Principles of Graphic Design

Pat Morin
COMP 2405
**Principles Graphic Design**

- Basic graphic design principles can be summarized in one word:

- **CRAP:**
  - Contrast
  - Repetition
  - Alignment
  - Proximity

- Focus (here) is on text
Contrast

• Contrast: When two elements are not exactly the same, they should be very different
  – Otherwise it just looks like a mistake

• With text, contrast can be achieved through
  – Font size: small, medium, large
  – Font family: serif, sans-serif, cursive, monospace, σψμβολ
  – Font weight: light, normal, bold
  – Font style: oblique, normal, italic
  – Font decoration: none, underline, shadow,

• We can also use text and/or background color
**Contrast (Cont'd)**

- Contrast can be used to separate different parts of a document (e.g., navigation vs. content)
- Contrast can be used to aid the user in navigation (e.g., section headings)
- In the best case, weak contrast is not noticeable
- In the worst case, it just looks bad
  - User's Name: Patrick Morin
  - User's Location: 5177 Herzberg Building
**Repetition**

- Styles and visual elements should be repeated across a page and across a web site
- Leads to a cohesive and consistent web site
- Repetition can be achieved with
  - Text (font) properties: Use these the same way throughout
  - Color: Consistent use of color throughout the site/document
  - Background: Background images/colors
  - Page and section layout: Similar elements should be laid out the same way
  - Images: Graphics can be repeated and/or styled similarly
  - Alignment: Consistent use of alignment
Repetition (Cont'd)

- Repetition lets a user know that they are still on the same web site
- Repetition allows a visitor to learn the page (or section) layout only once
- Another form of repetition: Web design patterns
Alignment

• Our minds like to imagine straight line grids when look at things
• We like to see things line up
• We can't stand to see things that almost – but don't quite – line up
• We also like to see equal distances
  – This is a technique called symmetric spacing
• Things that are not aligned get treated differently
  – Navigation bar text vs. body text
Alignment - Example
Proximity

- Proximity (closeness of objects) can be used to group related items together
  - Section heading close to section text
  - Figure caption close to figure

- Distance can be used to visually separate unrelated items
  - Extra space before section heading separates it from previous section
  - Extra space before and after figures separate them from text and other figures
CRAP Summary

- **Contrast**
  - When things are different make them very different
  - Can be used to guide the reader's focus

- **Repetition**
  - Repetition creates a sense of cohesion and consistency

- **Alignment**
  - Alignment is critical for good looking web pages
  - Small alignment problems can make a whole page look bad

- **Proximity**
  - Closeness and distance can be used to group related items and separate unrelated items, respectively