E-Government

Cross-listed as PS119EG or COMP150EG
Fall 2002
Monday and Wednesday, 1:25-2:20, Thursday, 2:55-3:50
Eaton Instructional Lab

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This course is designed to provide an overview of how information technology, particularly the Internet and World Wide Web, are used in government and politics in the U.S. Its intent is to provide a foundation for comparing these uses of technology with theories of government and governance, and to assess how well governmental and political functions are performed with technology. Implicit in the course is an argument that technology is not used very well in government and politics, and the promise of improved government efficiency and responsiveness have not materialized. The challenge for us this semester is to understand the ways in which technology has been used, to discern how and in what ways it could be used better, and to improve upon these existing uses.

We will read some of the literature on e-government, broadly defined, to provide a sense of the uses of technology and the critical issues that technology addresses or tries to address. Additionally, we will learn how to use a particular software product, Macromedia’s Dreamweaver, to facilitate the creation of new improved web sites.

Much of the focus of this class is on the municipal (city) web site. We will form small teams of students (probably three of four people each) that will work on a group project for most of the semester. This group project requires that each team select a city in the U.S. with an eye toward re-inventing that city’s web site. The group can elect to revise the entire web site, or to concentrate on a specific piece of that site. The purpose of this project is to 1) provide a concrete place to apply the ideas discussed in class and found in the readings; and 2) make significant improvements in the way local governments use the web. This project will be described in more detail in class.

About the Readings: There is only one book that you must purchase for this class, Khristine Annwn Page, Macromedia Dreamweaver MX: Training from the Source. This book is available at the Tufts bookstore, and elsewhere. There are many other readings that are required for the class, as listed in the syllabus. To the extent possible, this course has been designed so that the vast majority of these readings are available online. See the course’s web site for links to these readings. A small number of the readings listed in the syllabus are not available online. These readings, or excerpts from them, will be provided in class in print form.

You will also need to purchase a zip disk for your own use. This zip disk will be the preferred storage medium for your work, especially work that you do in the public labs. When you are working in your team, each member of the team is responsible for keeping an up-to-date copy of your collective work. You should bring this zip disk to class with you each class meeting.
There will be four graded assignments in the class.

1. The first assignment requires that you select a city anywhere in the U.S. with a 2000 population size of at least 70,000 people. You are to examine this city’s web site, and prepare a 3-5 page critique of the site. You can critique the site on whatever grounds you wish as long as you make these grounds explicit. For example, you can criticize the site because it lacks basic information that a particular user might need, and you would presumably make explicit the kind of user who would need that information. You can criticize the site because it fails to provide specific functionality, and again you would be expected to be explicit about who would need or benefit from that functionality. You can criticize the site because of specific design flaws that either make the site less efficient than it could be or make it less functional than it could be. The bottom line is that this assignment requires that you identify the flaw, and explain in some detail why you think this is a flaw. This assignment is due in class on September 11. Some of these critiques will be selected for class presentations on September 18.

2. The second assignment requires that you and your team prepare a “design document” that outlines the proposed revised web site that you will prepare. Each member of the team will be responsible for a specific aspect of this design document. The specific format and outline of the contents of this design document will be provided in class. This design document is expected to serve as the framework for the team project’s final product, due at the end of the semester. This design document will be due in class on Monday, September 30.

3. The third assignment is a mid-term exam. The exam will be a take-home essay test focusing on conceptual issues of e-government content and functions, will be given out in class on Monday, October 21, and will be due in class on Monday, October 28.

4. The fourth assignment is the final team project product. This team project requires that you revise a city’s web site, and working with two or three other students, create a new and improved version of the site for the city you selected. Each member of the team will be responsible for a specific aspect or portion of this new web site, and each person will be graded based on the quality of that portion as well as the quality of the overall product.

It should be understood that although much of the work in this class is to be prepared in the context of a small team, each of you is responsible for your own work. It is assumed that the work you turn in will be your own, and that you will never turn in the work of someone else as your own.
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September

4 Wednesday  Introduction to Electronic Government -- the subject and the course

5 Thursday  Introduction to Dreamweaver -- The Basics

9 Monday  Web site processes and lifecycles
Read: *Macromedia Dreamweaver MX*, Chapters 2-3.

11 Wednesday  Organizing the Class Project; Dreamweaver Tables
Read: *Macromedia Dreamweaver MX*, Chapter 4.

12 Thursday  Dreamweaver: Actions and Events
Read: *Macromedia Dreamweaver MX*, Chapter 5.

16 Monday  Web site design issues


18 Wednesday  
**Student Presentations on City Web Sites**  
Read: No additional reading.

19 Thursday  
**Dreamweaver: Site Management**  

23 Monday  
**Global Perspectives on E-government -- The U.S. in the world context**  


25 Wednesday  
**E-Government in the American context**  


26 Thursday  
**Dreamweaver: Accessibility and Testing; Forms**  
Read: *Macromedia Dreamweaver MX*, Chapter 7, 11.

30 Monday  
**Electronic Government: Functions and Definitions**  


October

2 Wednesday Government websites in the U.S.


3 Thursday Dreamweaver: Editing Code
Read: Macromedia Dreamweaver MX, Chapter 12.

7 Monday Digital Divides in the U.S.


A version of this paper is also found in Science magazine, April 17, 1998.


9 Wednesday Digital Divides and government
10 Thursday Dreamweaver: Special Issues
Read: TBA

15 Tuesday Variations in government web sites


16 Wednesday E-Commerce Functions


17 Thursday Dreamweaver TBA
Read: TBA

21 Monday E-Commerce: Guest Speaker
No additional readings for today.

23 Wednesday Municipal government in the U.S.
Read: TBA

24 Thursday Team Presentations on Plans for Revised Web Sites
Read: No additional readings.

28 Monday Municipal government websites


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**30 Wednesday**

**E-democracy**


31 Thursday  Team Presentations on Revised City Web Sites
Read: No additional readings.

November

4 Monday  E-governance


6 Wednesday  Issues of Security and Privacy


7 Thursday  The remaining dates are reserved for special topics that arise in the process of preparing the small group projects.

13 Wednesday
14 Thursday
Other referenced materials for supplemental reading:


