COM 354 Designing Digital Media Spring 2025
Prof. Kevin McIntosh (klm5@njit.edu)
Monday 6-9 p.m. Kupfrian 205
Office Hours: Mon. 4-6 p.m., Fenster Hall 440 (& by appointment)

Course description: This course explores how computer technology has influenced the presentation of information and the ways in which it is structured via digital media. Students learn how various web-based media platforms and tools are used to present familiar topics in ways that are both dynamic and that align with contemporary culture. Through guided interactive activities, the course develops techniques for presenting information for technical, commercial, and artistic use. Projects involve the use of HTML editors, NJIT networks, and graphical and animation software.

Learning outcomes for this course include: building practical understanding of the processes and tools of communication media (i.e., hardware, software and networks), specifically as they relate to the World Wide Web; applying critical frameworks (including identifying and resolving communication design problems); cultivating the ability to write and edit verbally and visually (including graphics); designing within constraints, and with regard to economic, environmental, social, political, and ethical concerns.

This course is designed to ensure NJIT's Communication and Media program successfully provides its students with a foundation in a range of forms of communication. The course's overall objectives are designed to promote each student's competence or mastery of multi-media communications, using the worldwide-web as an informational and expressive tool. Through project development and completion, students build practical skills and processes in developing projects using online networks competently and artistically. The course will improve a student's flexibility in communication by using contemporary media formats, thus advancing their general skillset and ability to deliver content to public audiences. Core competencies addressed by the course include: Student awareness of, and engagement with, communications strategies; building perception of contemporary communication(s) environments; performative practice with communication tools; critical thinking on the subject matter; cultivation of communication literacy.

Students in this course will:

Gain firsthand understanding of a communicative genre.

Explore the practical and creative implementation of using Website tools and applications.

Develop technical and design skills using web-based media.

Use peers to develop ideas and cultivate production of original work.

Foster online publications.

There is no textbook for this course. Course materials, prepared by the professor, will be posted on Canvas and the syllabus.

To create work for this course, access to a computer with document layout and design software is required. If you do not have graphic design software on your personal computer, all assignments can be completed with software accessible via NJIT computer labs or library.

During the semester, you will maintain a website on NJIT's AFS system. Instructions for setting up NJIT homepage: http://ist.njit.edu/personal-webpages-on-afs/

Each of the course assignments must be posted to your website, and then linked to a COM 354 Coursework index that you will create (Week 3).

Week 1 – No Monday classes.

Week 2	*Topics*	*Assignment*
Jan 27	**Introductions, course overview & discussion**, server space diagnostic/setup. Beginning with this week's assignment, you will need to use MobaXterm SSH/FTP (file transfer protocol) Client. Downloadable from https://ist.njit.edu/software. **In Class Assignment:** Image Resize [5 points]	**Assignments #1 | Self-portrait** Due on 2/3 [5 points] Compose a self-portrait in the form of a collage that includes your name (required), images and as an option any other text you wish to add. Upload the digital image to your AFS account (in public_html or subdirectory).

Assignment #1 Due		
Week 3	*Topics*	*Assignment*
Feb 3	**Discussion of web design.** **Dreamweaver Introduction:** linking tools, publishing and design processes such as embedding images, CSS. **In Class Assignment:** Use Dreamweaver or equivalent WYSIWYG editor to design a COM 354 Online Coursework index. [5 points]	**Assignments #2 |** Personal Homepage (version 1) Due on 2/17 [5 points] Create a new NJIT Personal Homepage using Dreamweaver, which will be revised over the course of the semester; post to AFS.

Week 4	*Topics*	*Assignment*
Feb 10	**Canva Newsletter Creation** Exploring web-based newsletter creation. Assignment #2 Review [Due next week]	**Assignment #3** | Newsletter – Join Our Mailing List Due on 2/24 [5 points] Use Canva to create a newsletter to promote your upcoming magazine and request users to Subscribe or Join your mailing list. Select a template and change at least 3 major elements of the template design.

