

Spring 2022  
VIS 208, Graphic Design: Link  
Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:20pm  
185 Nassau Street, Room 206  
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## Overview

In this introductory studio course, participants explore the world wide web as an opportunity for self-publishing. We'll understand the web's history and original design as a decentralized system for publishing on one's own terms. But it's easy to forget this, as today the corporate and platformed web captures and sells our data and attention. Through hands-on exercises and projects, this course aims to demystify the web, removing barriers to basic web coding and publishing by focusing on the foundational skills in making websites with HTML and CSS. We'll remember what makes a web a web: links made by humans.

## Questions

Questions asked during the course might include:

- Is it specific?
- Is it memorable?
- Does it communicate the idea through its form?
- Where is the navigation?
- What happens to the navigation on mobile?
- What are the different conditions in which this can exist?
- What happens to this when it expands?
- Does it understand its audience?
- Does it benefit the user?
- Is the interface designed for its purpose?
- Could someone who is blind understand this?
- How would the experience change on a slow connection?
- Does it achieve its goals without breaking?
- What happens before it begins?
- How does it change once it's over?
- What's most unique to the world wide web as medium?
- Does this explore the creative potential of links (<a>)?
- How can we help create the web we'd like to inhabit and explore?

## **Theme**

The theme of this year's course is:

*“return to the source”*

The world wide web will be turning 33 this year. Today, the web is much different than when it began. But the foundational languages behind the world wide web have stayed pretty much the same since the very beginning. We will “return to the source” from 3 completely intertwined layers: technical, designed, and cultural.

## **Course & class design**

This course meets for 13 classes.

In general, the three hour class will be broken into two halves.

One half will include any combination of:

- example-based lecture / discussion
- project critique / discussion
- reading discussion
- group activity to identify design elements in selected websites
- short, ten-minute student presentation on interview findings

The other half will include any combination of skill-based workshop with working lab time and/or individual consultation.

## **Weekly interview findings**

Each class (starting Class 3), one student will give a ~10 minute presentation on a living designer, artist, or online presence who utilizes the web / links (<a>) in a unique way. This person/presence should be contactable via the internet, and this should be someone you haven't communicated with before. This should be someone without many interviews of them out there already. Conduct an interview (via email, chat, Zoom, etc.) with this person and then present your findings in the form of a simple website, linked from your class homepage. *It is important that you start contacting your interviewee as soon as possible in the semester.*

## Projects

3 projects comprise this course:

- P1. 25 Variations
- P2. Website for a Future Event
- P3. Anchor <a>

## Evaluation

In this class, students will strive to make memorable, functional online experiences. Projects need not be hypertechnical but must be of high quality — that is, they should both take a stance (be poetic, critical, and clear) and also be functional (achieve their goals and not break). Please note the invention of useful products is not the focus of this class, but the invention of useful techniques and approaches might be. Taking risks is not only encouraged but essential to worthwhile exploration. Craft (in both design, code, and presentation) is important.

## Grading

- 25% ... P1
- 25% ... P2
- 25% ... P3
- 25% ... Class participation, diligence, and attitude

At the end of the term, you will be required to send me an archival .zip file of all project materials divided into folders titled P1, P2, P3, exercises, journal, and interview. Keep this in mind as you organize your materials throughout the semester.

## Exercises & Journal

Throughout the course, there will be exercises and journal prompts given. These will be given weekly during the first part of the course, designed as ways to keep “fit” when learning new technical material and ways to reflect on course readings and media.

## **Class Websites**

Students will create their own class websites with neocities.com near the beginning of class. These websites should house all projects, exercises, journal entries, and interview. Students should feel free to design this site as well.

## **Academic Integrity**

Students will become familiar with using pre-existing language, images, and software as raw material while creating entirely new works. While making websites, we will learn which technologies could be appropriated and how to properly credit their inclusion.

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."*

Students are encouraged to retype someone else's code instead of copy and pasting. They should be careful about pasting large blocks of code. Rather, they should do things one step at a time in order to truly understand each piece of code's unique function.

## **Attendance & COVID**

Attendance is essential. If you absolutely must miss class, email me in advance. However, we live in unprecedented times. Health is a priority in this class. If you need to be virtual due to exposure, need to miss completely due to sickness, or are virtual or absent for some other COVID-related concern, let me know as soon as possible. If you miss anything, first try to help yourself by using the resources available on the class website and/or contacting other students in class to get back up to speed. I'll do my best to include you virtually, but let's all do our part.

## Materials

Students must bring their personal laptops to class. They should be responsible for their own files, making sure to back them up in some way. For editing and updating code, a free code editor such as VS Code, Atom, or Sublime Text should be installed. For image-making and sketching, Figma, Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign are standard tools available on most Princeton computers. Other good digital-image making tools include a phone, digital camera, scanner, screen capture, etc.

## Calendar

Class 1 ... Jan 25

Class 2 ... Feb 1 <P1>

Class 3 ... Feb 8

Guest: Min Guhong

Class 4 ... Feb 15

Class 5 ... Feb 22 <P2>

Class 6 ... Mar 1 </P1>

~ Spring Recess ~

Class 7 ... Mar 15

Class 8 ... Mar 22 <P3>

Guest: Tiana Dueck

Class 9 ... Mar 29 </P2>

Class 10 ... Apr 5

Class 11 ... Apr 12

Class 12 ... Apr 19

Class 13 ... Apr 26 </P3>

## **Eligibility**

This course is open to 12 students.

Anyone officially registered for the class who confirms they want to keep their spot is “in.” *For those registered, send me an email ([schwulst@princeton.edu](mailto:schwulst@princeton.edu)) to confirm that you would like to keep your spot by Saturday, January 29th.*

There is a large waitlist for this course. If someone who is registered drops the class, the priority for who gets in off the waiting list goes: VIS majors > VIS certificates > freshmen > sophomores > juniors > seniors. *I will be in touch to everyone on the waitlist via email on Monday, January 31st if there are any openings.*

If you’re registered but uncertain about whether you’d like to take the course, please kindly let me know and drop the course ASAP so someone from the waiting list can get in. Thank you!

Note: David Reinfurt’s VIS215 (“Advanced Graphic Design”) is currently seeking students. It meets Mondays, 1:30–4:20pm. It’s best if you have already taken a VIS course before (214, 215, 216, 217, 218). Learn more at its class website: <https://i-n-t-e-r-f-a-c-e.org>, or by emailing [reinfurt@princeton.edu](mailto:reinfurt@princeton.edu).

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