

# JB 3623 - Internet Communications

Dennis Whiteman, lecturer

Spring 2008 • Tuesday and Thursday, 6:45 p.m. - 8:25 p.m. • 201 Paul Miller Building

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## Course Description

Theoretical and practical understanding of how the Internet is changing the way mass media and media-related organizations communicate with audiences.

## Required Reading Materials



### **BOOK: Web Design in a Nutshell, 3rd Edition**

by Jennifer Niederst Robbins

Publisher: **O'Reilly**

Pub Date: **February 2006**

Print ISBN-10: **0-596-00987-9**

Print ISBN-13: **978-0-59-600987-8**

Pages: **826**

**WEB:** Anything linked to or hosted at <http://jb3623.com/>, including this syllabus, the class calendar, posts, comments, podcasts, video blogs and other internet-delivered media. You are expected to review the content on [jb3623.com](http://jb3623.com/) before every class.

## Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to expose students to how information is communicated to a mass audience using the internet. You will learn the fundamentals of how the web works, how to create a message for a web audience, how to design for the web and then apply these skills to a semester-long individual class web site project.

To be a good creator of content for the internet, you have to be a good consumer of internet content. Thus, we will explore many of the changing ways that content is communicated over the internet through a web server dedicated to this class located at <http://jb3623.com/>. This site will contain announcements, links to materials referenced during class, and more. RSS feeds on the site are an excellent way to stay up to date with new content posted on the site. In addition, if you have a Facebook account, a JB3623 group can be joined by searching for it in the Oklahoma State network. This group consists of former and present students who are taking or have completed this class.

The dedicated class server will host your individual web site projects on a topic that you will choose. Each of you will be required to create and post web content, including written posts or pages, audio or video materials, and to come up with a design that demonstrates your understanding of the course material. You will have functioning web sites by the end of the second week of this semester and your sites will evolve as you learn new techniques.

Although this is not a computer class, we will use a variety of computer software to demonstrate uses of the internet and the creation of content for web sites. Client software will include Firefox, Safari, iTunes, iCal and Quicktime Pro. Tools used to create these web site projects will include Firefox, TextWrangler, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Flash, iPhoto, iMovie and Garageband.

When this course is over, you will have an understanding of the tools and work involved in creating a functioning web site and, hopefully, one that you can be proud to show friends, family and prospective employers. Since the web site project will determine half of your grade, how well you communicate your subject matter will determine how much you get out of this course and how successful you are in achieving your goals.

## Grades

Final grades in this course will consist of four components:

• Quizzes/Exercises	10%
• Mid-Term Exam	20%
• Final Exam	20%
• Web Site Project	<u>50%</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**GRADING SCALE:** A: 90-100 B: 80-89 C: 70-79 D: 60-69 F: 0-59

**QUIZZES/EXERCISES:** To encourage attendance and preparation, quizzes and/or exercises will be given based on recent material. Quizzes/Exercises may or may not be announced in advance and can include true/false, multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Quizzes or exercises missed because of any absence or tardiness will be counted as zero; your two lowest scores will be dropped automatically. In addition, extra credit assignments may be given that replace one low score for each extra assignment. In the past, the final number of quizzes or exercises ranged from 7-10; dropping the two lowest scores, 5-8 count toward your grade.

**EXAMS:** A mid-term exam and a final exam will given according to the class calendar. Each exam is worth 20 percent of your grade, will be comprehensive and may consist of multiple-choice, true-false and short-answer questions. **Makeup exams** may be given only in cases of proven emergencies or university-sponsored activities and only if I am notified before the exam is given. Documentation must be presented before a makeup exam will be scheduled. The Mid-Term Exam will be given on **February 19, 2007** and the Final Exam will be given on **April 29, 2008**. The normal time for the final exam is 8 p.m., but students will have the option of coming and taking the exam at the normal class time of 6:45 p.m.

**WEB SITE PROJECT:** Each student is required to come up with a subject of their choosing and to post at least 30 content items, including written, photographed, audio, video or other content approved by the lecturer, on a web site using the Wordpress content management system. The topic for the web site must be posted on the Student's web site in the form of an *About* page by the end of class on **January 17, 2007**.

The student's web site design must meet or exceed w3c web standards, be original and distinct from classmates' sites, and effectively communicate the chosen subject matter, including correct spelling and grammar. Because this project is half of your grade, ample time will be given in class to work on these projects and explore creative options for achieving the best possible grade. Course material will be structured so that your sites can evolve over the course of the semester as you learn new methods for generating web content.

Mandatory individual status meetings with the lecturer will be conducted the week of **April 1-3, 2007**. The project is due no later than the end of class on **April 15, 2007**, but may be turned in early. There is a physical submission process for completing this assignment that requires your attendance to turn in your assignment. Projects turned in late will receive a reduction of one letter grade for each day they are submitted after the due date except in cases of proven emergencies beyond the control the student.

At the end of the semester, each student will receive a compact disc containing all the files necessary to post static web pages to a portfolio site along with the necessary files to move the site to a Wordpress hosting service.

## Attendance

This course will be a combination of lecture, discussion and practical application. The class periods are designed to highlight the principles and skills necessary for you to complete the exercises and the web site project. Students who frequently miss class will find themselves lost and failing. By automatically dropping your two lowest quiz grades, you receive two excused absences for the semester. Use these days wisely.

