WRA 420 :: Content Management

Department of Writing, Rhetoric & American Cultures :: Michigan State University

Spring 2013

Tuesday/Thursday, 2:40-4:00 PM
317 Ernst Bessey Hall
http://msu.edu/~mcleodm3/wra420

Instructor: Michael McLeod
Office: 1 Olds Hall
Email: mcleodm3@msu.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Required Materials/Resources

- Required text: Content Everywhere, Sara Wachter-Boettcher
- Required text: Content Strategy for the Web, Kristina Halvorson
- Recommended text: The Elements of Content Strategy, Erin Kissane
- A dependable computer with reliable Internet and email access
- A USB storage drive or cloud-based service (Dropbox, Google Drive) for file storage

Course Objectives: Students will …

- learn and practice the core competencies of content management, including: single sourcing, separating content from presentation, and distributing editorial roles amongst teams.
- learn and practice the genres and tools crucial to content management.
- learn and practice research methods for assessing the communication needs of organizations in order to recommend effective and sustainable content strategies.
- situate content management as a component of user-centered design.
- be able to frame content management as a rhetorical practice and a professional writing craft.

Attendance and Participation

Discussion and collaboration are essential parts of this course, as are in-class tutorials and workshops. Attendance in class is mandatory, so you are expected to attend class regularly and have completed any necessary preparation.

Because there are often legitimate reasons to miss class, you are allowed 3 unexcused absences (university-excused absences are defined by the Ombudsman here). Every unexcused absence beyond 3 will result in a half-point deduction from your final grade (see Grades and Grading Scale). Punctuality is also an important part of professional behavior, so arriving any more than 10 minutes after class begins will be considered an absence.

If you know in advance that you will have to miss class, please notify the instructor and make alternate arrangements for assignments, readings, or tutorials for those days. Even if an absence is excused, students are expected to complete all work.

Assignments and Grading

You must complete all major assignments in order to pass this class. Scoring guides for each assignment will be provided well in advance of their due dates so that students are well informed of the instructor's expectations. Course work should be submitted according to guidelines and on time; late work will only be accepted at the discretion of the instructor. Lateness is considered to be any time after class (4pm) on the day the work is due.

Major Assignments and Projects

- **Analysis of an Information Model: *200 points*.** You will analyze the content available to us as writers from an online content provider (YouTube, Twitter, etc). You will describe in detail what kinds of content the provider makes available, how that content is structured, what constraints are put on our usage by the provider's terms of service, and detailed examples of that content can be utilized.

- **Analysis of a Content Management System: *200 Points.*** You will get hands-on experience with a content management environment. You will write a brief report summarizing the features of that CMS and a review of your experience, evaluating that system for your classmates. We will develop shared criteria for evaluation to guide your review. The final product will include both a short written report and an oral presentation.

- **Research – Content Management in an Organization: *300 Points.*** You will work in groups to research how a real organization creates and manages their content. You will do an audit of the types of content they produce, audit the culture of that organization (including roles and workflows), and an audit of the types of technologies the use to enact their content strategies. Your group will prepare two reports, one a descriptive report of your findings and another that provides recommendations for how that organization might improve.

- **Exercises and Class Participation: *100 Points.*** There will be regular exercises that ask you to engage with the readings of the day and/or put an idea into practice. These exercises will not be graded , but doing them will be essential to understanding course material, as will participating in class discussions.

- **Final Exam: *200 Points.*** You will be asked to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the course material. The exact form of the exam will be revealed at the appropriate time.

Revising Assignments

Revision is an important part of the writing (and coding) process. To that end, you will be allowed to revise any of your projects for a higher grade. Consult with the instructor if you wish to revise; revisions will not be accepted if the policy is abused to extend deadlines. All revisions must include an additional description of the changes made, as well as the original and revised versions. All revisions are due by the last regular day of class.

Grades and Grading Scale

Course projects will generate 1000 total points over the semester. Based on a 1000-point scale, the following table describes how final grades will be assigned:

Points	Grade
1000-950	4.0
949-875	3.5
874-800	3.0
799-750	2.5
749-700	2.0
699-650	1.5
649-600	1.0
599-below	0.0

Remember than any unexcused absence over your allowed 3 will result in a half-point drop in your final grade (meaning each is a 50-point hit on your total points).

University Academic Honesty Policy

Academic Honesty-Article 2.3.3 of Academic Freedom Report states "the student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the College of Arts and Letters adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulation, 1.0, Protection of Scholarships and Grades, which are included in Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or in the course. For additional information, see MSU's ombudsman's website.

Be advised – copying code, particularly as a programmer, is common practice. For the purpose of course assignments where you are asked to demonstrate your understanding of the structure and syntax, you will be expected to compose your own and to document your work through comments.

Students with Disabilities

To receive any accommodation for any disability, students must first register with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities. The RCPD will request appropriate documentation and make a determination regarding the nature of the accommodation to which a student is entitled. The RCPD will then give the student a "visa" that specifies the kind of accommodation that may be provided. It is then the responsibility of the student seeking accommodation to present the visa to his/her instructor.

The course schedule is subject to change as circumstances demand.