

CMGT 528 | Section 21723 | Spring 2018

WEB DESIGNS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Instructor: Freddy J. Nager, MBA

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Class Time: Thursdays, 6:30-9:20 pm, January 11-May 10

Classroom: ANN 309

Office Hours: on class days by appointment

Units: 4

The web isn't what it used to be. Since public websites first launched in 1993, the responsibilities of developers, strategists, and managers have evolved significantly. Web professionals no longer simply repurpose print media to create static "brochure-ware." They now plan, direct, and manage websites to *perform* as well as *inform*:

- reducing organizational costs
- improving customer service
- contributing to the bottom line

In short, today's websites must solve problems and meet goals. Consequently, this course does not teach "design" in terms of art direction, although design principles will be discussed. Nor is it a programming course — no programming languages will be taught, though online applications such as WordPress will be used. Rather, this course emphasizes *website content strategies* — how to plan and direct websites with a purpose.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course combines theory, academic research, practical skills, teamwork, and hands-on experience in the process of creating and launching an actual website. By the end of the course, you should be able to...

- Research site users and other stakeholders to gain insights into their web-usage habits and needs.
- Evaluate and select website publishing platforms and content management systems.
- Direct website content to shape, enhance, protect, and promote brands.
- Optimize online content (text, images, video, etc.) for both search engines and site visitors.
- Analyze site traffic and behavior to discern trends and improve the user experience.
- Plan and manage ecommerce content amidst global competition.
- Create governance policies and standards to meet short- and long-term objectives.
- Establish and manage website production processes and vendor management policies.

INSTRUCTOR

Freddy J. Nager has over 20 years of experience in online marketing, and currently runs the media company Atomic Tango LLC. In 1994, he served as Editor of one of the Web's first entertainment sites, *AMP: MCA Records Online*. He then joined major ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as Sr. Interactive Copywriter, responsible for developing content ideas and editorial for Toyota's award-winning website and online advertising. Since then, Freddy has worked on sites for Nissan/Infiniti, the National Lampoon, and numerous startups. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from USC and his BA from Harvard. He has taught at Annenberg since 2012.

READINGS

Required:

- Steve Krug, *Don't Make Me Think (Revisited): A Common Sense Approach To Web And Mobile Usability*
- Avinash Kaushik, *Web Analytics 2.0: The Art Of Online Accountability And Science Of Customer Centricity*
- Avinash Kaushik, *The Marketing Analytics Intersect Newsletter* (free), <https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/marketing-analytics-intersect-newsletter-avinash/>

Recommended:

- Christina Wodtke & Austin Govella, *Information Architecture: Blueprints for the Web* (2nd Edition), Used or Amazon Kindle only
- Chip Heath & Dan Heath, *Made To Stick*

References: Since the rules of website design and development continually evolve, students should stay up to date by referencing the following sites.

- MOZ, <http://moz.com> (in particular, subscribe to the MOZ Top 10 newsletter)
- Baymard Institute (UX research), <https://baymard.com/>
- Interaction Design Foundation, <http://interaction-design.org>
- UX Matters, <http://uxmatters.com>
- Boxes and Arrows, <http://boxesandarrows.com>
- Content Marketing Institute, <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/>
- Annenberg Digital Lounge (for all your how-to/tactical needs), <http://annenbergdl.com>

In addition, articles from academic journals will be assigned and discussed. Please see the Schedule in this syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS

These assignments are not reports; they should demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply research, theories, frameworks, and creativity. They will also be graded on the quality of the writing. All papers should be posted as MS Word documents (.doc or .docx, not PDFs) to Blackboard by the due date. Without an exceptional circumstance and permission from the instructor in advance, late assignments will not be accepted. The specific assignment guidelines and instructions will be provided in class.

- **Individual Website Evaluation (10%):** Critically analyze the website of any B-Corporation (bcorporation.net) on the basis of the 3B's:
 - **Brand:** How does the website support the organization's image, reputation, and trustworthiness?
 - **Buzz:** How does the website support and promote "word of mouth" and press coverage?
 - **Behavior:** How does the website encourage and facilitate desired actions from users?