## Class Calendar and RSS Feeds

Because this is an Internet Communications course, a calendar listing the lectures, lab and reading materials will be posted on the class web site in iCalendar format, an open standard supported by iCal and Entourage on the Macintosh along with Outlook and Sunbird on the PC platform. This will allow you to keep up to date on the lectures and materials to be covered and also to transfer the events onto a cell phone or other device that supports the open standard iCalendar format.

RSS Feeds are also a helpful way to keep up with materials posted on the class web site. During the first week of class we will subscribe to those feeds in your browsers so that you can be up to date on what is happening in class. You may also subscribe to the RSS feeds in a my.yahoo.com, Google Reader or other RSS client or service.

Assignments may be given on the class web site during any snow days that are relevant to the subject matter that would have been covered in a given lecture. Some material may also be posted in our Facebook group or on my Facebook profile, but it will not be the primary method of delivery.

## Additional Lab Hours

Because this course involves extensive use of technology, which may be highly foreign to our students, I have found in the past that some students benefit from some additional lab time, outside of our regularly scheduled classes, where the lecturer can answer technical questions related to the creation of the student semester web sites. These labs are optional and are scheduled based on times when the maximum number of students can attend, usually on a Monday or Wednesday evening. You should take advantage of these opportunities, if offered, which will be announced in class and posted on the class web site in advance.

## Etiquette

Even though this is an Internet class, that doesn't mean you can check Facebook or e-mail and surf the web for the entire class period. I will almost always arrive early enough to class so that you will have some time to perform those tasks before class starts, but once class begins I expect you to focus on me and the material presented in the lectures and lab assignments.

Because the course is taught in a lab setting, food and drinks are not allowed in the classroom. Be considerate of those around you. Please don't play music without headphones or otherwise cause a distraction that will disrupt the entire lab. Turn off all cellphones during the lecture portion of the class; any calls received during the lab portion of the class should be taken outside of the classroom.

## Expectations

This course is a journalism elective. That doesn't mean that you can not come to class and expect to get a good grade. We will devote a substantial amount of class time toward the semester project so that you can gain practical experience working on a web site. It's important that you identify early what you want to get out of the class and begin working toward that goal by picking a topic you are enthusiastic about from the beginning.

Experience shows that students with the best attendance, who spend their lab time working on their projects, and who pay attention during lectures usually get an A; students who rarely come to class, leave early from the lab, and who sleep during the lectures don't. It's that simple.

## Learning Outcomes

The School of Journalism and Broadcasting has identified expectations for its students as a result of their learning activities. A poster listing all eight expected outcomes is in each classroom of the Paul Miller Building. In this course, we will specifically address the following learning outcomes of the school in these ways:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant constitutional freedoms, legal issues and ethical principles in mass communications.

*During the semester, we will cover the legal issues of copyright and privacy as they relate to the internet. We will also discuss other timely relevant First Amendment issues related to the internet as they arise in the media. Content created for the semester web site project will honor copyright laws and students will be expected to give credit when quoting material published on other web sites within the content of their web sites.*

3. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and social role of mass communications.

*Compared to print and broadcast media, the internet is a relatively new medium, having only risen to the level of a mass medium in the past dozen years or so. In this course, we will study the history of the internet and its role in society, including the evolution of social networks such as Facebook, MySpace.com and YouTube.com. We will also discuss how the internet may replace or supplement traditional media, over the coming decades.*

4. Demonstrate critical, creative and individual thinking.

*For their web site project, each student will be required to come up with a topic around which their sites will be built. Each student will be expected to create unique and individual content for their site that demonstrates an ability to think creatively and differently.*

5. Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant theories and concepts of mass communications.

*Content created for the semester web site project must be well organized, grammatically correct, and with proper spelling. Graphics must enhance the presentation of web content and not detract from the overall message presented by the site. The ability to write well and convey ideas is the foundation of mass communications and each student's project will be graded based on this foundation with severe penalties for misspelled words and incorrect grammar. In addition, the sites created must conform to World Wide Web Consortium (w3.org) standards.*

6. Demonstrate an understanding of the methods and techniques of research and information gathering.

*The creation of content for the semester web site project will involve researching a topic of the student's choice and gathering information about it from around the internet. Students will be expected to link to relevant material from other web sites on the internet as a means of demonstrating mastery of the concept of hyper-linking.*

7. Demonstrate appropriate writing, editing and production techniques in mass communications.

*The semester web site project consists of writing, editing and producing at least 30 content items for the internet. These items can be written articles or commentary, audio material, such as podcasts, video productions, or other multimedia content.*

8. Demonstrate an understanding of relevant planning and management methods in mass communications.

*The semester web site project will involve developing a plan for a web site and managing its content as it evolves over the course of the semester. A content management system (CMS) will be provided and students will be expected to master it in order to complete a web site covering their chosen topic.*

## **Finally...**

No two groups of students are the same. Some students take a particular interest in certain topics, or world and/or local events may necessitate discussions not listed in the syllabus. Therefore, I reserve the right to make changes to meet the needs of the class and to allow for the unscheduled arrival of guest speakers, etc.