
Typography & Interaction

Spring 2025

The New School, Parsons, MPS CD
PMCD 5002, CRN 3992 / 9589
2 W 13th St., Room 1201
Wednesdays, 9–11:40am

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Course Description

Typography & Interaction is a year-long course, divided into two classes, which will provide a rigorous foundation of typographic and interaction principles in the context of digital design. Over both classes, students will acquire and hone the skills they need for success in the field of interactive design.

Our second semester will build on the type and layout foundations from the first, moving into interface design and interactive experiences on the web.

Interaction, interactive, interface, product, UI, UX designers—we are known by many names. These are all monikers for a digitally-native design practice. It is our responsibility, as practitioners in this increasingly consequential and broadening field, to both understand existing paradigms and help manifest, refine, and sustain purposeful new ones.

Contemporary digital design exists in the continuum of the ever-shifting, evolving, and ubiquitous web. Designers today work at many different scales and within many different systems. We act as mediators—not only for users, meaning, and experience—but with these systems themselves, as well. They shape our work and we shape them—at the meeting point, the *interface*, between things.

In this class, students will learn to give form to and then work at these intersections. We will again use web technologies as our lens for the subject, building on our foundations in HTML and CSS by incorporating JS (*JavaScript*)—to give behavior, interaction, and life to our designs. We will survey modern approaches to front-end design and development, as our discipline has as many methodologies as we do names. There is no one way to do this work, nor one thing to do it for—and through our readings, discussions, exercises, and projects, students will understand and then situate themselves and their practice within the larger field.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this semester, students will:

- Thoroughly exercise and extend their typographic, design, and technical web skills developed in the first semester.
- Learn to use modular, templated HTML components with varied and dynamic external data sources.
- Understand the CMS (*Content Management System*) and API (*Application Programming Interface*) as software archetypes.
- Be introduced to JavaScript and programming logic, the underlying concepts that make interactivity possible.
- Gain an awareness of processes, methodologies, approaches, and systems in use in contemporary software development and on the web.
- Conceptualize a web project with an eye towards its complete implementation—balancing the tradeoffs between design, features, and practical build considerations or limitations.
- Develop an understanding of how they want to practice as a designer within the larger context of the discipline.

Course Outline

The course is structured into thematic units, each bookended by readings on the subject and a project that will demonstrate the material:

Unit 4: Interface as Interface

Weeks 16–21

We will expand on our first-semester foundations in design, typography, HTML, and CSS—now incorporating images and other media while introducing JavaScript to enliven our work. Students will be introduced to a CMS and will work with an API.

Readings

E **The Design of Everyday Things**

Don Norman, 1988 (*revised* 2013)

G **I Am a Handle**

Rob Giampietro, 2012

R **Sometimes It Looks Like a Duck, Sometimes It Looks Like a Rabbit**

Jack Balkin, Dan Michaelson, 2012

L **Laws of UX**

Jon Yablonski, 2018 (*ongoing*)

F **Folk Interfaces**

Maggie Appleton, 2022

Project 4: Links

The unit ends with Project 4, *Links*, which students will present on February 26.

Students will collaboratively assemble, connect, and present a collection using [Are.na](#) as a platform/CMS—designing and building an interface to explore and understand it.

In addition to our previous project requirements, here we'll be looking for the effective use of images/media, meaningful interactive interface functionality, and your use of JavaScript.

Unit 5: If All You Have Is a Hammer, Everything Looks Like a Nail

Weeks 22–30

To wrap up the semester (and course), we'll round out our knowledge of the web's intricacies—handling user input, managing state, constructing metadata. We will examine how our projects participate in and live elsewhere on the web, and outline real-world processes to make them come together.

Readings

F **What Is Code?**

Paul Ford, 2015

T **TikTok's Enshittification**

Cory Doctorow, 2023

J **ChatGPT Is a Blurry JPEG of the Web**

Ted Chiang, 2023

A The Age of Average

Alex Murrell, 2023

W Why A.I. Isn't Going to Make Art

Ted Chiang, 2024

G Human Interface Guidelines

Apple, 1987

M Macintosh Human Interface Guidelines

Apple, 1992

W The Windows Interface Guidelines

Microsoft, 1995

A Aqua Human Interface Guidelines

Apple, 2001

I iPhone Human Interface Guidelines

Apple, 2008

7 Windows Phone 7 UI Design and Interaction Guide

Microsoft, 2010

1 Material Design 1

Google, 2014

S iOS Human Interface Guidelines

Apple, 2014

3 Material Design 3

Google, 2021 (*ongoing*)

G Human Interface Guidelines

Apple, 2022 (*ongoing*)

F Fluent 2 Design System

Microsoft, 2023 (*ongoing*)

Project 5: Functions

This unit, and the course, will culminate with Project 5, *Functions*, which will be presented in class on April 23.

Students will identify a problem and conceptualize how to solve it on the web. They will plan, design, and implement a novel solution towards this problem—incorporating data and interaction with the tools, technologies, and techniques they’ve learned in this course.

We’ll first be looking for strong concepts—not limited to or by existing conventions—that push the grain of interaction design in new and interesting directions. And as the capstone for this course, we’re expecting the highest level of nuance and polish in the organizational, aesthetic, and technical aspects of these final projects.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Engagement**

Students are expected to actively and passionately participate in this course. This means more than showing up and turning things in on time—which should be a given. Beyond that baseline students should be curious, prepared, thoughtful, vocal, and intentional throughout the course. They should make us understand why they are here, and demonstrate to us that they care about themselves, their work, and each other—and ultimately, about this chosen profession.