Length: 500-1000 words (approximately 1-2 pages). The purpose of this paper is to emphasize writing skills and clarify expectations for the semester. It will be reviewed and graded, then returned for revisions. Revised papers are not guaranteed to receive a grade increase.

- **Website Plan (2 parts = 50%):** Students will work in teams to develop a complete plan for a new blog-based website. This plan consists of two parts:
 - **Individual Stakeholders Analysis (25%):** Each member of the team will research and analyze a competitor, a community stakeholder, and one user persona (3 stakeholders total). Team members will consult each other beforehand to assign targets and avoid overlap, then review each other's papers before submission. Length: 1000-2000 words (approximately 2-4 pages).
 - **Team Website Plan (25%):** Based on the Stakeholders Analyses, the team will collaboratively create a brand bible (design and voice); a sitemap of all content pages; a wireframe; SEO tactics (keywords, backlink

strategy, usage guides); conversion goals and KPI's. Length: 1000-2000 words (approximately 2-4 pages).

- **Team Presentation & Website (20%):** To simulate an organizational website, all team members will collaborate in creating a WordPress.com site based on the plan. Each student will write and keyword-optimize at least two blogposts (approximately 500 words each). Note that half of this grade is based on teamwork.
- **Article Summaries (10%):** While each student is responsible for completing all readings, students will also be assigned specific articles to analyze and post to Blackboard.
- **Class participation (10%):** Students must contribute to the learning in this class, and will not earn the full participation score simply by attending classes. In most class sessions, students must speak, ask questions, and debate respectfully. To do so, they must spend at least 3-5 hours per week outside of class in preparation: completing the assigned readings before class, researching additional materials, and applying theories and frameworks to personal and professional experiences. Staying silent is unacceptable behavior, especially in the company of guest speakers, since it conveys disengagement. In addition, **use of phones or computers for non-class-related purposes will count as being "absent."** Here is how class participation is evaluated:
 - Is the contribution relevant to the discussion?
 - Does it consider ideas offered by the reading and by classmates?
 - Does it increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
 - Are the views supported with data, third-party theories and research?
 - Does it test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?
 - Is the student respectful of others in the discussion?

GRADES + GUIDELINES

A	93.0% or higher (extremely rare)
A-	90.0%-92.9%
B+	87.0%-89.9%
B	83.0%-86.9%
B-	80.0%-82.9%
C+	77.0%-79.9%
C	73.0%-76.9%
C-	70.0%-72.9%
D	60.0%-69.9%
F	59.9% or lower

Grading Components

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Assignment 1 (Individual Assignment): Website Evaluation | 10% |
| • Assignment 2 (Individual Assignment): Stakeholders Analysis | 25% |
| • Assignment 3 (Team Assignment): Website Plan | 25% |
| • Team Website + Presentation | 20% |
| • Article Evaluations (Team Project) | 10% |
| • Class Participation | 10% |
- **Criteria:** A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to develop professional caliber work that could be presented to a client or CEO. A-level work is mistake-free, reflects in-depth research, shows creativity and superlative communication skills, and demonstrates a strong understanding of the course material. Personal recommendations will be provided on request to students who earn an A.

B's are awarded to graduate-school caliber work, reflecting in-depth research and analysis, as well as a strong understanding of course material. The ideas would need to be stronger to succeed in a professional setting.

C's and lower are given to amateur work, marked by insufficient research, many errors in writing and implementation of course material, or superficial analysis.

