

Sprint 2016
J339T/J395 Intro to Coding for Journalists
T 6 to 9 p.m.
BMC 3.210

Instructors:

Andrew Chavez, computational journalist, Dallas Morning News
adchavez@gmail.com
Office: BMC 3.332
Office hours: By appointment
Twitter: @adchavez
Github: achavez

Course Description:

Learning how to code opens all kinds of doors for journalists. It offers the ability to tell stories in new ways – from simple things like interactive news graphics to more sophisticated tools like machine learning and necessary business functions like the newsroom content management system and ad delivery.

But coding can also be frustrating and, at times, maddeningly complex. This course will guide you through many of the most basic elements of writing code – specifically code for the Web – and introduce you to many of the fundamental technologies that are essential elements of online news presentation. More importantly, in doing so you’ll be learning how to troubleshoot, debug and solve problems like a coder, which can turn all those frustrating moments into challenges followed by satisfying accomplishment.

This class won’t make you computer scientists and you won’t be able to go out and code your own news website from scratch after taking it. However, you will have a much better understanding of the technologies at the core of the Web and you’ll know enough to bend most websites to your will and create a very basic news interactive.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, J339T/J395 students will:

- Have a solid understanding of HTML, CSS and JavaScript and what each does in the context of a modern Web page
- Understand at a high level the interaction of key technologies – networks, servers, databases, etc. – and how they make contemporary news distribution possible
- Know what goes into making a basic news graphic
- Understand the Web publishing process and how to post simple static pages to the Internet
- Be able to create a Web page that responds to user input
- Understand how to independently debug and fix problems in code
- Know how to find online resources for technical help

Required Materials:

A subscription to codeschool.com - \$29/mo. or \$19/mo. with a student discount – is required. See “*Do you offer any student, military, or non-profit discounts?*” at <https://www.codeschool.com/pricing> for details on obtaining the discount.

There will be no textbook for this course.

Required Reading:

You are expected to read items prefixed with “Required:” on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

You've also been asked to subscribe to codeschool.com. You'll be expected to complete several courses on codeschool.com during this class. Details will be posted on Canvas.

Other than that, the most important thing required of you is persistence. Excuses of failed technology won't be accepted for this class. That's because part of this class is about learning to overcome those obstacles. It's assumed that problems will happen and that to receive an A in this class you will overcome them.

If you own a laptop or a tablet, you are required to bring it to every lecture and lab period. If you do not have access to one, see the instructor immediately.

Graduate Student Course Requirements:

Graduate students will be required to complete an additional assignment, due March 29. The assignment requires picking a single news application, published sometime in 2015 or 2016, and providing a written analysis of its source code and implementation. Further details will be distributed by March 15.

Attendance:

Success in this class begins with being in class. This is a once-a-week class, so even a single absence will mean missing out on a significant amount of material. Because of that, **2.5 points** will be deducted from your final course grade for each unexcused absence in this class (reasonable absences for illness, a death in the family, etc. will be excused). It is your responsibility to coordinate with the instructor ahead of time if you know you'll need to miss class or if you're ill and unable to attend.

How Grades are Weighted:

Quizzes/Homework (40 percent)

Midterm exam (30 percent)

Final project (30 percent)

Course Outline (subject to change):

Week 1 (Jan. 19) – Class setup; How the Web works; What happens when you visit a website

Week 2 (Jan. 26) – Developer tools; Basics of markup; Using HTML to add structure to a page; Finding good online resources

Weeks 3-4 (Feb. 2, Feb. 9) – Getting started with Github; CSS basics

Week 5-6 (Feb. 16, Feb. 23) – Basics of Bootstrap; Publishing to the Web

Week 7 (March 1) – JavaScript basics with jQuery; Midterm review

Week 8 (March 8) – **MIDTERM EXAM:** The midterm will require you to use everything you've learned up to this point in the semester – how to code and style a basic Web page and publish it to the Web.

Spring Break (March 15)

Week 9 (March 22) – Understanding and acting on user interaction with jQuery

Weeks 10-11 (March 29, April 5) – Workdays for final project; **Grad students:** Analysis due

Week 12 (April 12) – Libraries, frameworks and more – using open-source tools

Weeks 13-14 (April 19, April 26) – Workdays for final project

Week 15 (May 3) – More simple news apps – calculators, dropdowns and playing with forms

Final exam period (7 to 10 p.m. May 17) – **FINAL PROJECT DEMOS**

Use of Canvas for this Class

In this course, Canvas – a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu/> – is used to distribute materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and for online quizzes and exams. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 512-475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. or with online tutorials at <http://edutech.ctl.utexas.edu/students/>

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently – to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate UT rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from UT. For details see: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

Students with Disabilities

Please notify your instructor of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You will be requested to provide documentation to the Dean of Student's Office in order that the most appropriate accommodations can be determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities.

<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify your instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work

within a reasonable time before or after the absence if you give the required advance notification.

Absence for military service

In accordance with section 51.9111 of the Texas Education Code, a student is excused from attending classes or engaging in other required activities, including exams, if he or she is called to active military service of a reasonably brief duration. The maximum time for which the student may be excused has been defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as "no more than 25 percent of the total number of class meetings or the contact hour equivalent (not including the final examination period) for the specific course or courses in which the student is currently enrolled at the beginning of the period of active military service." The student will be allowed a reasonable time after the absence to complete assignments and take exams. Policies affecting students who withdraw for military service are given above.

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi03-04/ch4/ch4g.html> - attendance
<<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi03-04/ch4/ch4g.html#attendance>>

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

Q drop Policy

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6).

Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin

The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency>