



Syllabus

Digital Optimization and Analytics

DIG 3512/ 85527/ Fall 2026

Credit Hours/Contact Hours

Pre-requisites: CGS 2069 & DIG 2100

Contact Information

Instructor

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Office Hours: To be announced in Canvas the first week of class.

Response Time

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Course Information

Catalog Description:

This course examines the strategic use of search engine optimization in marketing in order to build profitable customer relationships. Topics in the course will include consumer search behavior, search engines and algorithms, website user-experience, on- and off-page SEO, and strategies for conducting SEO campaigns for traditional and niche search engines. The course is designed to teach the fundamentals of SEO as well as provide practice with analysis and skills associated with doing SEO for a business or organization.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

Knowledge: Recall and articulate key concepts related to digital optimization and analytics, including the fundamental principles of search engines, searcher behavior, and the main components of SEO strategy.

Comprehension: Demonstrate a deep understanding of performance indicators, crawlability, and user experience (UX) in the context of digital optimization. Explain how these elements contribute to the overall effectiveness of a website's search engine visibility.

Application: Apply their knowledge of keyword research, site structure, and keyword mapping to optimize website content effectively. They should be capable of implementing on-page SEO strategies to enhance a website's search engine performance.

Analysis: Develop the ability to analyze and interpret off-page SEO factors, link building strategies, and holistic SEO approaches. They should be able to evaluate the impact of these elements on a website's ranking and visibility in search engine results.

Evaluation: Critically evaluate and compare different SEO strategies, particularly in the context of local SEO, YouTube SEO, and emerging trends such as Amazon, voice search, and online reputation management (ORM). They should be able to assess the effectiveness of these strategies for different types of businesses.

Synthesis: Synthesize their understanding of the various SEO components covered in the book to develop a comprehensive and strategic approach to digital optimization. Students should be able to create and present a well-rounded SEO strategy that incorporates elements from each chapter, demonstrating a holistic understanding of digital optimization and analytics.

Course Materials & Resources:

Mimic SEO Simulation and SEO: Strategy & Skills by Steve Wiideman and Scott Cowley. ISBN: 9781956963144

Delivery Method:

This is a web-based course. All online courses at GCSC utilize the Canvas Learning System. Students should read all information presented in the Canvas course site and should periodically check for updates—at least every 48 hours.

Remember: This course is not one in which students may work at their own pace. Each week there are learning modules, assignments, online lectures, online discussions, and/or online exams with due dates. Refer to the schedule within this syllabus and within Canvas for more information.

Student Expectations

In this course, communication and feedback will occur through various channels, including GCSC email, Canvas Inbox, Canvas Announcements, Canvas Discussions, Microsoft Teams or Zoom, assignment feedback, and instructor office hours. Review the statements below so that you understand the expectations for communication.

As a student at Gulf Coast State College, you are expected to:

- **Adhere to Course Guidelines:** Follow the guidelines detailed in the course syllabus, along with any additional instructions provided by the instructor. This includes understanding and complying with the course objectives, grading criteria, and academic policies.
- **Maintain Regular Contact:** Keep in touch with your instructor and classmates via your GCSC email or other designated communication channels. Regular contact helps clarify doubts, share ideas, and foster a collaborative learning environment.
- **Active Participation:** Engage actively in class discussions and submit assignments on time. Your active participation is crucial for your academic success and contributes to a vibrant learning community.

As your instructor, my commitment to you is to:

- **Provide Timely Feedback:** I will review and provide feedback on your assignments and submissions promptly. My goal is to help you understand your strengths and areas for improvement, which is crucial for your academic growth.
- **Respond Via Canvas Inbox:** I will respond to your emails or messages within 24-48 hours (excluding weekends), unless otherwise noted. I understand the importance of clear and timely communication in addressing your questions and concerns.
- **Post Regular Announcements:** To keep you updated and help you manage your time effectively, I will send out weekly reminders via announcements. These reminders will

include important dates, upcoming assignments, and any changes to the course schedule.

