TYPOGRAPHY & INTERACTION

SPRING '26

THE NEW SCHOOL, PARSONS, MPS CD
PMCD 5002, CRN 3992/9589
63 FIFTH AVENUE, ROOM 620
WEDNESDAYS, 4–6:40PM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

"TYPOGRAPHY & INTERACTION" IS A YEAR-LONG COURSE, DIVIDED INTO TWO CLASSES, WHICH WILL PROVIDE A RIGOROUS FOUNDATION OF TYPOGRAPHIC AND INTERACTION PRINCIPLES IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL DESIGN. OVER BOTH CLASSES, STUDENTS WILL ACQUIRE AND HONE THE SKILLS THEY NEED FOR SUCCESS IN THE FIELD OF INTERACTIVE DESIGN.

OUR SECOND SEMESTER WILL BUILD ON THE TYPE AND LAYOUT FOUNDATIONS FROM THE FIRST, MOVING INTO INTERFACE DESIGN AND INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES ON THE WEB.

Interaction, interactive, interface, product, UI, UX designers—we are known by many names. These are all monikers for a digitally-native design practice. It is our responsibility, as practitioners in this increasingly consequential and broadening field, to both understand existing paradigms and help manifest, refine, and sustain purposeful new ones.

Contemporary digital design exists in the continuum of the ever-shifting, evolving, and ubiquitous web. Designers today work at many different scales and within many different systems. We act as mediators—not only for users, meaning, and experience—but with these systems themselves, as well. They shape our work and we shape them—at the meeting point, the *interface*, between things.

In this class, students will learn to give form to and then work at these intersections. We will again use web technologies as our lens for the subject, building on our foundations in HTML and CSS by incorporating JS (*JavaScript*)—to give behavior, interaction, and life to our designs. We will survey modern approaches to front-end design and development, as our discipline has as many methodologies as we do names. There is no one way to do this work, nor one thing to do it for—and through our readings, discussions, exercises, and projects, students will understand and then situate themselves and their practice within the larger field.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

BY THE END OF THIS SEMESTER, STUDENTS WILL:

- Thoroughly exercise and extend their typographic, design, and technical web skills developed in the first semester.
- Learn to use modular, templated HTML components with varied and dynamic external data sources.
- Understand the CMS (*Content Management System*) and API (*Application Programming Interface*) as software archetypes.
- Be introduced to JavaScript and programming logic, the underlying concepts that make interactivity possible.
- Gain an awareness of processes, methodologies, approaches, and systems in use in contemporary software development and on the web.
- Conceptualize a web project with an eye towards its complete implementation—balancing the tradeoffs between design, features, and practical build considerations or limitations.
- Develop an understanding of how they want to practice as a designer within the larger context of the discipline.

COURSE OUTLINE

THE COURSE IS STRUCTURED INTO THEMATIC UNITS, EACH BOOKENDED BY READINGS ON THE SUBJECT AND A PROJECT THAT WILL DEMONSTRATE THE MATERIAL:

UNIT № 4: “INTERFACE AS INTERFACE”

WEEKS № 16–21

We will expand on our first-semester foundations in design, typography, HTML, and CSS—now incorporating images and other media while introducing JavaScript to enliven our work. Students will learn to work with a CMS and use an API for dynamic content.

READINGS

THE DESIGN OF EVERYDAY THINGS ↓

Don Norman, 1988 (*revised* 2013)

I AM A HANDLE →

Rob Giampietro, 2012

SOMETIMES IT LOOKS LIKE A DUCK, SOMETIMES IT LOOKS LIKE A RABBIT ↓

Jack Balkin, Dan Michaelson, 2012

LAWS OF UX →

Jon Yablonski, 2018 (*ongoing*)

FOLK INTERFACES →

Maggie Appleton, 2022

PROJECT № 4: "LINKS"

The unit ends with Project 4, *Links*, which students will present on February 25.

Students will collaboratively assemble, connect, and present a collection using Are.na as a platform/CMS—designing and building an interface to explore and understand it.

In addition to our previous project requirements, here we'll be looking for the effective use of images/media, meaningful interactive interface functionality, and your use of JavaScript.

