Syllabus: DESIGN 3254 Communication Design - Interaction Foundations, Fall 2025

Basic Course Information

DESIGN 3254 - Communication Design: Interaction Foundations
Fall 2025

3 Credit Hours

Class: Wednesday 8:30am CST/CDT
Lab: Monday 6:00pm CST/CDT

Instructional Format: Lecture
Delivery Mode: Online

All sessions meet via: Zoom
Preferred mode of contact: Slack

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Course Description

This course is a hands-on application of interaction design for digital media (primarily browser-based). Participants will learn and apply the fundamentals of HTML and CSS, explore how user-interaction adds bidirectionality to communication, examine the intricacies of seemingly simple digital interactions, and become familiar with the attributes of digital device as 'canvas'. Students will work both independently and collaboratively to design interactive solutions for a selection of communication challenges.

Learning Objectives

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Design and build layouts with HTML and CSS. Develop the self-knowledge, conceptual and visual methodologies, and technical proficiency necessary to conceive, plan and execute screen-based interactive design projects.

- Collaborate as part of a development team. Understand the vocabularies, applications, and production environments associated with interactive design in order to work effectively with people in related disciplines (creative directors, writers, web-developers, programmers, etc.)

- Produce portfolio work that demonstrates successful and effective application of interactive design to accomplish specific communication objectives.

Texts, Materials, and Supplies

Work will likely be (but not required to be) accomplished with tools and software you already have (Adobe Creative Suite) or can download and/or use for free (VS Code, GitHub). Web browsers on desktop computers will also be used extensively, and other devices as your work warrants.

You also will likely use paper to draw out conceptual sketches and generate low-fidelity wireframes, as well as to take notes. You may alternatively use tablets or other design software to sketch out your ideas. Occasionally, you will be asked to show your sketches as part of your deliverables to demonstrate your design process. These should be scanned, photographed or exported as image documents, and need not be printed. As such, printing costs should be minimal/nonexistent.

Course Requirements & Grading

You will receive feedback on the work through individual and group critiques as it is developed. Exercises will be evaluated on completeness and timely submission. Faculty will arrange midterm conferences if desired, and will also be available during lab sessions to discuss assignments and overall course progress as needed. At the end of the semester, you will receive a final letter grade, determined by a combination of objective and subjective factors:

- **Timely delivery assignments:** Were all deliverables posted and available on the class website at or before the time specified?
- **Technical development/proficiency:** Have you correctly applied the technical skills learned in the class? Does your work demonstrate your technical ability? Do final deliverables function without error?
- **Design thinking/application:** Have you made thoughtful and appropriate creative choices? Does your work communicate clearly, and as intended? Is the final product beautiful, compelling, and well crafted?

- **Investment:** Does your work demonstrate a commitment of effort throughout the design/development process? Were you engaged in class? Did you contribute to the larger group? Did you manage your time well?

Grading

Grades will not be assigned on a curve, nor is any other particularly mathematical device applied. If you have an expectation of a strictly numbers-based grade, now is the time to let go of that expectation. We're talking about art here! At a high-level, final letter grades attempt to reflect the following standards:

A. Superior grasp and application of concepts; high level of exploration, thoughtful presentation of ideas, control and understanding of craft, timely completion of all projects. Serious and consistent effort, commitment, and participation.
B. Strong grasp and application of concepts; good quality work that meets and often exceeds the basic criteria of assignment; good effort and participation, evidence of growth.
C. Average comprehension of basic coursework and application of concepts, average level of investigation or initiative; some technical problems or trouble with craft; occasional participation.
D. Evidence that concepts are not understood and/or not being applied; poor quality work, course or projects criteria is not fulfilled, weak effort or level of investigation; little or no participation; attendance problems.
F. Failing, not acceptable for progress in curriculum, unacceptable deficiencies in process or final product.

If grades are important to you, be proactive about ensuring they are as you expect them to be.

Assignments and Homework

This class includes two major website projects, with many shorter assignments that build on each other and lead up to the larger projects. To get credit for your work, you must follow the directions for each project/deliverable in order to successfully link your work to the class website.

Assignments will be communicated to you via the class website (foundations2025fall.wudesign.me), and you will deliver all work by uploading to GitHub. Understand that your work will be public, and hosted on your own account. When the semester is over, you'll retain full control over what you've made.

Slack will be used for posting and sharing references, contributing to written discussions, and for communicating with your classmates and instructors.

You may occasionally use Figma to generate prototypes and/or use as a virtual pin-up space to post progress work.

Course-Specific Support or Supplementary Instruction

- **Communication with instructor:** Lab sessions, as described below, are the ideal opportunity to communicate individually with your instructor. Outside of lab sessions, be aware that most of our daytime hours are spent as a full-time developers and instructors. While we make every effort to respond quickly to requests for assistance outside of class and lab sessions, it may be hours before we can reply, particularly if your request is technical in nature. Email or Slack are the preferred methods of contact, as they help maintain a record for future reference. Be advised that we may not be able to respond immediately via Slack, even if we show as online. During weekdays, we will do our best to respond within 24 hours. Any communication sent after 5pm on Friday can expect a response by Monday.
- **Collaboration with peers:** Some projects/assignments may involve collaboration with your peers outside of class hours. In such cases, we leave it to you to determine how best to stay in communication, but we do expect all parties to be responsible for finding workable solutions. Slack is a useful tool for this purpose.
- **Other resources:** Project-specific resources will be enumerated on the class website for each project or deliverable.

