::The Art of Multimedia::
Assignments*

Session 1: January 25th
Assignment: What is Multimedia? 500 word-essay

So what exactly is multimedia? Looking at the actual term multimedia literally means multiple media forms, usually in one project but it goes further than that, as will be explained in this course.

Multimedia authoring is the ability to combine text, graphics, sounds, and moving images in meaningful ways. Beneath the flash and dash of multimedia technology is the need for well-written concepts, scripts, and plans to aid in the development and production process. This course focuses on explaining the theory, concepts, and strategies for planning multimedia projects.

Today we will look at some examples of multimedia projects and talk about some of the challenges that come with each.

For this assignment you are encouraged to think outside of the box. Write a 500-word essay with an image/visual aid that explores multimedia. In your paper you should include real world examples of
- Still Art & Media
- Dynamic Art & Media
- Interactive Art & Media

Required Reading:
“Post-Media Aesthetics” by Lev Manovich

Note: This week you will need to order the required books listed in the syllabus.

Web:
http://mixxnmash.blogspot.com/2005_08_01_mixxnmash_archive.html
Session 2: February 1st
Assignment: Project description/theme/flow chart, blog

Blog is short for web log. A blog is a public web site where users post informal journals of their thoughts, comments, and philosophies, updated frequently and normally reflecting the views of the blog's creator. For class, you will create your own blog that will document your artistic process, research, and even the images/sketches you capture or create during class.

Also, you will do research and write a description of your project broken into sequential elements:
- Paragraph 1: Introduction
- Paragraph 2: Main Idea/Theme
- Paragraph 3: Elements of the project
- Paragraph 4: Final presentation (Web, CD, DVD, etc.)

Sequence refers to a narrative structure or collection of images/pages organized by cause and effect. For example, viewers will learn about a theme (intro), and as a result learn or experience your project based on the theme.

You will post this on your blog for the class and create pages for a basic web site (refer to XHTML book) that you will create in the next class.

Required Reading:
History of Digital Media, Digital Creativity by Bruce Wands (handout)
“XHTML In Easy Steps” by Mike McGrath
“How to Create a Blog” (handout)
Multimedia Workflows Comparison

Web:
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/intropage.html
http://freevlog.org/

Session 3: February 8th
Assignment: Pre-Planning and XHTML
Like an outline for a paper, flowcharts and storyboards save time and improve the quality of the final product by assisting us in the planning and preparation stages of a project. They help us plan what we are going to do so we know where a project is going. Then they keep us focused on the final goal.

You will create a flow chart and/or storyboard based on your project description. For example, if your final project involves animation or video you may need to create a storyboard in addition to the flow chart.

For each item in the chart you will create a basic web page using a text editor. The intro or main page (index.html) will link to the other pages. For this you will learn HTML.

Required Reading:
“How to Design and Build the Coolest Website...” by Nick Nettleton, Introduction and Getting Started sections pgs. 6–21
“Flowcharts and Storyboards” (handout)

Web:
http://jessett.com/web_sites/html/
http://www.w3schools.com/
http://webmonkey.wired.com/webmonkey/
http://www.w3schools.com/

Session 4: February 15th
Assignment: Digital Imaging and Photoshop

Still images, graphics, etc. communicate simple ideas or actions, or brands. They can be manipulated to enhance designs and provide universal readability. Image editing applications like Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, and Photo–Paint are available to artists, designers and multimedia makers to create bitmapped images. See the Digital Imaging handout to learn about the difference between bitmap and vector-based images.

For those of you using scanners or digital cameras to capture images for your main project you may want to get the “Non-Designer's Scan and Print” book (from the recommended book list). This book goes a lot more in–depth on the subject of bitmap or
raster and vector-based images. As a general rule, if you are planning a web or video-based project you will be using bitmap images.

There are both technical and creative applications to explore in the area of digital imaging:

Technical – Formats and types, including hardware/equipment
Creative – Manipulation and enhancement, sequential technique

This class will explore both as well as issues to consider for integration into Web, DV or CD/DVD projects. The main technical issue for consideration (in both the technical and creative areas) is resolution. This handout on Resolution is a good introduction.