This engagement will be unavoidably reflected in the quality of students' work—but we also evaluate this discretely based on their participation in and out of the classroom, with us and with their peers.

- **Reading Responses**

Each unit begins with a set of readings to introduce the subject. Students are expected to read the required selections and synthesize their thoughts in a written response, prior to the next class. We are not looking for summarization, here—these should be personal reflections on the subjects, and are evaluated with this lens. We will then discuss these readings as a group.

■ Exercises and Milestones

Each unit will also have specific, technical exercises and milestones that are assigned towards completion of the projects. These are weekly assignments—students are expected to complete them outside of class, before the next session. Some of these will be small; some of these will be large. They are *all* evaluated for completion and quality.

■ Projects

The bulk of the work for this class takes the form of projects. They are intended as opportunities for students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills learned in class while developing their own practice, and are evaluated in this light.

There will be check-ins and reviews around each of these before the final due dates, when we will have critiques as a group. In addition to the project itself, students will be assessed on their presentation of their work, as well as their ability to provide constructive, critical feedback to their peers. More specific evaluation criteria will be delineated with each project's introduction.

Grade Calculation

Engagement	20%
Reading Responses	10%
Exercises and Milestones	10%
Project 4: Links	20%
Project 5: Functions	40%

Materials and Supplies

In the open tradition of the early web, the only materials truly required are a computer, a browser, a text editor, and an internet connection. The specifics of these are open to the student's individual preferences and practices. We will do our best to accommodate everyone and will make recommendations, when needed.

In class, we will demonstrate using [Figma](#) for visual design and sketching, [Visual Studio Code](#) for programming, and [GitHub](#)/[GitHub Desktop](#) for version control and project hosting. All of these products are available for free, or offer free education licenses to New School emails.

We will use the following tools to organize our class:

C Course Site

For housekeeping, agendas, and lectures

S Submission Form

For submitting your work/URLs

S Slack Channel

For direct and asynchronous communication (*not* email)

F Figma Team

For visual sketching, sharing

G GitHub Organization

For code examples, sharing

G Google Drive

For document collaboration, recorded lectures

Z Zoom Room

For screen sharing and recording

Class Policies

Our Community

This agreement is intended to help us create and maintain a safe, empathetic, and productive space for our course. It can be revised and modified, with all of our input, over the year:

- The class should feel comfortable asking the instructors anything—nothing is too trivial, or embarrassing, or off-topic. Tangents are good. Students can ask us via Slack, if they would like to remain anonymous.
- Classmates should use our preferred names and pronouns.
- When presenting, students will “have the floor” while they take us through their work. This means everyone else will be quiet, we’ll close our laptops, and give our full attention to the person showing their work.
- We will all engage meaningfully with presented work and try to give constructive feedback (no fluff).
- Fall semester, we’re not going to copy/paste any of our code. We’ll talk about appropriately using *Stack Overflow* and *large language models* (“artificial intelligence”) in the Spring.
- We will attribute our work when referencing other tools or examples.
- We will have a short break, roughly halfway through the class.

Inclusion

Our intent is to respect and give forum to a range of perspectives and backgrounds, including culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and age. In instances where we are personally not qualified to speak from a specific perspective, students are encouraged to explore this area themselves. And please let us know if there are ways that the course can better serve these goals.

Office Hours

We will have limited availability outside of our class time, and won't keep scheduled "office hours." Students should not expect us to immediately solve specific design or technical problems, or be blocked by this. Their first resource should be themselves, then [this course site](#) and its materials, and then each other.

If there are still questions—particularly logistical or content ones—students can message us on [Slack](#), and we will respond when we can. But this should never be a bottleneck; all of this works better when not done at the last minute.

Additional Technical Help

For more specific technical instruction and questions, Parsons has dedicated CD-program tutors available to help students with HTML, CSS, and JavaScript—as well as offering general design critiques and feedback. The drop-in schedules are available in the [CD@Parsons app](#) under "Make & Remake."

The University Learning Center also offers its own [tutoring sessions](#); these are by-appointment.

As tutors are only available a limited number of hours per week, it is advisable to start early on your projects and seek help along the way—to avoid the usual end of project/semester rush for additional help.

Code Plagiarism

Students may find code similar to our exercises or projects elsewhere online. But the copying or adapting of *any* code beyond our provided course material (lectures, exercises, demos) without attribution is not allowed under any circumstances.

If adapting, with attribution, students must explain the usage and demonstrate an understanding of how it works. We have zero tolerance for any sort of plagiarism—which ranges from “verbatim copying” (copying-and-pasting) to “thorough paraphrasing” (changing names or rearranging) of code. Students should also review the Academic Integrity Policy.

LLMs and “Artificial Intelligence”

Relatedly, there has been a lot of discussion and developments in our field (and others) around large language models, a.k.a. “artificial intelligence.”

Here’s what we’re going to say about this: tools like ChatGPT or GitHub Copilot are known to often generate wrong or unnecessarily verbose code. This, combined with the fact that their results are derived from potentially copyrighted and/or legally questionable sources—usually without permission or attribution—means the use of these tools remains fraught, at best.

We think you first need to write code yourself to understand the medium. Copying/adapting from ChatGPT/Copilot is no different from anywhere else (see above) and is ultimately a disservice to your education. These are to be treated like any other tools at our disposal—as *aides* to your understanding, not *shortcuts* around learning. We think you know the difference.

Recording Sessions

We will take screen recordings of our sessions for students to reference later. As these will include the students and their work, the recordings will be stored on our Google Drive and made available only to New School email users.

Attendance, Grading, and Other Policies

All CD classes adhere to the same common program and university policies.

Acknowledgments

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