

MMC 3260/5015

Your Digital Life

Course Syllabus

Welcome to the online syllabus of MMC 3260 / MMC 5015: Your Digital Life! This is a course about how to build and maintain your online presence, your digital identity, so to speak. Your digital identity includes everything you read, write and do online – email, social media, blogging, personal websites, shopping, archiving your professional work, and gaming. Your digital life is becoming more and more important as the internet and the web permeate every facet of our lives.

Class Meeting Time

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:50 to 1:40 p.m., Florida Gym 0230.

Course Objectives

This class will teach you how to build and maintain a professional and personal online presence that will help you in your career. It also will help you learn to make the best use of the tools the internet gives us for telling stories and presenting information.

By the end of this semester you will:

- Establish your own *online brand*
- Register an internet *domain name* (such as yourname.com) and begin populating it with your work
- Create a *blog* with at least a dozen posts
- Develop an *online resume*
- Build a professional presence on at least two *social networks*
- Begin an *online portfolio* you can use to get a job
- Learn how to maximize the value of your online presence through *search-engine optimization* and *mobile-responsive design*

- Build a *personal website* showcasing the information about yourself you want to share with the world.

This course includes significant content about building websites. You will learn introductory web design using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML5), Cascading Stylesheets (CSS3) and basic Photoshop. You will be able to create web pages by hand, but you will **not** be taught Flash, Javascript, CGI scripting or the like, although you are free to experiment with them.

Course Difficulty

If you've talked to other students from previous semesters about this course, then you've probably already heard that this course is a lot of work. This is true: this is not an "easy" class. While the concepts of good website design seem straight forward, applying those concepts correctly and professionally is not. You will spend many hours on this course. This course will likely take more time than you anticipate.

This course may appear daunting, but we assume that you are entering this course with little to no web design experience. We will guide you through the process of web design, but the most successful students are those that take initiative and responsibility for their learning, and seek out knowledge and skills beyond what we can cover in class.

Website Last Updated: 12/06/2013

About the Course

Undergraduate Prerequisites

- JOU 1100, Intro to Journalism
- JOU 3109c, Multimedia Writing
- Junior standing or permission of the instructor

Readings

The following textbooks were previously required for the class, but no longer. These books have now been changed to *recommended*:

- HTML5 & CSS3 Visual QuickStart Guide (7th Edition) by Elizabeth Castro and Bruce Hyslop, ISBN: 0321719611.
- Journalism Next by Mark Briggs, ISBN: 1452227853

The Castro book is a good reference for HTML5 and CSS3. We will teach you many codes and share various online resources with you, but many students find it helpful to have a reference book next to them while they code.

The Briggs book explains how the internet and social media are changing journalism, and how journalists can stay relevant in the current media environment.

There will, however, be several online readings required each week. You'll find these readings under the Calendar. The reading list will likely be updated as the semester progresses, so be sure to check it regularly.

Class Meetings

Attendance is very important. Much of what we cover will not come from the readings, and many real-life examples of good and poor web design will be shown in class.

I will occasionally take attendance in lecture. Attendance in lecture will be taken 5 times throughout the semester on random days. Attendance will be noted in lecture by signing an attendance sheet: if you do not sign the attendance sheet, I have no proof that you were in lecture!

If you miss class due to illness or any other EXCUSED reason, [email me BEFORE class starts](#). If this is not possible, email me as soon as possible. You are responsible for all material missed.

Please be prompt for all classes. Everyone is late occasionally, but it is impolite to your fellow students and the instructor if you regularly straggle in late. Also, turn off your cell phone during class. Because this is a web design class, many of you will likely bring your laptop to class. This is encouraged, but please stay on task during lecture so as not to distract the students around you.

Labs

Labs will be conducted online this semester. This is the first time we have tried this, so bear with us as we work out any kinks in the system. Online labs will allow you to learn the material at your own rate and convenience. Each week, several short videos will be available in e-Learning for you to watch. You will be taught hands-on skills for working with HTML, CSS, Wordpress, and Photoshop. You will also have short lab assignments due most weeks, as noted on the Lab calendar.