For this class, you will need to

1) Tell a story through still images (sequentially) using at least 10 photographs or images to be digitized and manipulated in an image editing application such as Adobe Photoshop. Keep your Project Theme and audience in mind!

2) Manipulate or enhance your images to indicate change or the passing of time using color, text, filters, etc. Save the images based on the chart in the Resolution handout.

Also, all 10 images should be scanned or in digital form for a PDF presentation/slideshow created using Photoshop.

Required Reading:
“Digital Imaging Tutorial” (handout)
“Photoshop CS 2 In Easy Steps” by Robert Shufflebotham
“How to Design and Build the Coolest Website...” by Nick Nettleton, Chapter 3, "Working With Images" pgs. 48–75

Web:
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/imagingpage.html
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/logopage.html
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/menupage.html
http://jessett.com/web_sites/graphics
Session 5: February 22\textsuperscript{nd}
Assignment: Presentation/Critique

Prepare assignments 1–4 for critique. You will be required to make a 3–5 minute presentation of their projects in class, for discussion.

Make sure you bring the digital projects for critique and post examples of your projects on your blog.

Web:
http://jessett.com/web_sites/usability/

Session 6: March 1\textsuperscript{st}
Assignment: Design Fundamentals and Interface Design

In this class you will develop a prototype for your final project based on the theme/plan and previous assignments. The prototype process addresses many different purposes such as establishing a look and feel for your project, determining what colors, images, fonts, etc. are to be used...as well as the layout for the various pages, screens or menus of the project.

We will be using Adobe Photoshop CS to design the layout.

From "The Non–Designer’s Design Book":

"Where do you begin when you start to design or re–design something?"

In the book, there is a description of the "process", including these points:
1) Start with a focal point (what do you want viewers to see first?)
2) Group your Information (proximity)
3) Create and maintain strong alignments (alignment)
4) Create a repetition (repetition)
5) Have strong contrasts (contrast)

The book also describes how to increase your visual awareness using these methods:

See it. Keep a swap file or stock folder.
Say it. When you see a design you like, spend a couple of minutes putting into words why you like it...using the principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity (C.R.A.P.)

Sketch it. When you come across bad design, sketch ways to improve it. This is a way to get more ideas.

Required Reading:
“How to Design and Build the Coolest Website...” by Nick Nettleton, Chapter 3, "Creating a Layout " pgs. 38–43
The Non–Designer's Design Book – Read the chapter about the Joshua Principle (pages 13–14)

Web:
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/webpage.html
http://jessett.com/web_sites/graphics/

Session 7: March 8th
Assignment: Design Fundamentals/Flash

For this session you will create 3 versions for your project layout in Photoshop or application of choice that incorporates contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity. These images or designs will evolve into your main project prototype and should include an interface/menu bar.

You will get an introduction to Flash and select a part of your layout or project to animate in 2D (two dimensions) for the next class.

Required Reading:
The Non–Designer's Design Book – Read the chapter about the Joshua Principle (pages 13–14) and read about the 4 design principles
Flash Cheat Sheet (handout)

Session 8: March 22nd
Assignment: Motion Graphics

Basically motion graphics is time–based, moving images for TV, film, etc. As more and more end–users get broadband in the home more and more web sites will feature motion graphics and video or
dynamic media. The web is a powerful and inexpensive way to deliver dynamic media to a global audience. For this session you will learn how to incorporate motion graphics in your web project or even for delivery on CD or DVD.

With Photoshop we learned how to manipulate images using techniques such as compositing (using layers) that will now include a timeline. Macromedia Flash is a popular application used by web designers, game developers, television producers, etc. to create dynamic, interactive motion graphics or movies. Entire web sites are created using Flash such as this one:

One way to jazz up a web page is using cool navigation effects. Some of the same applications used to make animations also can be used to create navigation effects. Also, Fireworks and Photoshop/ImageReady are great applications to use.

