

# ART 441 – WEB DESIGN

*Project - WordPress Portfolio Website*

## PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

You are a junior web designer/developer preparing an employer-ready portfolio website. The site must demonstrate strong visual design, core front-end literacy, and real production workflow by being built in WordPress and deployed to a public server under a functioning domain.

## THE CHALLENGE

Plan, design, build, and launch a responsive portfolio website using WordPress. Your goal is to make your work easy to scan, trust, and contact—while showing that you understand the decisions behind structure, layout, accessibility, and deployment (not just how to install a theme).

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define a clear information architecture (sitemap + navigation) that supports recruiter scanning behavior.
- Translate sketches/wireframes into responsive layouts and a consistent visual system.
- Configure WordPress responsibly (theme, plugins, menus, templates) and document design decisions.
- Apply accessibility and performance basics (contrast, alt text, keyboard support, optimized assets).
- Deploy a live site (domain + DNS + SSL) and perform final QA before launch.

## REQUIRED INPUTS

- A curated set of portfolio work (recommended: 4–6 projects with depth OR 6–10 lighter pieces).
- Written content: about/bio, project descriptions, roles/responsibilities, and a resume (PDF).

- Brand decisions: name/wordmark (optional), type choices, color palette, and image style direction.
- A hosting plan and domain (school-provided or student-provided). If using a temporary URL, it must be public and stable.

## DELIVERABLES

### A. Planning + UX Foundations

- Sitemap + navigation map (1 page).
- Content inventory (what content appears on each page).
- Sketches or low-fi wireframes for: Home, Work/Projects Index, Case Study Page, About, Contact.
- Style tiles or mini design system snapshot (type scale, colors, button styles, spacing rules).

### B. Live WordPress Website (public URL)

- Required pages: Home, Work/Projects Index, at least 3 case study pages, About, Resume (view + downloadable PDF), Contact (working form).
- Consistent header + footer with clear navigation and a persistent way to contact you.
- A coherent visual system (typography, spacing, component reuse).
- Theme customization evidence: a child theme and/or custom CSS that meaningfully affects layout/typography/components (not only color swaps).
- Accessibility basics: alt text for meaningful images, sufficient contrast, keyboard navigability for primary actions, clear focus states (where applicable).
- Performance basics: optimized images, reasonable page weight, and a brief performance check (e.g., Lighthouse screenshot).

### C. Deployment + Documentation

- Domain + DNS configured to point to the live site (or equivalent published URL if school-hosted).
- SSL enabled (HTTPS).
- One-page build notes PDF: theme choice + key plugins (with justification), any custom CSS/code highlights, and a short QA checklist.

- A site backup/export file OR documented backup method used.

## CONSTRAINTS

- No “template-only” portfolios: if you start from a theme, you must demonstrate meaningful structural and typographic customization and explain the choices.
- No fabricated work, clients, or results. If a project is speculative, label it clearly.
- All copy must be readable, scannable, and professional (no lorem ipsum on key pages).
- Your site must be usable on mobile (responsive layout + tap targets).
- You must be able to explain and reproduce your workflow (planning artifacts + iteration evidence).

## WORKFLOW

- Curate projects and define target roles (what employers should conclude in 30 seconds).
- Draft sitemap + wireframes; run a quick peer scan test (what do they notice first?).
- Build style tiles and a mini component system (type, buttons, cards, spacing).
- Set up WordPress locally or on staging; choose a theme and configure core settings.
- Build pages and case studies; implement reusable components/patterns.
- Optimize assets; run accessibility and performance checks; fix issues.
- Deploy, connect domain/DNS, enable SSL, and complete final QA.

## AI & TOOL USE POLICY

AI Status: Yellow (Limited)

- Allowed: brainstorming page structure, drafting alternative headlines, troubleshooting code snippets, summarizing your own notes, and generating test plans/checklists.

- Not allowed: submitting AI-generated case studies or code without understanding, fabricating testing results, or using AI to replace your design reasoning.
- Disclosure required: include an AI Use Note in your build notes (tool + purpose + representative prompt + what you changed).

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Planning rigor: sitemap, wireframes, and evidence of iteration.
- Information architecture + hierarchy: scannability, clarity, and navigation usability.
- Visual design quality: typography, spacing, consistency, and professional polish.
- WordPress implementation: sensible theme/plugin choices, reusable components, and maintainability.
- Accessibility + performance basics: demonstrable checks and fixes.
- Professional readiness: live deployment, contact reliability, and clear documentation.

## GRADING GRID

Enter points in the Student Score column. Total possible: 100.

| Category  | Pts Possible | Student Score |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| Planning + UX Foundations (sketches, wireframes, IA)                  | 15           |               |
| Visual Design + UI System (typography, spacing, hierarchy)            | 20           |               |
| WordPress Build Quality (theme structure, plugins, content types)     | 15           |               |
| Responsive + Accessibility (mobile-first, readability, WCAG basics)   | 15           |               |
| Portfolio Content + Case Studies (clarity, writing, scannability)     | 15           |               |
| Deployment + Technical Setup (hosting, domain, DNS, SSL, performance) | 10           |               |
| Professionalism + Process Evidence (iterations, file organization)    | 5            |               |
| AI Use Compliance + Disclosure (transparent + within policy)          | 5            |               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>100</b>   |               |