**Assignments**

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| Item | |  | | --- | | **Assignments** | | This section will provide additional information about the major assignments that will contribute to the final mark for the course.  Information will be added on a regular basis as the deadline for the assignment.  The major assignments, in order of submission, for this course are the   1. Page Re-design — 15% 2. User Profile — 10% 3. Article Summary — 15% 4. Wireframe mock-up — 20% 5. Design Portfolio — 15% | |  |
| Item | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Page Re-design — 15%** | | | **Purpose:** | To re-conceive/improve the design of a page of an existing page of information. | | **Explanation:** | Our day-to-day landscape is littered with information that is attempting to communicate with us. Some of the information meets the needs of its audience and some does not.  To be effective in document design, we need to be consistently watching for opportunities to improve the design of information and ensure that it meets the needs of its audience.  This is your chance to improve or re-conceive the design of a page of information. You can even fix a "pet peeve" if you wish. | | **Requirements:** | This **hard-copy** submission is to have three parts.   * **Part I:** A covering memo, addressed to me, that (1) defines the audience for the information, and (2) identifies, in design terminology, the revisions/changes that have been made. * **Part II:** The re-designed page that maintains the same content, but delivers the information in a different way. The size of the re-designed page should be comparable to the original, up to a maximum of 11" x 17". * **Part III:** The original, unaltered page of content. If the original is not yours to cut up or hand in, a photocopy will be acceptable.   Colour is not an integral part of this assignment, so black and white submissions are acceptable. If, however, colour is relevant to the re-design, it should be discussed in the covering memo (Part I). | | **Deadline:** | End of class on Friday, October 9, 2009. | |  |
| Item | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **User Profile — 10%** | | | **Purpose:** | To align a document's design with its content. | | **Explanation:** | Audience analysis is a crucial part of document design. The choices that we make about the design and placement of information are derived from information about   1. the people who are using the information, and 2. the use to which the information will be put in the audience's personal or professional life.   While we frequently generalize about the qualities of our audience in an effort to make the greatest impact on as much of our audience as possible, our precision and effectiveness is improved by the emergence of specific trends or details about that audience (i.e., demographic information, reading level, workplace role, relationship to the topic, and personal preferences).  User profiles are a way to capture these trends or details about a type of audience or a specific person. By using a variety of research tools, we can develop a picture of a "stand-in" that represents the dominant traits of our audience. With that picture, we are able to make meaningful and relevant decisions about our design. | | **Requirements:** | For this assignment, you are going to create and submit a profile for a fictitious user. Apart from the format requirements listed below, there are two stages for this assignment.  **Stage I: The Creation of the User** The user that is created must be fictional, but you can use yourself or others in your life as inspiration. Our goal is to have a heterogeneous user base, not a homogeneous one. The content for the profile will be descriptive and can be in a narrative format. (Think of combining the personal information in a medical file with the details in an online dating profile.) The user that is developed should seem more like a real person than a cartoon or a stereotype.  **Stage II: The Design of the Profile Page** Once the content has been created, you will be able to use a wide array of design options to build the content into a profile page for the user. The goal is to create a design personality for the page that foreshadows and complements the details in the user profile. The format requirements are deliberately minimal in order to expand the opportunities for the design of the page.  *Option:* If you wish, you may exchange content with a classmate and design each other's profile.  These two stages will be combined into a **hard-copy** submission that   * is one letter (8.5" x 11") page in length, * uses design to support and extend the meaning of the content, and * has a clear, but unobtrusive, inclusion of the name of the writer and the name of the designer. | | **Deadline:** | End of class on Friday, October 16, 2009. | |  |
| Item | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Article Summary — 15%** | | | **Purpose:** | To summarise the contents of a journal article in a visually appealing and useful fashion. | | **Explanation:** | Design can play a crucial role in the effectiveness of the summary of a longer document. This is true not only of the abstract or summary that is created for the beginning of a report, but also of any of the summary features that are created for the start of a chapter or section of a document.  While the challenge of actually writing a summary is very real, the ability to create a visual summary presents a different kind of challenge. Visual summaries traditionally use written summaries as the foundation and then look for ways to present the ideas and the connections between the ideas in a visual fashion. Among the easier forms of visual summary is the creation of a diagram or flowchart for the argument that can be traced through the document being summarised. | | **Resources:** | To complete this exercise, you will need to find an article to summarise. The selected article must be related to the discipline of Technical Communication, and it would be nice if it was related to document design.  As a starting point, the appendix in the back of the compiled readings for our course contains a bibliography that includes both books and articles. Furthermore, through the databases and e-resources available to all students (<http://www.algonquincollege.com/lrc/library/databases.htm>), you have access to the following journals that publish articles related to the discipline:   * *Technical Communication*, * *The Journal of Business Communication*, and * *Business Communication Quarterly*.   Finally, if you are having a lot of difficulty finding an article, I have additional resources that I would be willing to make available to you. | | **Requirements:** | This article summary assignment has three parts: (1) sign-up for submission date, (2) identification of article, and (3) submission of summary.  **Part 1: Sign-up for Submission Date** The window to sign-up for submission dates for the article summary assignment will **open at 16:00 on Friday, October 2, 2009** and will **close at 16:00 on Monday, October 5, 2009**. During this window, you will be able to e-mail your top three (3) preferred submission dates (from Friday, October 23, 2009 to Friday, November 27, 2009) to me, and I will assign dates on a "first- come-first-serve" basis. Once the window is closed, I will assign a submission deadline to anyone who has not sent an e-mail requesting a date.  **Part 2: Identification of Article** At least one (1) week prior to the submission of your summary assignment, you are to e-mail me the bibliographic information for your chosen article. The sooner you submit this information, the sooner I am in a position to answer questions about your assignment and provide suggestions on approaches to the task.  **Part 3: Submission of the Article Summary** On your assigned date, you are to bring twenty-four (24) copies of your summary (one for each of your classmates, and one for me) to class to be handed out. There will be time at the beginning of each class for the distribution of the summaries, and for the summary authors to say a few words about their work, if they wish.  In the final **hard-copy** submission, the following elements are expected:   * a coherent effective summary of the article that is capable of taking the place of the original article (an informative summary), * professional and thoughtful deployment of design features and elements, * contact information for the author/designer of the summary, along with encouragement for continued communication in the event of questions related to the document, and * bibliographic information about the article is to be on each page of the summary.   **Note:** I will take care of making the copies for those who are able to submit an electronic version of their summary to me by the end of my office hours (16:00) on the Tuesday of the week in which the summary is due. Beyond that date, you are responsible for making the copies that will be distributed in class. | | **Deadline:** | Beginning of class between Friday, October 23, 2009 and Friday, November 27, 2009, depending on the date assigned to you. | |  |
| Item | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Wireframe mock-up — 20%** | | | **Purpose:** | To design and "pitch" a template for a technical document tailored to a specific audience. | | **Explanation:** | To engage fully in the process of designing technical documentation, we must be willing to design the layout of a document before we have the exact content. If we have information about our audience and the role or purpose of the as-yet-unwritten content, we have ample information that will enable us to create a template or "wireframe mock-up" of the look and feel of the document.  A complete wireframe aims to account for, or incorporate, all of the design features that will be used in the presentation of the final document. It uses not only the exact fonts (face, size, and decoration), but also placeholders for the presentation of graphics, and all other unifying features that would appear in the document.  Finally, designers need to be able to connect the design decisions presented in the mock-up with any and all information that they have about both the audience and the document's purpose. | | **Requirements:** | For your final **hard-copy** submission of this assignment, there will be two parts, and both of these parts will need to address the following information related to the audience for the document, and the purpose of the document.   * **Audience**: After October 16, 2009, the User Profiles will be re-distributed throughout the class so that each person has a detailed page of information about the audience for the document. * **Purpose**: The document being created is a *Quick Start* user guide for a consumer electronic device. The two qualities of the device that matter for the design of this document are that it is applicable to all audiences, and that it requires interaction with a computer as a stage between out-of-the-box and use. If you need a tangible example of a product, think of a digital picture frame.   The two parts of the submission and the requirements for each part are as follows:  **Part I: The Wireframe Mock-up** This is the actual design template that is being proposed for the audience and purpose outlined above. As suggested in the explanation, the goal is a content-free replica of the document. This mock-up will   * be the equivalent of one double-sided, 11" x 17" page in length (two double-sided letter [8.5" x 11"] pages would, therefore, be acceptable), * include samples of all design features and elements that would be used in the final document (if the elements are not used in the mock-up, then it is understood that they would not be used in the document at all), and * use only descriptive or nonsense language to simulate written content that would appear in the document.   **Part II: The Explanation or "pitch" of the Wireframe Mock-up**  In a separate document, the design decisions displayed in the mock-up will be explained or "pitched" as the best design decisions for the intended audience and purpose. This separate document will   * be in memo format, * adopt a positive, persuasive approach by focusing on the elements and features that are used, and avoiding discussion of those things that have been left out, and * demonstrate clear connections between design decisions and the document's audience and purpose. | | **Deadline:** | End of class on Friday, December 4, 2009. | |  |
| Item | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Design Portfolio — 15%** | | | **Purpose:** | To showcase and chronicle the development of document design skills. | | **Explanation:** | From both an educational and employment perspective, portfolios are valuable tools for tracking the development and application of skills in a tangible practical fashion.  In their book, *Portfolios for Technical and Professional Communicators*, Smith and Haimes-Korn, point out that  "As a job-search tool, a portfolio enables you to go beyond your resume and demonstrate what you can do as well as what you know. Portfolios play an important role in many fields and disciplines, from the arts and architecture to technical and professional writing." (2007, p. 1)  This assignment is an opportunity for you to explore the tool as a means of showcasing your knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to document design. | | **Requirements:** | In essence, this assignment is an opportunity for you to extend design principles to an entire document. In that sense, the layout, and design of the portfolio is only constrained by the fundamental design principles of coherence and consistency.  There are, however, minimum standards for content. Those standards are the following:   * **Design course work**: Copies of all four (4) major assignments for this course must be collected in the portfolio. There should also be some of the minor assignments that were worked on during the semester. * **Other course work**: At least two (2) copies of assignments for your other courses must be collected in the portfolio. Choose assignments that showcase your integration of design principles with the content requirements of the assignment. * **Cover Sheet/Explanation**: For each item in the portfolio, there must be a cover sheet of explanation that   1. identifies/names the item that is included,   2. outlines the purpose of the item and the audience for which it was intended, and   3. explains a few of the design principles use in the development of the item.   Additional materials can be included at your discretion.  In the final two weeks of the semester, a meeting will be scheduled with each student. During this meeting, lasting about fifteen or twenty minutes, you will have the opportunity to walk me through your portfolio. | | **Deadline:** | Individual meetings will be scheduled the week of December 7 to December 11, 2009 and the week of December 14 to December 18, if necessary. | | **References:** | Smith H.J. & Haimes-Korn, K. (2007). Portfolios for Technical and Professional Communicators. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall. | |  |