- **Maintain Weekly Office Hours:** I will maintain regular weekly office hours, but I can also be available by appointment. This is to ensure I'm available for any questions or concerns that may come up during the week.

Course Schedule

Dates	Module	Topic	Assignments
		Orientation	Course Introductions (Assignment)
	1	Overview of Search Chapter 1 – An Overview of Search Chapter 2 – Searcher Behavior	Chapter 1 (Review) Buying Decision Process (Assignment)
	2	Performance Indicators Chapter 3 – Search Engines Chapter 4 – Performance Indicators	Chapter 3 (Review)
	3	Crawlability Chapter 5 – Crawlability Chapter 6 - User Experience (UX)	Chapter 6 (Review) Homepage Analysis (Assignment)
	4	Keywords Chapter 7 – Keyword Research	Chapter 7 (Review) Round 1 (Mimic SEO)
	5	Chapter 8 – Site Structure & Keyword Mapping	Chapter 8 (Review) Site Map (Assignment) Round 2 (Mimic SEO)
		Lab	Digital Optimization and Analytics (Project) Round 3 (Mimic SEO)
	6	Optimization Chapter 9 – Content Optimization	Chapter 9 (Review) Round 4 (Mimic SEO) Digital Optimization and Analytics Critiques (Project)
	7	SEO Strategy Chapter 10 – Off-page SEO Chapter 11 – Link Building	Chapter 11 (Review) Link Building (Assignment) Round 5 (Mimic SEO)
	8	Chapter 12 – Holistic SEO Strategy	Chapter 12 (Review) Round 6 (Mimic SEO)
	9	Chapter 13 – Local SEO	Chapter 13 (Review) Off-Page SEO (Assignment)

			Round 7 (Mimic SEO)
	10	Chapter 14 – YouTube SEO	Chapter 14 (Review) YouTube SEO Audit (Assignment) Round 8 (Mimic SEO)
		Lab Week	
	11	Future of Search Chapter 15 – The Future of Search	Chapter 15 (Review) Holistic Digital Optimization (Project) Round 9 (Mimic SEO)
		Conclusion	Holistic Digital Optimization critiques (Project)
		Finals Week	Final Reflection (Assignment) Reflection Paper (Mimic SEO)

Grading

GCSC Grading Scale

All grades will be posted in the student grade book in Canvas and will be assigned according to the following scale:

- A 90%-100%
- B 80%-89%
- C 70%-79%
- D 60%-69%
- F 59% and below

Calculation of Grades

Review	15%
Assignments	20%
Projects	30%
Mimic SEO Simulation	35%

Course Policies

Accessibility Statement

Gulf Coast State College supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the student. Please visit [GCSC's Student Accessibility Resource \(SAR\) webpage](#) to learn more. For information regarding the registration process, email sar@gulfcoast.edu or call 850-747-3243.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance and participation are significant factors that help to promote success in college. Students are expected to attend all class meetings of all courses for which they are registered.

You are expected to know the instructor's specific attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus for each course. In the event of absence, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible to indicate the reason and to inquire whether make-up work is possible. (Make-up work is offered solely at the discretion of your professor.)

If your absences in a class become excessive, as stated in the course syllabus, your professor may contact you, indicating that further absence may result in your withdrawal from the course. Your professor can withdraw you from a course for excessive absences without your permission.

Instructors will monitor attendance at the beginning of each semester. If you are not in attendance during this period, you may be withdrawn from the course. You will be financially responsible for the course and a "W or NS" will appear on your transcript. Withdrawal from a course may also have implications for financial aid.

Make-Up Work Policy

Assignments are open for a two-week window of time from the start of a module until one week after the listed due date. Assignments not submitted by the due date will be automatically graded as a 0%. Late submissions will be docked 4% per day until the assignment closes.

