please raise your hand to ask questions or speak up if I'm not looking. Your questions are very important for me to answer and if I don't have an immediate answer, I'll let you know by email.

If you miss lectures, you are responsible for getting the tutorial and knowledge on your own. READ THE BOOK(S) and RESEARCH ONLINE. Please e-mail for questions about class or assignments. Do not wait until you see me again if it will affect your grade.

It is the student's responsibility to initiate discussion with the instructor regarding illness, planned absence, or other situations like dropping the class. *It is also your responsibility to bring it to my attention any learning or english language problems you are aware of which might affect your performance.* It is your responsibility to drop the class if you no longer want to be enrolled.

Only extreme circumstances warrant a grade of "incomplete."

- A) Student experiences an extreme situation which is unexpected. (Death in family, serious illness requiring student to miss several classes, employment loss)
- B) Student's grades are passing (C or higher) at the time of extreme situation.
- C) Student notifies instructor within 10 days of occurrence mentioned in item A.
(Home computer failure is not an acceptable excuse since the lab at SCC is available to everyone.)

GCOM MacLab Computer lab hours:

Technology Building Rm. T109

Mon–Thurs: 8 AM – 10 PM

Fri: 8 AM – 5 PM

Sat-Sun: 10 AM – 5 PM

The computer lab is equipped with Macintosh G5s loaded with the latest software. They are for you to use for class projects —please treat them with respect. Every time you use the computer lab you MUST sign-in at the computer near the door using your student ID number. The lab attendance records generate funds for new equipment and software.

The lab coordinators and tutors are available for assistance if you are experiencing difficulty with the homework. They have been asked NOT to hand-feed you answers. They are there to help you learn and remember the material. There should always at least one lab employee close by to help you, but do not use the help as a crutch or you will not learn the material. I also recommend that you bring your text book to the lab as reference material, especially during busy hours when one-on-one help is harder to get.

Projects

A series of tutorials will be assigned to assist you in developing your skills and to apply the tools of Adobe Dreamweaver CS4. Most of the tutorials in the first half of the class will build on the previous week towards a "finished" redesign which will be presented as your midterm. The second half of the course will be spent creating a new site from scratch using skills learned in the first half of the semester along with new ones each week. The finished site will be presented as your final. Presenting your midterm and final projects is mandatory.

Please current with your assignments as they build on the previous ones. Each week you will be graded for credit, with letter grades assigned for the midterm and final.

Please place priority on following directions of the tutorials and learning core skills over trying to dazzle me with effects. You will get to be creative on the final project. **All projects should be completed using Adobe Dreamweaver CS4.**

Each topic will be discussed in lecture in conjunction with the textbook. Assignments will be due approximately every week on Monday at 5 p.m., uploaded to your site. It will be considered "turned in" once you email me the URL to the file in question. Weekly assignments are NOT accepted late.

Projects will be graded on the following criteria

- Did you follow the directions?
- Computer skills — Do you understand how to use Dreamweaver's tools? Do you know which tools are most effective in terms of your idea?
- Timeliness —Did you meet your deadline?
- Standard scale: >90% = A, >80% = B, etc. Total points earned determines your grade — a grade of "F" will be assigned if less than 60% of the total points are earned.