1. **Course Description**

Content Analysis is an established social science methodology for analyzing meaning and structure in written documents; it can also be used to analyze images and sound. The World Wide Web is a multimodal, networked means of document delivery that is the most important source of content in the world today.

In this course, you will learn about and apply Content Analysis methods, both narrowly and broadly construed, to diverse types of content communicated through HTML documents on the web, including text and graphics, video, interactivity features, and links. The methods, which are both qualitative and quantitative, can be used to analyze genre characteristics, aesthetics, usability, "stickiness," credibility, persuasion, bias, and cultural differences associated with the presentation of information on the web. In addition, we will consider how Content Analysis can be adapted to analyze "Web 2.0" content, such as content collaboratively produced on wikis, social network sites, microblogging sites, and social bookmarking sites.

The course is structured around presentation of methods and hands–on web data analysis. Each student selects a website or sites for analysis, according to their interests. For example, students with interests in a particular content domain (e–commerce, online instruction, news, politics, health information, gender issues, etc.) or web genres (blogs, wikis, social network sites, online dating sites, music downloading sites, social bookmarking sites, etc.) may focus on them in their choice of data for analysis. After each method is presented in class through the readings and lectures, students apply it to their data. The students' findings are then shared with the class through oral presentations, and written up in short reports. At the end of the semester, students write an original research paper describing a web genre or other collection of sites of their choice. As relatively little research of this type has been carried out so far, it is likely that each student project will create new knowledge about the web. If it is well done, your research in this course can lead to opportunities for conference presentation and/or publication.
Students are expected to have experience accessing the World Wide Web, including using search engines such as Google. No previous knowledge of Content Analysis is required. Students do not create websites as part of this course; rather, the focus is on creating knowledge about the web through descriptive empirical research. This knowledge, in turn, may have implications for web design and/or content development that extend beyond the course.

2. Course Objectives

- To provide training in applying a set of empirical analytical methods to web content.
- To instill understanding of Content Analysis principles that will enable you to design and carry out CA research, and ultimately to modify the methods to address questions and data of interest to you.

Specifically, as a result of completing this course, you should gain:

- A critical perspective (in the positive sense) on the web as a communication medium.
- Practical skills in applying and interpreting the results of Content Analysis methods.
- The ability to design and carry out an original research project.

3. Student Requirements

Readings. Students are expected to read the assigned required readings (suggested readings are not required but recommended if you are interested) before each scheduled class meeting.

Website analysis. Each student will select a website (or sites) for the purpose of analysis throughout the course. The sites should contain content that the student finds personally interesting and/or that relates to their professional goals. These data will be used to train the student in applying Content Analysis methods. They may also be used, supplemented with additional data, for the final research paper.

Reports. The results of applying the methods introduced in the course to the selected data will be presented in four oral and four written reports, where the written reports are on the same topics as the oral reports. The oral reports should be brief (5–6 minutes) and may be supported with simple PowerPoint displays and live Internet demonstrations. (**A good rule of thumb is one PowerPoint slide per minute of presentation time.**) The written reports should record the findings presented in the oral reports, incorporating feedback from the class and the instructor, clearly and concisely (3–4 pages, excluding appendices). Guidelines for each report will be made available one week before the scheduled oral report presentation date.
**Research paper.** At the end of the semester, each student will write a 4000–7000 word research paper (excluding references and appendices) analyzing the content of a collection of websites defined by the student. This research may make use of the data already analyzed during the semester, or it may supplement or replace those data with new data (with the instructor's approval). However, it should NOT just be a compilation of the written reports, nor should it apply all the methods covered in the course to a single dataset. Rather, the paper should be focused and organized around a question or set of related questions, and the method(s) selected should be appropriate to address those questions. A **500–word written proposal describing the web genre, sites to be analyzed, methods to be employed, and including a minimum of 3–5 references is due in the 10th session of the semester.** In the last session of the semester, the results of each student's research will be presented to the class in a formal (conference–style) oral presentation (approx. 12–15 minutes, depending on how many students are enrolled in the course). The written paper should follow the formal conventions for a publishable–quality research article, including footnotes and citations of scholarly work in APA (American Psychological Association) style. For examples of APA conventions, see articles in the Journal of Computer–Mediated Communication (http://jcmc.indiana.edu/).

### 4. Grading

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral reports (4 x 4%)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written reports (4 x 6%)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation of term paper research</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading policy:

A late written report will be accepted once during the semester, no questions asked, provided it is turned in two days before the next class meeting, to allow time to grade it. We reserve the right to subtract one–third of a letter grade (from A to A–, A– to B+, etc.) for each day a report is late beyond the due date or this one–time extension. This penalty also applies to the final paper.

Class participation means speaking in class in an informed way about the topics under discussion. A good rule of thumb is to try to speak at least twice in each class session. In order to be able to speak intelligently about a topic, you will need to have done the readings for that topic before class. You will also need to be physically present and attentive (e.g., NOT surfing the Web or reading email). **If you have to miss a class due to any kind of emergency, please email the instructor(s) before the class.**

Oral reports will be graded with a check mark to indicate a satisfactory presentation. A satisfactory presentation is one that makes a good faith effort to address all the questions in the
guidelines given in advance for each report, even if the report contains some errors. This method
of grading is intended to encourage you to try to apply the methods, even if you feel somewhat
uncertain about how to do so.

