Writing for New Media

Fine Arts 3600, Section 090, 3 credits, Online Course

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Required Text: William Strunk, *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. It’s important to have the correct edition, as I will be using the numbering in the book to communicate with you when I comment on your papers. Other selected readings will be available on course e-reserve and on the World-Wide Web.

Overview

Prerequisite

Writing 2010 or equivalent. This course assumes you have mastered the fundamentals of college writing and are prepared for an advanced class. You will be accountable for having a working knowledge of basic research practices, how to define and support an argument, and how to craft the organization, mechanics, and style of a piece of writing.

Course Description

This course provides a theoretical basis and practical approaches for writing interactive, non-linear documents for the World-Wide Web and other multimedia environments. Through readings, writings, and discussions, class members explore how interactive digital media are shaping public discourse and creative possibilities. Students complete projects applicable to business, communications, education, the arts, entertainment, and personal interests. Topics include the relationship between medium and message, the history of hypertext, blogging, storyboards, web-specific organizing strategies, evaluating and choosing information sources, persuasive writing techniques, and developing multimedia scripts for video games or hyperfiction.
Objectives

By the end of the course, you will have developed your ability to:

- Think critically about the theoretical implications of new media communication—What impact are these tools having on how we construct knowledge and conduct conversations? How does the medium influence the message and vice versa?
- Define and write for a specific audience and purpose.
- Organize and present your writing for clarity and impact in a variety of interactive, multimedia environments, and think about the limitations and potential of various new media tools.
- Reflect productively on the writing process—Talk and write about what insights you gain when revising, collaborating, or receiving audience feedback.

Teaching & Learning Methods

Activities will include short- and long-term writing assignments in electronic, interactive, and more traditional formats. Some projects may be collaborative. Other activities will include readings, participation in discussion boards, and peer and instructor critiques.

Accommodations

Some of the presentations, discussions, and student projects you are asked to review in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. This is a workshop-style course involving the production of writing and art with instructor and peer feedback given to each student producer. Since much of the writing will be new to the audience and the instructor, there will be no practical way for the instructor or fellow students to predict which pieces or discussions about them may be a problem for you. Consider carefully the nature of this course before committing to taking it. If you do have any concerns, please let me know right away.

Additional Help

I strongly encourage you to use the University Writing Center, which provides free tutoring services both online and in person if you would like more help with any stage of the writing process, including generating ideas, developing content, and proofreading. See http://www.writingcenter.utah.edu/ for more information.
Requirements

Reading and Discussion Assignments
Due during the first half of each week, these assignments will usually receive credit based on whether you complete the required number of posts and how well you demonstrate having read and thought about the material in the lesson. For more specifics, see the Discussion Guidelines in Canvas.

Project Checkpoints
These assignments will usually receive credit based on completeness. You will earn points for meeting prewriting, drafting, and revising deadlines throughout the semester and for participating in peer reviews.

Graded Assignments & Projects
You will complete a number of short, graded writing and multimedia assignments as well as two longer projects:

1. Multi-Media Research Essay (Informational Website)
2. Interactive Narrative (Multimedia Script or Game Concept)

Grading

Breakdown
15% Discussions (10 points each)
10% Project checkpoints (10 points each)
75% Graded assignments and projects (variable points – 25-100)

Criteria for Graded Assignments
I will provide specific criteria in the instructions and rubric for each project, but keep the following in mind:

• Thoroughly address the question or objectives described in the written instructions for each assignment.
• Give attention to developing and defining your own purpose and audience, and look for creative ways to use the assignment tools and principles to solve your particular problem.

• Present your ideas with a level of professionalism appropriate to your purpose and medium. For example, expectations in a discussion group would be less formal than for a finished informational website, which should reflect care with revising, proofreading, and consistency issues.

Revising to Improve Your Grade

I will designate some assignments and projects that you may choose to revise and resubmit in an attempt to improve your grade provided you originally submitted them on time. Your rewrite should reflect significant changes and should be accompanied by a brief but specific explanation of how you have improved the piece and addressed the comments received on the first grading.

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94–100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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Materials

You will need:

- Access to word-processing software, PowerPoint, and the Internet. We will be using an online website builder to set up some assignments. Arrange your schedule to use one of the on-campus computer labs if necessary.

- A backup storage device, separate from Canvas, such as a thumb drive or portable hard drive (2 GB of space should be more than sufficient). For all your electronic work in progress and finished work, keep backup copies in more than one location.

- Optionally, you may also find it helpful to have access to a digital camera (inexpensive is fine).
Policies

Communication

You are responsible for:

• Maintaining an individual email address at which you may receive confidential communications regarding your coursework. Update this address on your Student Profile in the Campus Information System, and check your messages regularly.
• Asking promptly when you need clarification of a concept, help with an assignment, or have a concern you’d like to discuss with me.

Submitting Assignments/Late Work

For full-credit, you must submit work by the Canvas deadline and in the format requested, including the required file type and naming convention. Remember:

• I do not accept late discussion postings or project checkpoints, and missed participation credit cannot be made up.
• I will accept graded assignments and projects late for a full letter grade reduction, but these may not be reworked for a higher grade.
• Equipment failures or losses are not an acceptable excuse for late or incomplete assignments. It is your responsibility to keep back-up copies of your work, including your Canvas Discussion posts, and to maintain your computer and related equipment—or make alternate arrangements when necessary.
• If you have a rare extenuating circumstance, such as an illness requiring hospitalization, please communicate with me as soon as possible to make arrangements for completing work.

Plagiarism

Representing anyone else’s words or ideas as your own by failing to cite sources clearly or use quotation marks appropriately is illegal. Whether in a discussion board or a formal writing assignment, plagiarism may result in serious consequences such as a failing grade or even dismissal from the University. I strongly recommend that you review the Student Handbook definitions and policies regarding plagiarism and other academic misconduct, detailed in sections I and V of the Student Code.
One way I screen assignments for potential plagiarism is by using the program Turnitin. If I see that your document has more than 5% plagiarized material, I may ask you to redo the project by a specific date and time. You will then receive late credit (a letter-grade reduction) for the assignment. If you do not correct the errors, I am obligated to report your violation to the University.

Remember that while you may support your writing with brief, properly cited quotations from other writers, the bulk of what you submit for any assignment should be your own thoughts in your own voice. Your goal is to read information from different sources and to synthesize it into your own, original response. However easy it may be to copy and paste, never use text directly from a source unless you clearly indicate what and from where you are quoting.

**On-line Classroom Equivalency**

Discussion threads, e-mails, and chat rooms are all considered to be equivalent to classrooms, and your behavior within those environments must conform to the Student Code. Specifically:

- Off-color language and photos are never appropriate.
- Using angry or abusive language is called "flaming," is not acceptable, and will be dealt with according to the Student Code.
- Using ALL CAPS, except for titles, is the equivalent of shouting online, as is overuse of certain punctuation marks such as exclamation points !!!! and question marks ??????. Avoid these habits.
- Course e-mails, e-journals, and other online course communications are part of the classroom and as such, are University property and subject to GRAMA (Government Records Access Management Act) regulations and the Student Code. Privacy regarding these communications between correspondents must not be assumed and should be mutually agreed upon in advance, in writing.

**Adding/Dropping**

It is the responsibility of the student to enroll in the class by the add deadline. Late slips will not be signed by the Department. It is also the responsibility of the student to make sure that dropping or withdrawing from the class has been officially completed in the Registrar’s office.
ADA Notice

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

All written information in the course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.