I used Nettleton’s Flash Gallery tutorial as a basis for my personal web site at http://www.nettrice.us

There are a variety of ways to add animation and audio to a web page
- HTML
- GIF animation
- Flash/Shockwave
- DHTML
- QuickTime

How to Design and Build the Coolest Website in Cyberspace has a cool section on animation, audio and video on the web, including tips for video makers. I highly recommend doing the step-by-step tutorials for this session.

Required Reading:
“How to Design and Build the Coolest Website...” by Nick Nettleton, Chapter 5, "Creating a Layout " pgs. 112–143
Motion Graphics with Flash (handout)

Web:
http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/infolit/poster.htm
http://www.soe.uoguelph.ca/webfiles/agalvez/poster/
http://www.posterpage.ch/exhib/ex131imp/ex131imp.htm
Session 9: March 29th
Assignment: Digital Video and Audio Capture

For video and audio, you need some source material. This material can come from the real world or directly from your computer. All real world material must be digitized or transferred to your computer.

To capture audio simply plug in a sound source into the jack of the computer's sound card and use software to record or convert and save as a digital file.

To capture video you will have to transfer footage from a camera to your computer using a digital video camera with a FireWire port and cable. Remember to start simple and make your video project short. You will need software to transfer and edit your project.

There will not be a lot of time to develop a digital video project in this course. It is recommended that you already have completed video or audio clips.

Some suggestions for video, or audio projects include:
- A slideshow or a series of still images that play like a movie and is often interactive.
- An opener that includes an animated title and other graphics, composited movie clips, or special effects.
- A PSA or a short announcement for television, radio or the Internet that serves the public interest.

Note: PSAs often run at no charge via media outlets. Usually, PSAs highlight a social issue or advocates for special-interest groups, i.e. charities, grassroots, politicians/elections, etc.

Required Reading:
“How to Design and Build the Coolest Website...” by Nick Nettleton, Chapter 6, "Sound & Video" pgs. 144–163

Web:
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/videopage.html
**Session 10: April 5th**  
**Assignment: Nonlinear Editing/Open Studio**

For this class you will edit video and audio footage captured for your final project.

Catch up with all the readings, including web sites.

**Session 11: April 12th**  
**Assignment: Presentation/Critique**

Prepare assignments 6–9 for critique. You will be required to make a 3–5 minute presentation of their projects in class, for discussion.

Make sure you bring the digital projects for critique and post examples of your projects on your blog.

**Session 12: April 19th**  
**Assignment: Final Project**

This session begins the process of completing the final project. For this project you have a few options:  
Slide Show/Animation (Photoshop or Flash)  
Web/CD (**Dreamweaver**)  
DVD (DVD Studio Pro)

For this class we will focus on Dreamweaver, esp. going beyond the basics and creating a web site.

You must write a short 500–word essay about the process of creating the final project in your blog.

**Session 13: April 26th**  
**Assignment: Open Studio/Encoding & Compression**

You will continue working your final project.

For this session, you will learn how to prepare your assets and encode video, motion graphics and audio for web and non-web based projects.
Also, if applicable, make sure you have edited & captured all your video footage and audio.

Encoding is the process of compressing audio or video for output via Web, CD or DVD. The process is similar for Web and CD and slightly different for DVD, mostly because of the formats used for these platforms.

You will visit 2–3 blogs created by other students in the class and post comments. Consider the critical questions, design fundamentals, and principles. Refer to the course intro at http://www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/pa/digital-media/mmintro.html regarding taste and judgment.

Required Reading:
Encoding for Web/CD (handout)
Encoding for DVD (handout)

Web:
http://home.earthlink.net/~nettrice/html/deliverypage.html

Session 14: May 3rd
Assignment: DVD Authoring

If you are creating an interactive project (CD/DVD) you have many tools to choose from. For this course, I recommend DVD Studio Pro (for Mac). We will cover how to create a basic DVD for the final project.

Session 15: May 10th
Assignment: Final Critique

Prepare final project for the critique. You will be required to make a 5–minute presentation in class, for discussion. Your project should be digital and either published via the Web or on CD or DVD.

* Assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor(s).