If you struggle with online labs, don't worry: we will also offer two **optional, face-to-face lab sessions** a week. Dave Stanton will be available to help you with any questions you have. He will assist students on a first-come, first served basis.

The following lab times are available each week:

- Tuesday, 10:40 a.m. to 12:35 p.m., Weimer 3028
- Thursday, 4:05 to 6:00 p.m., Weimer 3028

Computer Use

This course requires the use of e-Learning and email. Assignments, grades, and discussion boards will be found on E-Learning. Students are responsible for reading announcements and emails from class. If you bring a computer to class, *please use it for class-related activities only so as not to disturb students around you.*

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. [These evaluations are conducted online.](#) Students will be notified when evaluations are open, which will be toward the end of the course. Your feedback is very important to us, as it helps us improve the course for future students.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation of the necessary accommodation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. Please expect to visit the instructor during office hours to discuss your needs. This course conforms to all requirements of the ADA and handles with sensitivity all matters related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Please alert the instructor if any issues arise.

Emergencies and Illness

Despite our best-laid plans, semesters don't always finish as strong as they start. Family emergencies, personal struggles, and illness can come up suddenly and seriously disrupt your coursework. Should an emergency happen that hinders your ability to complete your schoolwork, please let Professor Carlson know as soon as possible so that we can help you complete your schoolwork in a timely manner. Dennis was once very sick one semester of undergraduate and was hospitalized for two weeks at the end of the semester, so he knows how sudden these things can come up, and how disruptive they can be for your schooling.

If any emergency comes up this semester, please let your instructors (in your other classes as well) know as soon as possible. You don't have to fully reveal the nature of your emergency, but the more upfront you are with your instructors, the more willing they are to work with you. And if something comes up it's nothing to be embarrassed about: it happens to at least a couple students every semester in a large class like this, so we are used to meeting students' needs.

Assignments

Blog

If you want to build a professional, online identity, you need content. This semester, you will create a Wordpress blog and post regularly, about once a week, or 12 posts minimum. Ideally, your blog should be something relevant to your professional interests. For example, if you want to be a sports writer, then your blog should primarily be about sports, or even better, a subsection of sports (like college sports).

You will be shown in lab how to set up a Wordpress blog. If you already have a professional blog and would like to continue developing it, let Professor Carlson know and we can work something out.

Your blog will be graded twice in the semester, as noted on the Calendar. Your first six posts are due midway through the semester, and your second six posts are due toward the end. Your blog will be graded on the following criteria:

- Frequency and consistency of posts (are they on a schedule? Are they spaced regularly or posted all at the last minute?)
- Writing, mechanics, grammar
- Use of hyperlinks, multimedia
- Linked to social networks, personal website
- Posts around a topic area: do they fall within one or two subject areas? Are these subject areas relevant to your professional interests?
- Length of posts: generally, 400-600 words. Are longer topics broken into multiple parts?

[List of Student Blogs, Fall 2013](#)

Assignments

Throughout the semester, you will have a variety of assignments, many of them coming directly from the online lab videos. Lab assignments will be graded on completion: if you turn them in on time and do what was asked, you will get credit. Grading criteria for other assignments will be explained closer to assignment due dates. The Calendar will be updated throughout the semester with new assignments; you will also be given reminders in class, through email, or through e-Learning.

Late work for assignments will NOT be accepted.

Personal Website

Half of your course grade will come from a personal website that you will design throughout the semester. Details about what is required will be noted on the course website. You will turn in the first draft of your personal website in Week 9. Your instructors will evaluate your work and provided detailed, written feedback within 3 weeks. The second draft of your personal website is due during Week 15. You are expected to make improvement, based on feedback from your instructors, as well as to add to it significantly.

Calendar

The calendar is tentative and may be updated as the semester progresses.

All of the course readings can be found online. If for some reason a link is broken, please [let Professor Carlson know](#).