UNIT № 5: "IF ALL YOU HAVE IS A HAMMER, EVERYTHING LOOKS LIKE A NAIL"

WEEKS № 22–30

To wrap up the semester (and course), we'll round out our knowledge of the web's intricacies—handling user input, managing state, constructing metadata. We will examine how our projects participate in and live elsewhere on the web, and outline real-world processes to make them come together.

READINGS

WHAT IS CODE? →

Paul Ford, 2015

TIKTOK'S ENSHITTIFICATION →

Cory Doctorow, 2023

THE AGE OF AVERAGE →

Alex Murrell, 2023

WHY A.I. ISN'T GOING TO MAKE ART →

Ted Chiang, 2024

A NOTIONAL DESIGN STUDIO. →

Ethan Marcotte, 2025

HUMAN INTERFACE GUIDELINES ↓

Apple, 1987

MACINTOSH HUMAN INTERFACE GUIDELINES ↓

Apple, 1992

THE WINDOWS INTERFACE GUIDELINES ↓

Microsoft, 1995

AQUA HUMAN INTERFACE GUIDELINES ↓

Apple, 2001

IPHONE HUMAN INTERFACE GUIDELINES ↓

Apple, 2008

WINDOWS PHONE 7 UI DESIGN AND INTERACTION GUIDE ↓

Microsoft, 2010

MATERIAL DESIGN 1 →

Google, 2014

iOS HUMAN INTERFACE GUIDELINES ↓

Apple, 2014

MATERIAL DESIGN 3 →

Google, 2021 (*ongoing*)

HUMAN INTERFACE GUIDELINES →

Apple, 2022 (*ongoing*)

FLUENT 2 DESIGN SYSTEM →

Microsoft, 2023 (*ongoing*)

PROJECT № 5: "FUNCTIONS"

This unit will culminate with Project 5, *Functions*, which will be presented in class on April 22.

Students will identify a problem and conceptualize how to solve it on the web. They will plan, design, and implement a novel solution towards this problem—incorporating data and interaction with the tools, technologies, and techniques they've learned in this course.

We'll first be looking for strong concepts—not limited to or by existing conventions—that push the grain of interaction design in new and interesting directions.
And as the capstone for this course, we're expecting the highest level of nuance and polish in the organizational, aesthetic, and technical aspects of these final projects.

PROJECT "INDEX"

The Spring semester, and the entire course, end with the Project *Index*, which will be due on May 15.

Students will build a landing page for themselves and their *Typography & Interaction* projects, providing links and context for them. They will update this with their finished projects, and refine it to deliberately and uniquely represent themselves and their work online.

We'll be looking for self-expression within the their now-familiar materials of the web—demonstrating an understanding of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript as a means to manifest a personal taste in this medium.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

READING RESPONSES

Each unit begins with a set of readings to introduce the subject. Students are expected to read the required selections and synthesize their thoughts in a written response, prior to the next class. We are not looking for summarization, here—these should be personal reflections on the subjects, and are evaluated with this lens. We will then discuss these readings as a group.

EXERCISES, MILESTONES

Each unit will also have specific, technical exercises and milestones that are assigned towards completion of the projects. Assignments are expected to be completed outside of class, before the next session. Some of these will be small; some of these will be large. They are *all* evaluated for completion and quality.

ENGAGEMENT

Students are expected to actively and passionately participate in this course. This means more than showing up and turning things in on time—which should be a given. Beyond that baseline students should be curious, prepared, thoughtful, vocal, and intentional throughout the course. They should make us understand why they are here, and demonstrate to us that they care about themselves, their work, and each other—and ultimately, about this chosen profession.

This engagement will be unavoidably reflected in the quality of students' work—but we also evaluate this discretely based on their participation in and out of the classroom, with us and with their peers.

PROJECTS

The bulk of the work for this class takes the form of projects. They are intended as opportunities for students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills learned in class while developing their own practice, and are evaluated in this light.

There will be check-ins and reviews around each of these before the final due dates, when we will have critiques as a group. In addition to the quality of the project itself, students will be subject to an in-person code review and will also be assessed on the presentation of their work. More specific evaluation criteria will be delineated with each project's introduction.

