The Course

Course Objectives
The objective of this search engine optimization (SEO) course is to familiarize you with organic search—the importance and benefits of ranking highly in major search engines. Our goal is to help you inherently understand how search contributes to online visibility, how it can be used in reputation management and to integrate search with your current public relations/communications efforts. As search is both an art and a science, we will delve into tactical as well as strategic measures. To that end, there will be some technical aspects that you will be expected to grasp. At the conclusion of the course, you will be able to assess a site’s search strategy and make and implement recommendations to improve search rankings.

Course Description
We will explore the fundamentals of a solid SEO strategy. You will learn how to perform keyword research, edit body text for search engines, understand a technical audit and perform link building to name a few key components. In addition, search is a moving target and changes on a daily basis. In order for you to succeed well after you have completed this class, you will be expected to monitor daily search blogs and news sites and discuss with the class.

Philosophy
This is an interactive class. While I will be lecturing about the fundamentals during each class, I encourage discussion and debate. Since search is an ever-changing field, this will require us to be flexible with both the topics we cover and the extent to which we cover them. I regularly monitor blogs and web sites that pertain to search and will sometimes bring new items up for discussion that are not on the syllabus. I expect and encourage you to do the same.

Administrative

Class Time

Wednesday – 5:20 pm-7:50 pm

We will begin on time and will have one break. Class will usually start with student presentations or guest speakers and be followed by lecture. No make-ups are currently required.

Contacting Me
Email is the best way to get in touch with me. I will usually respond within 24 hours. If it’s an emergency, you may call me on my cell. Email and phone are listed above.

Communicating
We will use Blackboard to communicate with each other, share information and participate in discussions. You may download the syllabus and lectures there.

**Office Hours**
Office hours are by appointment only. I will usually be available before and after class. I am also available to schedule phone appointments during non-business hours, if needed.

**Mobile Devices**
I will give you my undivided attention during class time and hope you do the same. However, I understand that you are working professionals. If you must respond to an urgent email or return an urgent phone call, I ask that you step outside of the classroom and preferably respond only during breaks. We will learn from each other and any unnecessary distraction will impede that.

**Attendance**
Attending class is critical to your success. I will circulate an attendance sheet at the start of every class. Please notify me as soon as possible when you will not be able to attend. There are several classes that are critical. Please make every effort possible to be here for the lecture on keyword research, tools, tweaking content, tech audits and link building. These courses are directly related to your graded assignments and will be difficult to understand using notes or slides only.

Missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

**University Policies**

**Honor System**
Students are expected to abide by the Georgetown University Honor System. If you have been caught cheating, you will automatically receive and “F” in the course. If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the materials and information posted at: [http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/](http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/)

**Georgetown University Honor Pledge**
In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

**Academic Information**

**Academic Resource Center:** If you believe you have a disability, please contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm) before the start of classes to allow their office time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally
responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

**Counseling and Psychiatric Services**
202-687-6985
http://caps.georgetown.edu

**Georgetown University Writing Center**: Please contact the Writing Center for support in preparing your written assignments. The Writing Center staff can be reached in Lauinger Library, 217A or at 202-687-4246 or http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/.

**Resources**

**Primary Tools**
These are tools that you will rely on to complete assignments and to get hands on experience. Please install them or bookmark them. I encourage you to try out other tools that may be useful and share them with the class.

**Keyword Research**
- Google Keyword Planner (available after a Google Adwords account has been set up)
- Rank Checker ([http://tools.seobook.com](http://tools.seobook.com)) – determines position by keyword

**Technical Audits**

**Web Sites/Blogs**
In order to keep up with current events, staying on top of these blogs is essential. In addition to reading the daily tech news, these are very good SEO resources for you to use in deepening your knowledge.

**Search**

**Recommended Readings**

*Optional*
Assignments

More detailed instructions for each assignment below will be reviewed in class as indicated in the schedule.

As SEO is both an art and a science, you will be expected to share in both oral presentations and written deliverables how/why you reached the conclusions you did, the tools you used, how you cross checked, etc. The “art” portion of SEO allows you some wiggle room. However, you must support your claims with logic, data and analysis.

Papers should be written in 11 point, Calibri or similar font with 1” margins.

• **News Update (30%)**—(Group assignment with 4 people per group). Find a new (within the last month) SEO issue/development on Search Engine Land, Search Engine Watch or any other news/web site, develop a PowerPoint and deliver to class discussing the SEO.

