JOMC 721:

Usability and Multimedia Design
Fall 2014

Welcome

Whether creating an animated graphic, an interactive kiosk or an entire mobile Web presence, excellent usability and design are central to a communicator's success. Usability and multimedia design combine the basics of information organization, visual layout and several media including still photos, video, audio, graphics and text. The results can be extremely powerful.

This course is about being a knowledgeable communicator, an informed designer and an innovator. Passions for clear, accessible and ethical communication, as well as creativity and design, are essential to your success. These immersive forms of presentation open many possibilities, many of which we are yet to discover.

The goals of this course, therefore, are to familiarize you with multimedia design concepts and allow you opportunities to experiment, create and explore.

Class dates, Fall 2014 semester

Tuesday, August 19 through Friday, December 12, 2014.
On **August 20 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.,** the course will begin with a live Adobe Connect welcome session. There will be six additional synchronous sessions every other Wednesday from 6:30-7:30 p.m. throughout the course. See the course schedule for those dates. All synchronous sessions will be recorded for those who are unable to attend.
Final projects will be presented via videoconference December 8-12, 2014. *(See final project section.)*

Instructor

Lisa Villamil, assistant professor
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Google Chat/Video: villamil.lisa | Skype ID: lisavillamil

Office hours

I will be available for phone or video chat on Wednesdays from 2-3 p.m. You can contact me through Google Chat/Video or Skype. (See contact information above.) If you need to contact me at another other time, email me at lisa_villamil@unc.edu. I will answer within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on weekends.

Course goals and objectives

This course will introduce you to six basic areas of excellent multimedia design and help you develop expertise in their application. They are:

- Relevance to audience
- Information editing
- Information architecture
- Aesthetic presentation
- Innovation
- Usability

This class requires a working knowledge of Adobe Illustrator. Certain tutorials about using Illustrator for Web design, as well as some Web design and Usability basics, will be part of your assigned readings.

By reading, viewing and discussing the writings and works of journalists, artists, Web developers, photographers, usability experts, graphic designers, educators and researchers you will deepen your appreciation for each distinct media form. By examining the latest eyetracking research and usability testing, you will assess the practical application of many concepts. Through critiques and original storyboards, you will work to expertly integrate all this knowledge into well-designed packages.

Required purchases

• Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability **(second or third edition) by Steve Krug**
• Rocket Surgery Made Easy: The Do-It-Yourself-Guide to Finding and Fixing Usability Problems **(first edition) by Steve Krug**
• Subscription to Lynda.com for September, October and November ($25/month)

Other readings/viewings

I will provide PDF, .ppt files, and/or links to articles, multimedia presentations and book chapters that we will use. All these will be accessible from the Sakai course site at sakai.unc.edu. You also will have assigned lessons and viewings from Lynda.com and the Poynter Institute's News University site http://www.newsu.org.

Sakai

All course materials and links will be available on the Sakai site at sakai.unc.edu. In Course Materials, you will find a folder for this syllabus, weekly guides, assignments and the final project. Weekly guides contain learning objectives and a list of items to be read/viewed during that time. Details of assignments and the final project are located in respective folders. We will use the Sakai forums for discussions.

Course calendar

The course has a public Google calendar that includes assignment deadlines and other pertinent information that you can import into your personal calendar. It can be found at: http://tinyurl.com/JOMC721. The calendar also is linked from the main menu of your Sakai course site.

Below is a week-by-week overview. Assignments/readings/links for each week are in Course Materials in Sakai.

Week 1 (Aug. 19-24): Understanding basic components of digital design for Web and mobile
Week 2 (Aug. 24-31): Understanding Web and multimedia design processes
Week 3 (Aug. 31-Sept. 7): Design principles; critiquing digital designs
Week 4 (Sept. 7-14): Photo editing, typography and color
Week 5 (Sept. 14-21): Storyboarding
Week 6 (Sept. 21-28): Storyboarding
Week 7 (Sept. 28-Oct. 5): Storyboarding
Week 8 (Oct. 5-12): Storyboarding

Week 9 (Oct. 12-19, includes Fall Break): Finalizing project proposals
Week 10 (Oct. 19-26): User testing
Week 11 (Oct. 26-Nov. 2): User testing
Week 12 (Nov. 2-9): User testing
Week 13 (Nov. 9-16): User testing
Week 14 (Nov. 16-23): Pitching
Week 15 (Nov. 23-30, includes Thanksgiving Break): Final project work
Week 16 (Nov. 30-Dec. 7): Final project work; developing your pitch
Week 17 (Dec. 7-12): Final project work; developing your pitch

Discussion guidelines

As part of the course, you will be graded for your participation in required discussions. It is important that you share your ideas, interact and participate regularly in class discussions. This can be an exciting, enriching experience.

There will be 6 class discussions and 7 synchronous sessions throughout the course. If you know you are not able to attend a synchronous session, please send questions ahead so that they can be addressed in the lecture. Again, all synchronous sessions will be recorded and available to all students for viewing.

Discussion will begin at Noon on Thursday each discussion week and conclude by Noon the following Tuesday.

