



Course Syllabus: Web Design

Fain College of Fine Arts
MCOM 2833
Fall 2026

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course treats web design as a design discipline, not a software tutorial. Students will learn to build for the web, but more importantly, they'll learn to see it. Students will learn to read the grid systems, typographic hierarchies, color logics, and interaction patterns that shape every screen they encounter, and to understand the historical and political forces that produced them. The web is not neutral infrastructure; it is a designed environment, and this course treats it as such.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

No textbook. The final project will be the creation of a personal website or a mock-up of a business website. Please plan to pay for a domain name and hosting service (Wix, Squarespace, etc.).

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

In this course, we may use generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) to examine the ways in which these kinds of tools may inform our exploration of the topics of the class. You will be informed as to when and how these tools will be used, along

with guidance for attribution if/as needed. Any use of generative AI tools outside of these parameters constitutes plagiarism and will be treated as such.

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Course Grade - List all graded assignments with their point value and or percentage of total grade. Letter Grade Scale indicate the overall points or % to letter grade scale for example 1270 to 1137 = A.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Quizzes (5 at 50 pts each)	250
Homework	150
Project 1	200
Final Project	300
Final Presentation	100
Total Points	1000

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	900
B	800 to 899
C	700 to 799
D	600 to 699
F	Less than 600

Homework

Homework will be almost entirely digital.

Quizzes

There will be a total of 5 quizzes in this class with 3 being announced and 2 being surprise or "pop" quizzes. The quizzes will be timed and best prepared for by completing assignments and readings.

Exams

We will not have exams in this course.

Projects Required

Projects and corresponding student presentations make around half of the graded material in this course. Getting a satisfactory grade cannot be accomplished without completing these assignments. We will briefly discuss projects on Day 1 of classes so that students of the class can begin to brainstorm early.

Projects in this course take a “forensic” or case-study based approach to research. You will be asked to select a specific issue or example from topics covered in order to complete various types of analysis of media, texts and scholarly research surrounding the issue.

Dissection of a Simple Site (Project 1)

Personal Website or Business Site (Project 2)*

* Full details and rubric for projects are on D2L.

Mid-Term Exam

No midterm exam.

Final Exam

We will use the final exam period for final student presentations. Please plan accordingly!

Extra Credit

I will only accept extra credit assignments if the student in question is within 1-point of the letter grade threshold. Extra credit assignments must be requested by the student in a timely manner.

Late Work

Barring documented extenuating circumstances or pre-negotiation with me, I will not accept late work. I am very understanding of life events and troubles outside of the university interfering with performance in class. Please be proactive about discussing these matters with me. I will work with you.

Make Up Work/Tests

Quizzes and tests will not be re-administered without prior negotiation or documented extenuating circumstances.

Attendance

"This course is studio-based. Regular attendance is crucial, but flexibility is built in. Please reach out if challenges arise. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Instructor Class Policies

This is a laptop- and phone-free classroom. Devices stay closed and put away unless you are the one presenting or speaking. I am invested in protecting the kind of attention this course actually requires. Close reading, argument, and discussion don't happen well when a screen is open in front of you, even with the best intentions. Take notes by hand; bring the readings printed or annotated; be here.

If you need a laptop or phone for a documented accommodation, please let me know and we'll sort out logistics. No need to explain why.

We can and will discuss extremely controversial issues in this class as part of our work to consider the relationship between internet and society. Please be kind to one another.

Disagreement isn't disrespect. Discomfort is often a sign the discussion is working, not a sign something has gone wrong. Harassment, personal attacks, and targeting classmates for who they are, however, are not discussion. Ad hominem and personal attacks end the conversation and will be treated as a conduct issue, not a debate.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Unit 1 — Artifact: build naive, then dissect (Weeks 1–3)

- **Wk 1 Tu: Intro — syllabus, what "web design" means when AI can generate it in seconds; land acknowledgement; tech-free norms discussion**
- **Wk 1 Th: HTML as material — semantic markup, the DOM, view-source as primary text**
- **Wk 2 Tu: CSS fundamentals — box model, selectors, cascade/specificity**
- **Wk 2 Th: Studio day — build a minimal 3-page site by hand, no AI tools allowed**
- **Wk 3 Tu: Media Artifact Autopsy applied to websites — dissect 3–4 existing sites (inspect element, network tab, wayback machine comparisons)**
- **Wk 3 Th: Peer critique of Week 2 studio sites — establish crit norms/vocabulary early**

Unit 2 — Concept: history, theory, critique (Weeks 4–9)

- **Wk 4 Tu: Document-web to platform-web — Berners-Lee's vision vs. Web 2.0 enclosure**
- **Wk 4 Th: Responsive design and mobile-first logic — technical + why it became inevitable**
- **Wk 5 Tu: Typography and grid systems — hierarchy as argument**
- **Wk 5 Th: Color theory and visual rhetoric — studio exercise applying both**
- **Wk 6 Tu: Accessibility as ethics, not compliance — screen readers, WCAG, disability justice framing**
- **Wk 6 Th: Studio day — accessibility audit of Week 2 sites, revise**

- **Wk 7 Tu: Dark patterns and persuasive design — taxonomy (Brignull's original categories onward)**
- **Wk 7 Th: Scam/Con as Media Object applied to commercial web design — aesthetic capture techniques, trust signals, fake urgency**
- **Wk 8 Tu: Political economy of the web — hosting, domains, platform dependency, who owns your site**
- **Wk 8 Th: AI-assisted design tools as objects of critique — what a prompt-to-site tool assumes, whose taste is encoded in its defaults**
- **Wk 9 Tu: Studio day — students generate a site with an AI tool, then annotate every choice they didn't make themselves**
- **Wk 9 Th: Midterm discussion/synthesis — no new content, debate and consolidate Unit 2**

Unit 3 — Artifact-transformed: final project (Weeks 10–15)

- **Wk 10 Tu: Final project launch — pitch personal-site vs. theoretical-business options, form crit groups**
- **Wk 10 Th: Information architecture workshop — sitemaps, user flows**
- **Wk 11 Tu: Drafting studio — wireframes, AI-assisted first pass**
- **Wk 11 Th: Drafting studio — override/subvert the AI draft, deliberate departures**
- **Wk 12 Tu: Design rationale workshop — how to write critical justification for choices**
- **Wk 12 Th: Studio day — build continues, one-on-one check-ins**
- **Wk 13 Tu: First full draft due — studio-model group crit (client-crit format)**
- **Wk 13 Th: Revision studio — incorporate crit feedback**
- **Wk 14 Tu: Accessibility + persuasion self-audit — apply Weeks 6 and 7 frameworks to own project**
- **Wk 14 Th: Studio day — final polish**
- **Wk 15 Tu: Final presentations, group A**
- **Wk 15 Th: Final presentations, group B — wrap discussion on what "web design" will mean by the time they graduate**