Assignment #2 Due		
Week 5	*Topics*	*Assignment*
Feb 17	**WordPress Introduction** Exploring a leading web-based website creation platform. Assignment #3 Review [Due next week]	**Assignments #4 |** New Personal Homepage Due on 3/3 [10 points] Use a WordPress template to create a new NJIT Personal Webpage (Assignment 2). Incorporate or add at least three unique design elements.

Assignment #3 Due		
Week 6	*Topics*	*Assignment*
Feb 24	**SITE123 Introduction** Exploring a competing web-based website creation platform. Assignment #4 Review [Due next week]	**Assignments #5 |** Online Autobiography Due on 3/10 [10 points] Design and create a multi-page online autobiography using SITE123. Highlight a particular aspect of your life by creating a 4-5 page website featuring text and images (and potentially other media).

Assignment #4 Due		
Week 7	*Topics*	*Assignment*
March 3	**Wix… Doing it for the Likes.** Exploring the importance of social media in modern communication/branding via another web-based website creation platform.	**Assignments #6 | S**ocial Media Documentation Due on 3/24 [20 points] Design and create a multi-page social media site using Wix. Using your phone or camera, document a part of your life at present. Each section/image should include a caption and any other narrative you wish to present (feel free to write more than a caption); compose 4-6 interconnected pages.

Assignment #5 Due		
Week 8 March 10	*Topics* **AI and You** Discuss the ethics of online content creation. Assignment 6 review; assignment is due after spring break.	*Assignment*

Week 9 - March 17 SPRINGBREAK

Assignment #6 Due		
Week 10 March 24	*Topics* **We have options.** Explore other free website creation platforms.	*Assignment* **Assignments #7 |** Academic Portfolio Project Due on 4/7 [15 points] Create a web-based Academic Portfolio using as many sub-pages needed to present materials you have prepared as a student at NJIT that reflects your professional objectives. This portfolio should contain a resume, brief bio, and any other pertinent information with regard to your field of study and career aspirations. Prepare this portfolio using the software program or web app you are most confident working with.

Week 11	Topics	Assignment
March 31	**Final Project - Design Brief** We'll work on creating individual design briefs. **Discuss Final Project:** Online Magazine Newsletter Social Media **In Class Assignment:** Create a Design Brief detailing the sections of your final project (Online Magazine) *A design brief is a document that outlines the core details and expectations of a design project for a brand. A good design brief sets the tone for a successful design project by outlining the goals, quality, and deliverables.*	

Assignment #7 Due		
Week 12	*Topics*	*Assignment*
April 7	**Discussion: Course Project – Online Magazine** **Design Brief Review**	**Assignments #8 |** Course Project – Online Magazine Due on 5/7 [20 points] Create an online magazine using the software/web app you are most confident working with. Course Projects should focus on individual interests and include hypermedia as applicable. Examples will be provided on Canvas. Produce at least 8 different pages of content; should include letter from editor and credits page. Make use of external links as much as possible.

Week 13	Topics	Assignment
April 14	**Meet your co-writer** We will discuss the details relating to a co-writer that will assist you in writing one of your articles for the Course Project.	

Week 14	Topics	Assignment
April 21	**Assignment 1-4 Review** We revisit the first four assignments and fix or improve on these to sharpen on skill. **Final Project Prototype Review**	

Week 15	Topics	Assignment
April 28	**Assignment 5-7 Review** We revisit the last three assignments and incorporate changes based on the feedback received. **Work on Course Project**	

Week 16	Topics	Assignment
May 5	**In Class Studio** Course Project (Assignment 8) is due on or before May 7.	

OTHER COURSE INFO/NOTE:
Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than one class will harm your final grade (5 points for every unexcused absence).

Grading policy (instructional objectives / evaluation criteria):

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their production's:

(1) Application of design techniques, such as those introduced in COM 353;
(2) Sustained investigation and development of materials (process over time);
(3) Quality of sources and originality;
(4) Creating polished, aesthetically thoughtful products

Scale converting number to letter grade:
A = 90 - 100
B+ = 85 - 89
B = 80 - 84
C+ = 75 - 79
C = 70 - 74
D = 60 - 69
F = 59 or less

Prerequisites: ENGL 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher. Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: https://www.njit.edu/sites/njit.edu.policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.