Yale Summer Session
Summer 2020

ART S167 (30257)
Tuesday / Thursday 1–4:15
Online and at Home[1]

Class Site
yss20.matt-wolff.com

Instructor
Matt Wolff
matthew.wolff@yale.edu

Teaching Assistant
Nick Massarelli
nick.massarelli@yale.edu

INTRODUCTION TO INTERACTIVE DESIGN
WORLD WIDE WEB

"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Welcome to the World Wide Web. This is an intensive studio course focusing on the impact of internetworked computers on art, design, and communication at large. We will be looking at the net critically – as both material and subject. Participants are encouraged to create new works that live within, alongside, against, around, and in response to the Internet. Coinciding with these works will be lectures, readings, and discussions on the ways in which today's internet (its military origins, infrastructural physicality, access points, dark design patterns, and information overload) affects our perception of the world as artists and designers.

This is a design course emphasizing visual communication. During the semester, students will be encouraged to generate novel form: to design, read, write, and publish. In doing so, special attention will be given to choices in content, data, navigation, pacing, interface, and interaction. On a more technical note, participants can expect to learn some of the foundational languages of front-end web development – HTML, CSS, and JavaScript – in order to develop their own unique, graphic forms. No prior experience in programming is required.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

– Create moments of unique individuality and personhood online
– Foster a sense of authorship and publishing
– Gain a general understanding of the Internet and the World Wide Web[2]
– Respond critically to trends in user interface, visual communication, and hardware
– Improve your technical skills and widen your technical lexicon

– Make and evaluate typographic decisions for desktop and mobile devices
– Propose and develop novel, unique interactive projects
– Experiment (severely) with form and content
– Develop a position, deciding what's important to you critically, aesthetically, morally.
– Learn new technical, conceptual, and creative skills to apply to your creative practice.

IMAGE "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog." Cartoon by Peter Steiner and published by *The New Yorker* on July 5, 1993.

1 In response to the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, Yale Summer Session has decided to move this course (and all others) online. Unfortunately, this means that rather than getting to meet and work with each other in-person and on-campus, everything must be done remotely. Each of our unique immediate surroundings – houses, apartments, dorms, basements, parks, etc.– now need to operate as our studios. Fortunately for us, this is course is about the Internet. Our computers and web browsers still offer us a window to the world and a means of producing novel work.

2 Where these technologies come from, where they are today, and where they could go next.

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EVALUATION

– Originality: Point of view, content, authorship
– Formal Approach and Typography
– Execution of technical skills
– Giving your idea a chance
– Strangeness

You will be evaluated according to your overall engagement in the course and the work you produce therein. Active participation during the semester will also be taken in account.

Please note: The focus of this class is not the invention of useful products, but rather the invention of useful techniques and approaches.

GRADING CRITERIA

70% … Final Project
10% … Exercises
10% … Reading responses
10% … Participation: feedback, diligence, and attitude

You may revise or update your work at any time until the end of the course. "Final work" will be considered as whatever lives on your individual class website as of Sunday, August 2nd.

MATERIALS

We will be doing quite a lot of work on our computers (Zoom Meetings, web development, debugging, etc.). Be sure you have access to a reliable network connection and a fully-charged machine for the full duration of the course.

Students are responsible for their own files, making sure to always save and back them up in some way. We will discuss some options for this, but note: it's important to back up files often.

For editing and updating code, students should download any reliable code editor:

– Atom
– Brackets
– Visual Studio Code
– Sublime Text

For image-making and sketching: Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign are standard tools available on most Yale computers. Other good digital-image making tools include a phone, digital camera, scanner, screen capture, etc. Sometimes writing can prove to be an incredibly useful method for sketching or working through ideas. At the very least, there's almost always a pen and a piece of paper somewhere nearby.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance to all class meetings is mandatory. You should make an effort to attend each class. Absence without a valid medical reason will be taken as an unexcused absence. The accumulation of three unexcused absences, will result in a failing grade for the course. In addition to attendance, you should aim to consistently arrive on time. Repeated tardiness with no excuse will count towards one or more absences.

To excuse an absence, you must have provided advanced notice with a valid excuse (illness, emergency, etc.). It will be your responsibility to catch up on missed work.

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In this class, you will become familiar with using pre-existing language, images, and software as raw material to create entirely new works. While making websites, you should seek out examples, open source projects, and other online resources to improve your work. We will discuss which technologies should be appropriated and how to properly credit their inclusion. I encourage you to seek out examples, open source projects, and online resources to improve your work.

From: *Academic Integrity at MIT: 'Writing Code'*

– "Writing code is similar to academic writing in that when you use or adapt code developed by someone else as part of your project, you must cite your source. However, instead of quoting or paraphrasing a source, you include an inline comment in the code. These comments not only ensure you are giving proper credit, but help with code understanding and debugging."

– "You should not simply re-use code as the solution to an assignment. Like academic writing, your code can incorporate the ideas of others but should reflect your original approach to the problem."

When you do inevitably find code from others to incorporate into your work, retype it instead of copying and pasting it in. This will help you better understand what that code does line by line and how it fits within your project. Maybe you can improve it. On that note, avoid pasting huge blocks of code. Remember to do things one step at a time so you can fully understand what each part is doing.

WEBSITES AND PRIVACY

Early in the session, we will publish our own class websites. These websites will house or link to all coursework – not only the final project, but any related sketches, reading responses, labs, etc. Everything completed in class should appear on the website, as it will be used to determine your final grade at the end of the course. Projects that are not accessbile online the day are due will be considered late. For anything that is natively offline – sketches, wireframes – you should prepare visual documentation and/or writing instead.

Although this course does require you to post work online and signup for some online services, privacy matters. As a student, your privacy is legally protected under FERPA. With anything you publish, you do NOT have to associate it with your name, image, or any other identifying information. Please pick any username you like. Please use smart passwords. Please be safe.

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COURSE DESIGN

This course meets for only 10 sessions. Given this condensed structure, the course will be fast-paced and rigorous. Generally, any class session will contain some combination of: lectures, exercises, tutorials, presentations, discussion, working, debugging, or critique.

SCHEDULE*

June 30	Hello, World! Exercise – What even is a website? Project introduction
July 2	Lecture – "A Possible History of the Internet" Tutorial – HTML Exercise – Organizing Files for the Web
July 7	Exercise – Favicons Project review, in-class critique
July 9	Lecture – "Hypertext: Web 1.0" Tutorial – CSS 1 Exercise – Web Inspector / DevTools
July 14	Tutorial – CSS 2 Exercise – Web Fonts Review – HTML and CSS
July 16	Student Presentations, in-class critique
July 21	Lecture – "Salty, Muddy, and Wet: Infrastructure of the Internet" Exercise – Making `<form>`
July 23	Individual Meetings Time for debugging
July 28	Discussion – "The web was open, now it's closed... what next?" Individual meetings
July 30	Final review
August 2	All work due (and any revisions)

*   In response to in-class discussions, your interests, and of course current and global events, the above schedule is subject to changes. Changes may include referenced materials, assigned projects, due dates, and guests. Always check our class website and your email inbox. These will offer the most up-to-date information. Any changes will be announced in class.

All readings will be posted to the class site as PDFs or as URLs. If you cannot access them – for whatever reason – send a message to either me or Nick.