- **Attendance:** You must attend every class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class (missing more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence). Makeup assignments will be given for any excused absences, such as illnesses or athletic commitments. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies), and obtain what you missed from classmates and Blackboard. Two unexcused absences will result in a complete loss of participation points. More than two unexcused absences will result in a course grade of C- or lower. Note: unauthorized use of phones or computers in class will be counted as an absence, since you are in attendance but not truly present.
- **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few "right" answers: what works for one company might fail for another — or even for the same company at another time. Assignments must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
- **Professional Writing:** Since this a graduate program in communication, your writing and document formatting will be factored into all assignment grades, so please proofread to eliminate all errors. If you need help with fluency or simply polishing your work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: <http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>
- **Research and References:**
 - Your work must be supported by research from authoritative sources, such as academic journals, professional journalists and news publications, and credible experts. Please vet your sources.
 - If you use Wikipedia, do not cite it as a reference. Rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article, and cite if applicable.
 - Do not limit your research to whatever Google turns up. Contact experts on campus or online. You may also conduct focus groups, interviews, and surveys; just make sure to include all contact information (dates, medium, etc.) and any disclaimers about statistical significance.
 - Bibliography entries must include complete source information — a URL alone is never enough. You may use APA style, which includes the name of the source, article titles, author names, and dates of publication. In addition, in the case of websites, you should include the date you accessed the source.
- **Respect:** Treat classmates and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. Also, *be present*: **all computers and phones must be turned off and put away during lectures — no exceptions.** You may eat in class, but not when other students or guest speakers are presenting.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

LECTURE SCHEDULE

This schedule may change depending on the pace of class discussions and the availability of guest speakers. For final requirements, please refer to the lecture slides, which will be posted to Blackboard.

Class 1, January 11: Defining Content Strategy + The Role of Professional Strategist

- What is website content strategy, why it's important, and how it's evolved
- Readings for next class:
 - Scott, "The Gobbledygook Manifesto"
- Assignment: Introduce Yourself on Blackboard, bring paper copy to class

Class 2, January 18: Purposes and Platforms

- Company (client) objectives + integrating organizational departments
- CMS platforms
- Readings for next class:
 - Krug, *Don't Make Me Think*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2
 - Lin, C., "Organizational Website Design as a Rhetorical Situation," *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, March 2007, Vol.50(1), pp.35-44
 - Altimeter Group, "Content: The New Marketing Equation," 2012
 - Swire, "The Art of Thinking Sideways: Content Marketing for Boring Businesses," Moz, 8 April 2014, <http://moz.com/blog/the-art-of-thinking-sideways-content-marketing-for-boring-businesses>
- Assignments:
 - Pick Team & Topic
 - Explore Wordpress.com
 - Assignment 1: Website Evaluation, due before the next class

Class 3, January 25: Users and Personas

- Defining and analyzing your key site users, creating personas
- Readings for next class:
 - Krug, *Don't Make Me Think*, Chapters 3-5
 - Hermeking, "Culture and Internet Consumption: Contributions from Cross-Cultural Marketing and Advertising Research," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 9 August 2006, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.tb00310.x/abstract>
 - Hinton, "Personas and the Role of Design Documentation," *Boxes and Arrows*, 27 February 2008, <http://boxesandarrows.com/personas-and-the-role-of-design-documentation/>

- Davis, Wang & Lindridge, "Culture Influences On Emotional Responses To On-Line Store Atmospheric Cues," *Journal of Business Research*, August 2008
- Massanari, "Designing for Imaginary Friends: Information Architecture, Personas and the Politics of User-Centered Design," *New Media & Society*, 2010 May, Vol.12(3), pp.401-416
- Assignments:
 - Website Evaluation due

Class 4, February 1: Stakeholders Beyond Users — Community and Competitors

- Competitors: think different... and better
- Community: Google, regulators, advertisers, complements, collaborators
- Readings for next class:
 - Krug, *Don't Make Me Think*, Chapters 6-8
 - Withrow, "Competitive Analysis: Understanding the Market Context," *Boxes and Arrows*, 7 February 2006, <http://boxesandarrows.com/competitive-analysis-understanding-the-market-context/>
- Assignments:
 - Assignment 2: Stakeholders Analysis due before class 7

Classes 5-6, February 8 & 15: Design and Creative Direction

- Style guides: look, feel, voice, tone
- Globalization vs localization
- Readings for next class:
 - Krug, *Don't Make Me Think*, Chapters 9-13
 - Kaushik, "7 Incredible Web Design, Branding, Digital Marketing Experiences," *Occam's Razor* (Kaushik.net), 28 January 2013, <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/web-design-branding-digital-marketing-experiences/>
 - Kuzic, et al, "Web Design and Company Image," *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, 2010
 - Kelleher & Miller, "Organizational Blogs and the Human Voice: Relational Strategies and Relational Outcomes," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 9 August 2006, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00019.x/abstract>