Written reports, the oral presentation of your term paper research, and the written term paper will
be assigned letter grades (A, A−, B+, B, B−, C+, C, etc.). A composite grade such as A−/B+
means that the grade is between an A− and a B+ (i.e., 89.5%). Grades in the 'A' range indicate
outstanding work. Grades in the 'B' range indicate very good to good work. Grades in the 'C'
range indicate average work, and a grade of 'D' or below is poor work. Graduate students are
expected to perform at a 'B' level or above.

Written reports should be concise (3–4 typed pages) and written in continuous prose (NOT
outline style). Elaborate introductory and concluding paragraphs are unnecessary, but each report
should begin with a statement of the topic that the report will address and should be sure to
answer explicitly all questions asked in the guidelines for the report. DO include examples from
your data and/or summary tables and graphs of your analytical results in your report, to support
your claims. If including these supporting materials in the report would disrupt its flow, they
may be appended to the report as an appendix. An 'A' quality written report is written clearly and
concisely, answers all the questions asked, applies the methods correctly, and interprets the
results plausibly and convincingly.

The oral presentation of the final research project will be graded primarily on form: how well it
is organized, how informative it is, and how clearly and professionally it communicates to the
audience (i.e., the rest of the class). An 'A' quality oral report conveys an appropriate amount of
information given the time allotted for presentation, is presented in a straightforward and concise
manner, and is logically organized (following the schema: identification and motivation of the
choice of web data, brief background on the genre, data sampling, methods of analysis, findings,
and some interpretation of the findings). Visual displays are strongly encouraged.

The final paper will be graded on content—motivation of the choice of web data, appropriateness
of the data selection procedures, accuracy of the description and application of the methods,
plausibility of the interpretations—and form—organization, clarity and quality of written
expression, and appropriate use of scholarly conventions such as citations and footnotes. An 'A'
quality term paper motivates the research topic, makes appropriate use of sampling and
analytical techniques, and interprets the findings thoughtfully, in addition to being well–
organized and clearly and professionally written. Some visual representations (e.g., screen shots)
should be included of the content of the analyzed web sites.

Academic honesty: Most of your activity in this course will involve producing original research.
However, in writing about your research, and especially in your final paper, it may be necessary
to reference previous work. As a rule of thumb, when in doubt, cite the source! In accordance
with the policies of Indiana University, plagiarism, copyright infringement, and other types of
academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

5. Course Schedule (subject to revision with advance warning)
Note: All links have been checked and are working as of 8/23/13. If you find a broken link in this schedule, let the instructor know.

Required Readings:

Most of the readings for this course are available on the web (live links are included in this syllabus). The others will be on Oncourse. **Suggested readings are not required but recommended if you are interested.**

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**Session 1 (8/29):**  **Introduction to Content Analysis.** Selecting websites to analyze for this course.

**Read:**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


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**Session 2 (9/5):**  **Web archives. Methodological issues in analyzing the web.**

**In class:** Describe a website you have selected that exemplifies the type you would like to analyze in this course.

**Read:**
Required:


Suggested:

Hands-on: Check out the history of 2 webpages on the Wayback Machine: http://archive.org. How has web design evolved in the past decade?

Session 3 (9/12): Web genres and feature analysis.

In preparation for the 1st report: Select 5–6 websites of the same genre

Read:

Required:


Session 4 (9/19): Feature analysis (cont.). Interactivity and website credibility.

1st oral report: Identify and analyze the frequency of the features in your 5–6 site sample that characterize that genre of web content

Read:
Required:


Look over:


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Session 5 (9/26): Link analysis.

1st written report due: Feature analysis

Read:
Required:


Suggested:

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Session 6 (10/3): Link analysis (cont.). Social network analysis.
2nd oral report: Link analysis

Read:

Required:


Suggested:

Session 7 (10/10): Image analysis.

Read:

Required:


Suggested:


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**Session 8 (10/17): Image analysis (cont.). Cultural differences.**

**2nd written report due: Link analysis**

*Read:*

*Required:*


*Suggested:*


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**Session 9 (10/24): Video analysis.**

**3rd oral report: Visual CA and semiotic/iconographic analysis of images on five sites from one genre**
Read:


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**Session 10 (10/31): Theme analysis.**

500–word description of final research project due (see under Student Requirements at beginning of syllabus)

Read:


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**Session 11 (11/7): Language analysis (computerized text analysis).**

3rd written report due: Image analysis

Read:


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**Session 12 (11/14): The challenges of Web 2.0: Wikis.**

**4th oral report: Theme analysis**

Read:

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


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**Session 13 (11/21): The challenges of Web 2.0 (cont.): Multimodality.**

**4th written report due: Theme analysis**
Read:


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Session 14: No Class (11/28) - Thanksgiving

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**Session 15 (12/5):** Oral presentations of term paper research.

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12/16: Written term paper due by 6 p.m., MONDAY, December 16th.