Week 1 (begins 1/6)

Classes begin 1/6. Course Introduction.

Required Readings:

- None

Assignments:

- None

Week 2 (begins 1/13)

Taking Stock of Your Online Identity, and How to Use Social Networks Professionally

Required Readings:

- [Online identity: is authenticity or anonymity more important?](#)
- [Protecting your online identity](#)
- [Managing your professional reputation on social media](#)
- [Seven social media myths busted for professionals](#)

Assignments:

- Set-up your GitHub account; **DUE Sunday, Jan. 19, 11:59 p.m.**
- Set-up your Wordpress blog; post first entry; **DUE Sunday, Jan. 19, 11:59 p.m.** Submit link to Carlson via e-Learning (under Assignments).

Week 3 (begins 1/20)

Building Your Online Brand

Required Readings:

- [5 key strategies to build your online brand](#)
- [Business owners share ways to build your brand experience online](#)
- [Building your personal brand online \(PDF download, 133 Kb\)](#)
- [9 steps to build your personal brand \(and your career\)](#)
- [Students, here's how to kick-start your personal brand online](#)

Optional Readings:

- [Create the perfect favicon](#)
- [Dynamic Drive: Favicon generator](#): A nifty website that will convert .png, .jpg, and .gif files into .ico, which is used for some favicons.

Assignments:

- Continue blogging, posting about once a week.

Week 4 (begins 1/27)

Web Design Process: Goals, Audiences, and Strategies; Site-Mapping and Wireframing

Required Readings:

- [Following a web design process](#)
- [6 phases of the website design and development process](#)
- [The nightmare of choosing a domain name](#)
- [12 rules for choosing the right domain name](#)
- [FTP for beginners](#)
- [Design criticism and the creative process](#)
- [Audiences, outcomes, and determining user needs](#)
- [Ultimate guide to website wireframing](#)
- [Responsive design with mockups](#)
- [Why you should build a sitemap before designing your site](#)

Optional Readings:

- [Following through with post-launch strategy](#)
- [How web servers work](#)
- [10 important factors to consider before choosing a web host](#)
- [Choosing a web hosting company: Five things you shouldn't let pass you by](#)

- [Tutorial: A beginner's guide to wireframing](#)
- [Sitemap tutorial](#)
- [Google information about sitemaps](#)
- [Testing websites in game console browsers](#)

Assignments:

- Lab Assignment: HTML Quick Fix; **DUE Sunday, Feb. 2, 11:59 p.m.** Submit via GitHub.

Week 5 (begins 2/3)

Web Design Do's and Don'ts

Required Readings:

- [Personality in design](#)
- [Designing fun](#)
- [Design choices can cripple a website](#)
- [Testing content](#)
- [Usability testing demystified](#)
- [Good web site navigation – Reaching the information instantly](#)
- [How to design the best navigation bar for your website](#)
- [10 principles of navigation design and why quality navigation is so crucial](#)

Optional Readings:

- [Web pages that suck – Learn good web design by looking at bad web design](#)

Assignments:

- Lab Assignment: HTML Links and Images; **DUE Sunday, Feb. 9, 11:59 p.m.** Submit via GitHub.

Week 6 (begins 2/10)

Visual Web Design, or, How *Not* to Make Your Page Look Like it was Designed by a Five-Year-Old

Required Readings:

- [Contrast is king](#)

- [Contrast and meaning](#)
- [Contrast rebellion](#)
- [Visual decision making](#)
- [Whitespace](#)
- [How to create a visual scheme for your online brand](#)

Assignments:

- Sitemap and Wireframe; **DUE Sunday, Feb. 13, 11:55 p.m.** Submit to Carlson via e-Learning (under Assignments).

Week 7 (begins 2/17)

Visual Web Design, continued

Required Readings:

- [How to design a proper banner – one that actually works](#)
- [Good designers redesign, great designers realign](#)
- [More meaningful typography](#)
- [On web typography](#)

Assignments:

- None

Week 8 (begins 2/24)

Recap on HTML and CSS

Required Readings:

- None

Assignments:

- First Six Blog Entries; **DUE Thursday, Feb. 27, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 9: Spring Break (March 1-8)

Week 10 (begins 3/10)

Mobile First: Designing for a Mobile World

Required Readings:

- [Client relationships and the multi-device web](#)
- [Uncle Sam wants you \(to optimize your content for mobile\)](#)
- [Apps vs. the web](#)
- [Responsive web design](#)
- [Mo' pixels mo' problems](#)
- [Mobile first design: Why it's great and why it sucks](#)

Optional Readings:

- [9 awesome examples of effective mobile website design](#)
- [e-Book: Best and Worst of the Mobile Web](#)
- [Mobile website design: 30 pro tips](#)

Assignments:

- Personal Website, part 1; **DUE Thursday, March 13, 11:59 p.m.** Submit via GitHub.

Week 11 (begins 3/17)

Website Critiques; Intro to Multimedia: Audio and Video for the Web

Required Readings:

- [Designing with audio: What is sound good for?](#)
- [Digital audio basics](#)
- [How to create a podcast](#)
- [Video tutorial: How to create a podcast](#)

Optional Readings:

- [iTunes: Making a podcast](#)

Assignments:

- None

Week 12 (begins 3/24)

Audio and Video for the Web, continued

Required Readings:

- [8 ways to shoot video like a pro](#)
- [How to produce video interviews](#)
- [Seven best practices for video SEO](#)

Assignments:

- Feedback on Classmates' Websites; **DUE Thursday, March 27, 11:59 p.m.** Submit to Carlson via e-Learning (under Assignments).

Week 13 (begins 3/31)

Search Engine Optimization

Required Readings:

- [Google's Search engine optimization starter guide \(PDF download, 8 Mb\)](#)

Assignments:

- None.

Week 14 (begins 4/7)

How Online Advertising Works, and Marketing with Social Media

Required Readings:

- [Study suggests fake web traffic is worse than you thought](#)
- [The most hated advertising techniques](#)
- [16 social media marketing tips from the pros](#)
- [Whiting out the ads, but at what cost?](#)

Optional Readings:

- [23 badly placed internet ads](#)
- [Is ad blocking the problem?](#)
- [Ad blocking: Theft or fair use?](#)

- [The ad-blocker's dilemma](#)
- [Why ad blocking is devastating to the sites you love](#)
- [.com Disclosures: How to make effective disclosures in digital advertising. \(PDF from the FTC\)](#)

Assignments:

- Lab Assignment 4: CSS typography; **DUE Thursday, April 10, 11:59 p.m.** Submit via GitHub.

Week 15 (begins 4/14)

Online Ethics: When is it Stealing, Borrowing, Imitating, and Using Other Peoples' Content?

Required Readings:

- [Fair use information](#)
- [Public domain information](#)
- [Fair use for educational purposes](#)

Optional Readings:

- [Creative Commons](#)

Assignments:

- Lab Assignment 5: CSS selectors; **DUE Thursday, April , 11:59 p.m.** Submit via GitHub.

Week 16 (begins 4/21)

Communicating on the web: How the Professionals Do It.

Required Readings:

- [Should you be designing with QR codes?](#)
- [Principles of minimalist web design, with examples](#)
- [The how and why of minimalism](#)
- [Less is more: Fundamentals of minimalist web design](#)
- [Designing for services beyond the screen](#)
- [12 cool HTML5 geolocation ideas](#)

Optional Readings:

- [QR code generator](#)

Assignments:

- Second Six Blog Entries; **DUE Tuesday, April 22, 11:55 p.m.**

Week 16 (begins 12/2)

Where Do You Go From Here? Ways to Teach Yourself After Class Concludes

Required Readings:

- None.

Assignments:

- Personal Website, part 2; **DUE Tuesday, April 22, 11:55 p.m.** Submit via GitHub.

