COURSE DESCRIPTION

The catalogue description says that this class provides experience in planning and constructing webpages. Discusses historical, ethical, and social implications of the Internet and digital culture. Students will develop a balance of technical and aesthetic knowledge and an understanding of some of the problems and limitations of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

You can see that this is not a class in software. There will be some direct instruction in using software, but you must keep in mind that becoming a competent, thoughtful, alert, useful web designer involves much more than knowing the workings of a bunch of software (which will probably be obsolete before you graduate, anyway)—this is what the catalogue description is indicating in its mentioning that we will address history, ethics, society, technology, and aesthetics.

If you want to make webpages and websites that not only appeal to (if not fascinate) your intended audience but that also are responsible to that audience and add ethically to the ongoing discourses that shape all our lives, then you need to be thinking about how the design of what you make shapes the possible actions and thinking of those who “read” your site. To do that, you need to develop understandings of how we have been shaped to read what is on the web... and that means developing understandings of not only how we learned to read letters on a page or screen, but also how we learned to respond to colors and shapes, offline as well as on, and how we understand what is at stake when we read online as opposed to off, and who we and the rest of the world imagine ourselves to be when we read, and how we came to be in the position of having these big expensive tied-to-a-massive-power-grid-and-production-system machines sitting on our desks—machines that have been designed to keep us reading and interacting by ourselves physically.

The list of conditions that shape us as online "readers" is long and—to repeat myself—involves way more than software.

I hope then that you understand why you’ll be learning software but also reading & discussing articles about the
history of the Internet and about how websites might work like freakshows in the 19th century. I hope you'll understand why the websites you make for class will sometimes involve you doing research not only into software and technical strategies but also into how the structures of the web encourage certain kinds of community building.

Here then is a **general outline** of how this class is structured, in order to provide you with a broad ground for web development:

- Major Project 1
- Major Project 2
- Major Project 3
- Major Project 4

Please see the course calendar to see how this outline becomes specific, in assignments, due dates, and expectations.

**NOTE:** Because each of you comes to class with varying experiences in working with the web, I understand that some of what we do might be a review for you but completely new to someone else. I am leaving open the possibility of modifying the class to meet your varying backgrounds, and I am also open to proposals you have for how you can shape the work of class to meet your particular background and intentions.