Before the course begins, you will be divided into teams to lead discussion. As discussion moderators, your responsibilities are to:
- **Moderate** the week's discussion and keep your classmates on-point. You will lead us in our discussion and understanding of the readings for that week. My role is to facilitate your discussions with each other. I will ask follow-up questions and provide additional information as needed, but I will not step in to direct the discussion. Email me with any pertinent questions.
- **Write a synopsis** of the week's topic and discussion board activity with your team. This should include a summary of the key points of the readings and a final summary of the topic based on the week's discussion. The synopsis should be posted to the forum by Noon Friday following the close of discussion. Email me at lisa_villamil@unc.edu when it is posted, so that I can send an announcement to point the class there and to officially close discussion.

After the first two weeks of class, I will provide a discussion grade and written feedback about how your participation is aligning with course expectations. I expect your participation to be insightful, comprehensive and regular. To respond effectively, you must be prepared to undertake additional research and engage in discussion with your peers—not merely post your opinion. Regularly contribute your thoughts and independent findings to each discussion forum. The frequency and consistency of your participation, as well as the application of key concepts and demonstration of independent research will be graded. Remember quality over quantity.

Design Exercises

Detailed instructions for assignments are located in respective folders in the Course Materials section of Sakai. You will have 4 design exercises during the first half of the semester: site structure, design elements, and two storyboards.

Usability Test

During Weeks 10-13, we will study the value of user testing and learn the steps to conducting effective tests. Your assignment from this segment of the course will be to work with your assigned team to develop, conduct, analyze, report on a user test on one site of your and your partner's choosing.

Final project

Your final project will require you to act as the executive producer and lead designer for a given multimedia presentation or one you propose. For your chosen scenario you must:

- Compose a written content and audience analysis of your publication and develop a specific angle for your piece. (about 2 pages, double spaced)
- Create a written, comprehensive inventory of all digital assets needed to complete the project. (about 1 page)
- Compose a written proposal (about 2 pages, double spaced) outlining how you will utilize the time and talents of your seven-person team*. Each team member is expected to work about 80 hours (two weeks) on his or her part of the project. Your team consists of:
  1. one researcher/writer
  2. one still photographer
  3. one illustrator/graphic artist
  4. one audio specialist
  5. one video specialist
  6. one multimedia programming specialist
  7. YOU -- the multimedia design specialist and team leader
- Plan the big picture for the overall presentation by creating a detailed flow chart.
- Create the design of all key nodal points (minimum five) in the presentation using a graphic design software program (Illustrator). You can utilize sample images, graphics, logos, etc. to convey concepts. All aesthetic choices and typography must be your original work. Pay special attention to creating innovative ways to tell your story. All designs should be submitted in PDF form.
- Incorporate the key aspects of your package in a seven-minute pitch. Focus on what makes your project different and innovative. You will give this presentation via videoconference.

*NOTE: If you are proposing your own project, where you are the only person working, provide a timeline for how the project will be completed by a deadline you propose. The goal for this part is for you to set up realistic expectations no matter what the size of the staff.

More detailed instructions for the final project will be located in the Final Project folder in Course Materials in Sakai.

Grading criteria and scale

This course uses the graduate grading scale of H (high pass), P (pass), L (low pass), and F (fail).

There are basic expectations that any supervisor or project manager would have for a project undertaken by a multimedia design or usability specialist. All of your assignments must meet the following minimum basic standards to be considered for a grade of "P" or better. The project must be:

- completed according to the assignment specifications.
- completed on time.
- free of typographical, grammatical and mechanical errors.
- completed so as to evidence a clear grasp of multimedia production and usability standards and design concepts.

Your final project and design exercises also will be evaluated for:

- relevance to audience
- presentation editing decisions
- architecture of information presentation
- aesthetic design choices
- creativity and innovation
- audience analysis *(design exercise #4 and final project)*
- usability *(final project)*
- written justification of design decisions *(final project)*
- written listing of assets *(final project)*
- written timetable for project completion *(final project)*

Your usability test (team assignment) also will be evaluated for:

- quality of the user test script and testing materials.

- interpretation of test results.
- clarity and focus of written usability report.
- effectiveness of usability test results presentation.

Your overall grade for this course will be based on the following components:
- Discussion (10%)
  - Weekly discussion board contributions and participation (5%)
  - One week of discussion board co-leadership (5%)
- Design exercises (40%)
  - Design exercise #1 (10 %)
  - Design exercise #2 (10 %)
  - Design exercise #3 (10 %)
  - Design exercise #4 (10 %)
- Usability test (20%)
- Final project (30%)

UNC Honor Code

It shall be the responsibility of every student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obey and to support the enforcement of the Honor Code (http://instrument.unc.edu), which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student, or academic personnel acting in an official capacity.

Online Course Statement

1. By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the Acceptable Use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy (http://help.unc.edu/1672) on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette and privacy protection.

2. As part of this course you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC Chapel Hill Information Security Policies (http://its.unc.edu/ITS/about_its/its_policies/index.htm) when participating in online classes.

3. When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC Chapel Hill, such as Google or Youtube, please note that the Terms and Conditions of these companies and not the University's Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC Chapel Hill.

4. When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

5. Online courses may at times require Web-based assignments that are public in nature and may be viewed by third parties online. This is especially true in social media and blogging platforms. Be mindful of the information you choose to share publicly as part of your assignments. Under the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and UNC's FERPA regulation (http://registrar.unc.edu/AcademicServices/PoliciesProcedures/StudentRights/CCM1_042762), a student's education records are protected from disclosure to third parties. However, FERPA protection does not extend to material shared publicly by students.

ACEJMC Core Values and Competencies

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.
- Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain this additional core competency:
- Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.