Grading

This class utilizes the following grading scale:

- A) 92-100%
- A-) 90-91.99%
- B+) 88-89.99%
- B) 82-87.99%
- B-) 80-81.99%
- C+) 78-79.99%
- C) 72-77.99%
- C-) 70-71.99%
- D+) 68-69.99%
- D) 62-67.99%
- D-) 60-61.99%
- E) 0-59.99%

The grading scale is non-negotiable. A final grade of 87.99%, for instance, is a B. All grades are final unless questions about grades are addressed in writing within **1 week after the grade is posted**. If you have concerns about your grades please check with me sooner in the semester rather than later.

More information about: [UF grading policies](#).

Course Requirements

Your semester grade will be calculated as follows:

- Blog: 15%
- Assignments and Quizzes: 25%
- Lecture Attendance: 10%
- Personal Website, part 1: 20%
- Personal Website, part 2: 30%

Late Work and Make-up Work

Assignments turned in late will **not be accepted**. If the personal website project is turned in late, you will be deducted 1 full letter grade (10%) for each day or partial day the project is late.

Make-up work is not permitted. However, under an extreme circumstance, if you have an excused absence AND the instructor was notified in advance, an exception may be made.

Extra Credit

Extra credit may be offered throughout the semester. This opportunities will be announced in class or via Announcements on e-Learning.

Academic Honesty

All work completed for this course must respect the intellectual property of others. When using somebody else's copyrighted material, whether words, images, media, or ideas, proper credit must be given. If direct quotations are used, they must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited. If copyrighted material is used indirectly, it must still be properly cited!

If in doubt, include a citation. If you have any questions at all, ask your instructors before the project is submitted. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse!

When you completed the registration form at the University of Florida, you signed the following statement:

"I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University."

When submitting work for this course, the following honor pledge is implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

If you are aware of academic dishonesty, please notify the instructor or contact the Student Honor Court (392-1631) or Cheating Hotline (392-6999).

Special Notes Concerning Plagiarism on the Web

Stealing another person's content is painfully easy on the web. I'm positive that nearly all of us have at some point downloaded pirated music, watched movies or television shows uploaded illegally to foreign websites, or found other ways of getting free stuff online that normally should be paid for. Perhaps you even think it is ethical to download copyrighted material instead of giving your money to big corporations. Whatever you do online outside of class is your own business, but when it comes to turning in work for this class, we strongly expect you to credit anything you get from somebody else.

If you get an image or clip art from another website, you must have permission and give credit. If you get audio or video from another website, you must give credit. Over the course of this semester, you'll likely find many websites that provide tutorials on how to design websites, or tutorials on how to do something cool on your website. Even if you borrow code from another website, you must still provide credit.

Just because it is easy to steal somebody's content doesn't mean it is ethical. Internet behavior is dictated more by developing cultural norms than by law. You can right click on any image or

multimedia and click "Save Target As" to download that image. You can also right click on any webpage and click "View Source Code" to get the HTML code for that page. The web was built (and is still being built) through a culture of collaboration and open sourcing. Many people even want you to use their code and templates in your own websites. But most of them also expect credit to be given where credit is due.

We will be discussing ethical issues like this later in the semester, but if you have any doubt, ask your instructors.

How to Give Credit to Others

Designing websites is not like writing an academic paper: there are far fewer rules, and you have much more freedom in how you present your content. Many students have asked over the years how to give credit on their websites. While there's no right answer or best answer, below are some of the ways students give credit to others whenever they borrow or reference their work:

- Provide a simple text link back to the website.
- Leave a comment in your HTML or CSS code acknowledging where the code came from (you will be shown how to do this).
- Include a reference page on your website that lists where everything came from.
- Include a reference section at the bottom on every single webpage, perhaps in smaller print, telling people where your information comes from.

There are likely many more ways to give credit to others. We take plagiarism very seriously, and students from previous semesters have been known to fail a project or the course for plagiarizing another's work.

Contact

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