  The presentation will be limited to 20 minutes, not including Q&A. This assignment must be unique and topics are claimed on a first come, first served basis using Blackboard.

  We will usually begin each class with these presentations, providing there isn’t a speaker conflict. Please provide me with a hard copy prior to your presentation. You must also email me a copy. You are encouraged to choose topics we have discussed. However, the groups that go first and at the beginning of the semester are at a disadvantage and will be graded accordingly.

• **Keyword Research Analysis (20%)** – Individual assignment. You will use your keyword research skills in determining a unique keyword phrase for webpages. You will also do additional keyword research using the tools we review in class to find the most appropriate term for each page.

• **Online Visibility Analysis (40%)**– Bringing everything together that we’ve discussed in class, assess the visibility of a web site. Produce a client-ready powerpoint analyzing pros/cons of their online presence, missed opportunities, suggested next steps, etc. In addition, analyze the optimization of the site. Prioritize suggested next steps. Consider the difference, if any, about the visibility of your site on major search engines. This deck is an opportunity to fully evaluate a website and demonstrate all you have learned regarding keyword research, content analysis, link analysis, technical audits and outreach. This is a group project. Arrangements will be made for hard copies to be turned in. This assignment must be emailed to professor as well.

• **Participation (10%)**—Class time is an opportunity for us to learn from each other, to challenge each other in constructive ways and to deepen our understanding. Your contributions to this discussion will be reflected in your final grade. I encourage you to poke holes in what is in front
of you and to take everything to the next level. Dive in and get your hands dirty. Your activity on Blackboard counts toward your participation grade.

**Grading**

- 300 points—News Update Presentation (30%)
- 200 points—Keyword Research Analysis (20%)
- 400 points—Online Visibility Analysis (40%)
- 100 points—Participation (10%)

**1000 Points Total**

**Schedule and Assigned Readings**

As search engines rapidly change, this schedule will remain flexible and is subject to change. I will do my best to post new articles as far in advance as possible. Please have all readings completed prior to class.

**Week 1—Introduction to Online Visibility Search Engines (Sept 3)**

*Readings:*  
*The Art of SEO, Chapters 1-3*  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc., Chapter 1-4*

**Week 2 —Install Tools, How Search Works (Sept 10)**

- Must bring laptops to this class. Please come to class with the Firefox browser downloaded to your machine.
- This is a critical class to your success. Make every effort to attend.
- Handout News Update Presentation assignment

**Week 3—Keyword Research (Sept 17)**

- This is a critical class to your success. Make every effort to attend. Bring laptop.
- Handout detailed keyword research assignment

*Readings:*  
*The Art of SEO, Chapter 5*  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc., Chapter 11*  
*50 Kickass Keyword Strategies in its entirety*

**Week 4—Content and User Experience (Sept 24)**

*Readings:*  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc., Chapter 12*

**Week 5—Link Building and Outreach (Oct 1)**

- Keyword Research Analysis due
Readings:  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc.*, Chapter 13  
*The Art of SEO*, Chapter 7

Week 6—Tech Audits (Oct 8)

Readings:  
*The Art of SEO*, Chapter 4 and 6  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc.*, Chapter 10  
- News Update Group #1  
- News Update Group #2

Week 7—Mobile (Oct 15)

Readings:  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc.*, Chapter 15  
*The Art of SEO*, Chapter 8 (review mobile section)  
- News Update Group #3

Week 8—Local & Video and Images (Oct 22)

- News Update Group #4  
- Handout detailed final project assignment

Readings:  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc.*, Chapter 15  
*Search Engine Marketing, Inc.*, Chapters 16  
*The Art of SEO*, Chapter 9  
*The Art of SEO*, Chapter 8 (review local section)

Week 9—Online Reputation/Crisis Management (Oct 29)

- News Update Group #5  
- News Update Group #6

Readings:  
TBD

Week 10—Paid Search (Nov 5)

Readings:  
TBD

Week 11— Paid Search Part 2 (Nov 12)

Readings:  
TBD

Week 12—Search Speaker/Panel TBD (Nov 19)

- Location is TBD
Week 13—Final Presentations (Nov 26)
  • Group #1
  • Group #2

Week 14—Final Presentations (Dec 3)
  • Group #3
  • Group #4

Week 15—Final Presentations (Dec 10)
  • Group #5
  • Group #6