Attendance, Participation, and Classroom Climate

Class sessions: Wednesday mornings, 8:30am–11:20am CDT/CST via Zoom
Lab sessions: Monday evenings, 6:00pm–9:00pm CDT/CST, also via Zoom

Instruction, discussion, independent exercises, and critiques will occur in class. Expect to be present for the full duration of the scheduled class session.

Homework assignments will typically be provided on Wednesdays (when class meets), and be due by 5pm the following Tuesday, to allow time for instructor review before the following class.

Time spent as a large group (lectures, etc.) will be kept at a minimum, but expect to be in class for the full schedule session. Class instruction will happen through in-person lessons and self-guided exercises. Attendance is required. Your instructor will regularly have short meetings with small groups of students during class for discussion, critique, and progress checks. You may also sometimes work in small groups independent of instructors. Like any studio class, expect to make an appreciable time commitment outside of class sessions for homework and projects.

Lab sessions are primarily intended to provide additional real-time access to the instructor for assistance and feedback related to assignments and project work. Lab sessions are optional; think of them as office hours. They are an excellent time to work through problems you've had with assignments before the assignment is due

Everyone learns more when critiques occur as a discussion rather than a one-sided evaluation. Expect not only to receive constructive feedback, but to provide it to your peers. This may occur in class discussions, one-on-one discussions with peers, or in the form of written notes.

Course Schedule
The following list of assignments and exercises is subject to change. Additional details about each assignment will be available on the class website at the appropriate time.

Date	Topics/Assigned Readings/Homework	Major Assignments
8/27	Hello World Webpage Exercise	
9/2	Introductory Questions Exercise	
9/9	Movie Quotes Exercise	
9/9	Song Lyric Webpage	
9/16	Type Lesson Exercise	
9/16	Type Styling Demonstration Webpage	
9/16	Recipe Webpage Research	
9/23	Complex Selectors Challenge	
9/23	Using Images Exercise	

9/23	The HTML Box Model Exercise	
9/30	Floated Elements Exercise	
9/30	Building Grids Exercise	
9/30	Recipe Webpage Content Collection	
9/30	Recipe Webpage Low-Fi Prototypes	
10/14	Multi-Panel Page Exercise	**Higher time commitment**
10/14	Responsive Layout Intro Exercise	
10/14	Responsive Techniques Exercise	
10/21	Recipe Webpage - Fully Realized	**Major Assignment**
10/28	CSS Positioning Exercise	
10/28	Building a Button Exercise	
10/28	Boatloads of Buttons Exercise	**Higher time commitment**
10/28	Microsite Content Outline	
10/28	Microsite Creative Brief	
10/31	Microsite Initial Meeting Notes	
11/5	Microsite Mockup A	
11/5	Microsite Mockup B	
11/7	Microsite Mockup Review	
11/12	Microsite Initial Build	
11/14	Microsite Notes from Initial Build	
11/19	Microsite Fully Realized	
12/3	Microsite Final	**Major Assignment**

Required Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others (including generative artificial intelligence) must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. You should familiarize yourself with the appropriate academic integrity policies of your academic program(s).

> Collaborating with other students, utilizing Internet resources, and utilizing generative AI as an aid in understanding the material is acceptable. Utilizing those tools as a replacement for understanding the material is not.
>
> In taking this course, students may be expected to submit papers and assignments through Turnitin for detection of potential plagiarism and other academic integrity concerns. If students do not have an account with Turnitin and/or do not utilize Turnitin when submitting their papers and assignments, the instructor may upload your paper or assignment to Turnitin for processing and review.

UNAUTHORIZED RECORDING AND DISTRIBUTION OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & MATERIALS
The following applies to all students in my class: "Except as otherwise expressly authorized by the instructor or the university, students may not record, stream, reproduce, display, publish or further distribute any classroom activities or course materials. This includes lectures, class discussions, advising meetings, office hours, assessments, problems, answers, presentations, slides, screenshots or other materials presented as part of the course. If a student with a disability wishes to request the use of assistive technology as a reasonable accommodation, the student must first contact the Office of Disability Resources to seek approval. If recording is permitted, unauthorized use or distribution of recordings is also prohibited."

DISABILITY RESOURCES (DR)
WashU supports the right of all enrolled students to an equitable educational opportunity and strives to create an inclusive learning environment. In the event the physical or online environment results in barriers to your inclusion due to a disability, please contact WashU's Disability Resources (DR) as soon as possible and engage in a process for determining and communicating reasonable accommodations. As soon as possible after receiving an accommodation from DR, send me your WashU Accommodation Letter. Remember that accommodations cannot be applied retroactively. https://disability.wustl.edu/

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT
If you are a victim of sexual discrimination, harassment or violence, we encourage you to speak with someone as soon as possible. Understand that if you choose to speak to me as an instructor, I must report your disclosure to my department chair, dean, or the Gender Equity and Title IX Compliance Officer, which may trigger an investigation into the incident. You may also reach out to the Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Center to discuss your rights and your options with individuals who are not mandatory reporters. https://titleix.wustl.edu/students/confidentiality-resources-support/

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS
To ensure that accommodations may be made for students who miss class, assignments, or exams to observe a religious holiday, you must inform me in writing before the end of the third week of class, or

as soon as possible if the holiday occurs during the first three weeks of the semester. For more information, please see the university's Religious Holiday Class Absence Policy.

Students can communicate with instructors directly via email regarding additional specific accommodations for religious holidays.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
Before an emergency affects our class, students can take steps to be prepared by downloading the WashU SAFE App. In addition, each classroom contains a "Quick Guide for Emergencies" near the door.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS
WashU provides a wealth of support services that address academic, personal, and professional needs. To start exploring resources that can help you along the way, please visit: Resources for Students.