

University of Washington
Masters of Communication in Digital Media
Spring 2004

COM 597:
Writing and Presentation for Digital Media (5 credits)

Instructors: **Kathy E. Gill**
 e-mail: kegill@u.washington.edu
 Voice mail: (425) 351.0005
 Office hours: Tuesdays 4.30 to 5:30 and by appointment
 Office: Communications 251b

Classroom: **COM304**

Time: **Tuesdays, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.**
 30 March - 8 June

1. Course Overview:

This course is the second of two linked courses that focus on digital content planning, creation, management and deployment. Throughout the course, we will explore four major topics:

- Applicable technologies
- Hypertext theory
- Readability
- Storytelling

The course builds upon the work from Winter Quarter as students begin creating content that meets plans already developed. This course continues a user-centered approach to web site design. That is, we start with the user's needs and make rhetorical and design choices from that point of view.

The focus is on creating original content, although we will examine issues involved in repurposing existing content. You will hone storytelling skills; integrate visuals, sound and text into meaningful forms; and understand theory underlying the storyteller's choices. We will explore the emergence of digital media story-telling techniques, as well as ethical and technical challenges these tools present to media and society

We will discuss how rhetoric addresses the strategic language choices we make when communicating with others. Rhetorical principles come to play in how categories, pages, and links are named. Text elements such as lists, subheads and callouts can be

considered rhetorical figures in design.

We will also explore issues relating to readability and how those issues differ when prose is displayed on a screen instead of being printed on paper.

This course requires intermediate computer literacy and familiarity with Dreamweaver and Photoshop.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Understand how hypertext differs from linear storytelling
- Understand the responsibilities of writer and editor
- Describe how content decisions affect web site goals
- Describe the different types of hyperlinks used on web sites
- Organize text for effective reading on screen
- Understand techniques that allow text to also be optimized for print readability
- Understand components of and importance of style guides
- Identify when and how to use non-textual content to communicate ideas, concepts and stories

Course Structure and Teaching Strategies:

Teaching methods for this course will include lectures, demonstrations, student presentations, guest lecturers, lab exercises, and reading and writing assignments.

The course instructor will coordinate all class material, keep in close touch with each student in order to assess and meet individual needs, and evaluate all course assignments. Material will be available on the class web site:
<http://courses.washington.edu/dmedia/w2004/>

Some classes will feature a guest lecturer who is a leading professional or scholar in digital media content creation. Class discussions are also a key element of the course, and students are encouraged to ask questions, offer their own observations, and share their own experiences with new technology.

Course Requirements:

Required readings include book chapters and articles from scholarly journals, trade magazines, and popular publications.

Assigned readings will be available on-line through the library eReserve system. In addition, topical readings on-line and in print will be assigned when appropriate.

2. Evaluation:

Grades are based on writing assignments, an individual project, a team project, and class participation.

A. Writing assignments, 20%

There will be at least three writing assignments. All assignments must be turned in as a live web page; your account on Homer is the logical place to house these.

Possible writing assignments include creating a “how-to” document; editing/repurposing existing print content for on-screen display; writing an effective promotional e-mail; writing a news story; or responding to a weblog entry.

Due dates: TBD

Format: HTML

B. Individual Project, 20%

You have three choices for the term project: a position paper, a case study, or an entrepreneurial project.

- You may use a topic from work or personal life as an entrepreneurial project, so long as the topic relates to content creation. Creating a web site falls in this category.
- A case study can explore an industry, product or technology; a critical analysis (such as a content analysis or readability study) of an existing web site falls in this category.
- A position paper means that you will take an issue (or theory) and present various points of view before taking a stand on the issue. Examining how print or electronic media current practices (or theory) apply (or not) to electronic media is an example.

** pull process from COM597 fall syllabus **

Due dates: TBD

Format: HTML, PDF or other web format

C. Team Project, 40%

The class will be divided into teams (the number will depend on the number of students enrolled). Each team will develop content for the web site(s) planned in

Winter Quarter. The teams will make presentations/reports to the class as the quarter progresses, culminating in a final presentation. Team members will summarize their lessons learned, which will include an analysis of each team member's contributions to the project.

Due dates: TBD

Format: HTML, PDF or other web format

D. Class Participation, 20%

These points will be based both on participation in the classroom and through e-mail. Occasionally, the instructor may pose a question or problem to the class and offer participation points for e-mail responses and discussion. Students may also suggest questions for class discussion and receive participation credit. There may be discussion leaders selected for in-class reading discussion.

There will be no midterm or final exams.

3. Schedule

The class meets weekly on Tuesday from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m.

The following schedule is subject to change; please check the class web site for updates on topics and assigned readings.

Part 1: Overview	
Week 1 : 30 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction, review syllabus and expectations • Teams assigned (or regrouped)
Part 2: Storytelling	
Week 2 : 6 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of storytelling • Verbal and visual storytelling • Components of good writing (even visual stories have writing as their foundation!)
Week 3 : 13 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhetoric and the Web • Inverted pyramid • What makes a good story?
Part 3: Hypertext Theory	
Week 4 : 20 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History, definitions of hypertext • Impact on storytelling
Week 5 : 27 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative analysis : storytelling in newspapers, TV, radio; by organizations (corporate and non-profit); and on the Web
Part 3: Readability and Meaning	
Week 6 : 4 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual communication on-screen • Elements of animation and sound
Week 7 : 11 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunking, web style (voice)
Part 4 : Applicable Technologies	
Week 8 : 18 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content management tools, process • Content creation tools
Part 5 : Presentations	
Week 9 : 25 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations

Week 10 : 1 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentations• Final Papers Due 10 June
-------------------------	--

Possible workshops:

Advanced Dreamweaver
Introduction to Flash
Creating Quicktime Videos