Classes 7-8, February 22 & March 1: Content Planning

- Structure: Hierarchy, Taxonomy, Site Maps, and the Purchasing Funnel
- Regulations: from privacy to accessibility
- Content sources: UGC, original, licensed
- Readings for next class:
 - Kaushik, *Web Analytics 2.0*, Chapters 1, 3 & 4 (Skip 2)
 - Dean, "How to Create a Squeeze Page That Converts at 21.7% (Step-By-Step Case Study)," *Backlinko*, 5 June 2014 (updated 12 January 2017), <http://backlinko.com/social-squeeze-page>
 - Moz, "The Beginner's Guide To Content Marketing," <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-content-marketing>
- Assignments:
 - Stakeholders analysis due
 - Team Website Plan due before class 11

Classes 9-10, March 8 & 22: Search Engine Optimization

- Creating "Linkbait": content that inspires backlinking, sharing
- Keywords and formatting
- Blackhat techniques: short-term tricks that hurt in the long run
- Readings for next class:
 - Kaushik, *Web Analytics 2.0*, Chapters 5, 6 & 7
 - Moz, "The Beginner's Guide to SEO," <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>
 - Singhal, "More Guidance On Building High-Quality Sites," by Google Webmaster Central Blog, 6 May 2011, googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2011/05/more-guidance-on-building-high-quality.html
 - Anderson, "The Long Tail," *Wired*, October 2004, <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>
 - Baye, Santos & Wildenbeest, "Search Engine Optimization: What Drives Organic Traffic to Retail Sites?," *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, Spring 2016

- Acidre, Jason, "Using Modern SEO to Build Brand Authority," *Moz*, 30 July 2014, <https://moz.com/blog/using-modern-seo-to-build-brand-authority>

March 15 - No Class Meeting (Spring Break)

Class 11, March 29: Analytics and Auditing

- Website integration in marketing campaigns
- Statistics that matter: KPI's, bounce rate, conversions, gap analysis
- Site audit requirements (qualitative criteria)
- Readings for next class:
 - Kaushik, *Web Analytics 2.0*, Chapters 8 & 9
 - Kaushik, "Are You Into Internal Site Search Analysis? You Should Be," *Occam's Razor*, 26 June 2006, <https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/are-you-into-internal-site-search-analysis-you-should-be/>
 - Christian, "The A/B Test: Inside the Technology That's Changing the Rules of Business," *Wired*, 25 April 2012, http://www.wired.com/business/2012/04/ff_abtesting
 - Kaushik, "The Very Best Digital Metrics For 15 Different Companies!", *Occam's Razor*, 2 May 2017, <https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/best-web-metrics-digital-companies/>
 - Mathew Ingram, "The Real Secret to BuzzFeed's Success Isn't Cat GIFs, It's Data", *Fortune*, Feb 16, 2016. (accessed 4 Aug 2017). <http://fortune.com/2016/02/16/buzzfeed-data/>
- Assignments:
 - Team Website Plan due
 - Presentation on Class 14; Website launch on Class 15

Class 12, April 5: Website Revenue Models

- Ecommerce design and management
- Affiliate Programs
- Readings for next class:
 - Kaushik, *Web Analytics 2.0*, Chapters 10 & 11
 - Ariely, "Gamed: How Companies Get You to Share More and Spend More," *Wired*, 20 June 2011, http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/06/ff_gamed
 - Bell, Choi & Lodish, Leonard, "What Matters Most in Internet Retailing," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 18 September 2012, <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/what-matters-most-in-internet-retailing/>
 - Kumar, "Making 'Freemium' Work," *Harvard Business Review*, May 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/05/making-freemium-work/>

Class 13, April 12: Governance and Workflow

- Editorial calendars and page tables
- Approval processes and client management
- Readings for next class:
 - Kaushik, *Web Analytics 2.0*, Chapters 12 & 14 (Skip 13)

Class 14, April 19: Class Presentations

Class 15, April 26: Website Due

- Meeting on Blackboard