GRADE CALCULATION

READING RESPONSES	10%
EXERCISES, MILESTONES	10%
ENGAGEMENT	20%
PROJECT "INDEX"	10%
PROJECT Nº 4: "LINKS"	20%
PROJECT Nº 5: "FUNCTIONS"	30%

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

In the open tradition of the early web, the only materials truly required are a computer, a browser, a text editor, and an internet connection. The specifics of these are open to the student's individual preferences and practices. We will do our best to accommodate everyone and will make recommendations, when needed.

In class, we will demonstrate using Figma for visual design and sketching, Visual Studio Code for programming, and GitHub/GitHub Desktop for version control and project hosting. All of these products are available for free, or offer free education licenses with New School emails.

WE WILL USE THE FOLLOWING TOOLS TO ORGANIZE OUR CLASS:

COURSE SITE →

For housekeeping, agendas, and lectures

SUBMISSION FORM →

For submitting your work/URLs

SLACK CHANNEL →

For direct and asynchronous communication (*not* email)

FIGMA TEAM →

For visual sketching, sharing

GITHUB ORGANIZATION →

For code examples, sharing

GOOGLE DRIVE →

For document collaboration, recorded lectures

ZOOM ROOM →

For screen sharing and recording

CLASS POLICIES

OUR COMMUNITY

Our class will create and maintain an agreement, intended to help us foster a safe, empathetic, and productive space for our course. It is built on trust and accumulated experience across cohorts. It can be revised and modified, with all of our input, over the year, and lives on our course site.

INCLUSION

Our intent is to respect and give forum to a range of perspectives and backgrounds, including culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and age. In instances where we are personally not qualified to speak from a specific perspective, students are encouraged to explore this area themselves. And please let us know if there are ways that the course can better serve these goals.

OFFICE HOURS

We will have limited availability outside of our class time, and won't keep scheduled "office hours." Students should not expect us to immediately solve specific design or technical problems, or have their progress be blocked by this. Their first resource should be themselves, then our course site and its materials, and then each other.

That said: if there are still questions—particularly logistical or content ones—students can message us on Slack, and we will respond when we can. But again this should never be a bottleneck; all of this works better when not done at the last minute.

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL HELP

For more specific technical instruction and questions, Parsons has dedicated CD-program tutors available to help students with HTML, CSS, and JavaScript—as well as offering general design critiques and feedback. Their daily schedules are available midway through the semester; sessions are by-appointment.

The University Learning Center also offers its own tutoring sessions; these are also by-appointment.

As tutors are only available a limited number of hours per week, it is advisable to start early on your projects and seek help along the way—to avoid the usual end of project/semester rush for additional help.

CODE PLAGIARISM

Students may find code similar to our exercises or projects elsewhere online. But the copying or adapting of *any* code beyond our provided course material (lectures, exercises, demos), without attribution, is not allowed under any circumstances. This *includes* from LLMs, more below.

If adapting, with attribution, students must explain the usage and demonstrate an understanding of how the code works. We may have in-person code reviews to facilitate and gauge this understanding.

We have zero tolerance for any sort of plagiarism—which ranges from "verbatim copying" (copying-and-pasting) to "thorough paraphrasing" (changing names or rearranging) and "autocompleting" (with LLM-assisted editors). Students should also review the Academic Integrity Policy.

LLMs AND "ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE"

Relatedly, there has been much discussion and developments in our field (and others) around *large language models*, a.k.a. "artificial intelligence."

Here's what we're going to say about this: tools like the conspicuous ChatGPT, Cursor's IDE, or GitHub Copilot are known to often generate wrong or unnecessarily verbose code. This, combined with the fact that their results are derived from copyrighted and/or legally questionable sources—usually without permission or attribution—means the use of these tools continues to be fraught, at best.

We think you first need to write code yourself to understand the medium. Copying/adapting from ChatGPT/Copilot is no different from anywhere else (see above) and is ultimately a disservice to your education. These are always to be treated like any other tools at our disposal—as *aides* to your understanding, not *shortcuts* around learning. We think you know the difference.

RECORDING SESSIONS

We will take recordings of our sessions for students to reference later. As these will include the students and their work, the recordings will be stored on our Google Drive and made available only to New School email users.

ATTENDANCE, GRADING, AND OTHER POLICIES

All CD classes adhere to the same common program and university policies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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