Withdrawal Policy

Two withdrawals are permitted per credit course. After that, a grade will be assigned. Please be concerned about withdrawals. When admitting students into certain programs, universities may calculate withdrawals as grades. It is your responsibility to verify the effects of enrollment and/or withdrawal upon your financial assistance (financial aid, scholarships, grants, etc.).

There are two kinds of withdrawals---student and administrative.

- *Student Withdrawal (W1)* - Students wishing to withdraw must complete the online Student Withdrawal Form before the scheduled withdrawal deadline as published in the College catalog. Student withdrawals initiated prior to the scheduled withdrawal deadline will be recorded as a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.
- *Administrative Withdrawal (W2)* – A faculty member may withdraw a student up to the published withdrawal deadline for violation of the class attendance policy in which case the student will receive a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.

Students cannot withdraw from developmental studies courses (college-preparatory classes) after the drop/add period without written permission from their instructor and/or their academic advisor.

Academic Integrity

Honest participation in academic endeavors fosters an environment in which optimal learning can take place and is consistent with the college's mission. Academic misconduct, including cheating or plagiarism, is destructive to the spirit of an educational environment. GCSC professors report every instance of student academic misconduct to the college for inclusion on the student's records.

Most course syllabi include an academic honesty policy and the consequences for violating this policy. Familiarize yourself with course policies regarding authorized or unauthorized use of AI to avoid the pitfalls of academic dishonesty.

The following definitions will apply:

"Cheating"

includes but is not limited to use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; the acquisition without permission of tests or other academic materials belonging to a member of the College's faculty.

"Plagiarism"

includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment as well as the purchase of papers or projects. It can also include overuse of an editing program like Grammarly or submitting work written by an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generator like ChatGPT. Make certain to consult your course syllabi for your instructor's guidelines of AI material.

"Self-plagiarism"

occurs when a student submits the same or considerably similar document to fulfill requirements in different classes. For example, if a student submits a term paper in Religion they originally wrote for an English class, this is self-plagiarism. Once a paper receives a grade in one class, it cannot be submitted again for another class.

"Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)"

is technology that uses machine learning to create new content, such as text, images or code, based on user input. These systems are trained on vast amounts of data, including large language models and image or code generators. Common examples include ChatGPT, GitHub, Copilot, Google Gemini, Perplexity, and the Grammarly AI function.

Sanctions for incidences of academic misconduct, depending on the severity of the incidence and/or its repetition, may range from receiving an F grade (or 0) for the test, assignment, or activity, to failure of the course, to suspension or dismissal from the college.

Classroom Recording

In accordance with federal and state privacy laws, students may record class lectures for their own personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the college, or as evidence in internal or external legal proceedings. Students may not publish or upload the recordings or any components thereof without the knowledge and written permission of the faculty member. Failure to obtain permission to publish could lead to the students' having to pay damages, attorney fees, and court costs. For more information about what can be recorded, please see the guidelines in the GCSC Student Handbook.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of generative AI tools in academic work requires clear guidelines to maintain academic integrity. Please review the policy selected for this course regarding the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI features, and similar platforms for assignments, research, and other coursework.

See the student handbook for further information. Students with questions about acceptable use should consult their instructor. Review the three AI policy statements provided. Choose which policy best matches your teaching approach, then delete the two unused statements, keeping only the one that reflects your course's AI guidelines.

Generative AI Use with Permission and Disclosure

Students may use basic assistive technologies for spelling, grammar, and formatting (e.g., PaperRater or SpellCheckPlus). Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI function, etc.) may also be used for classes and/or assignments where instructors have given explicit permission. Students must clearly disclose and properly cite any AI-generated content used in their work, following course guidelines. Students are permitted to use AI only in the manner and means described by the instructor. Unacknowledged or unauthorized AI use will be treated as a violation of academic integrity and may result in penalties, including a zero on the assignment and additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the college's academic integrity policy.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Gulf Coast State College does not discriminate against any person in its programs, activities, policies or procedures on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, marital status,

religion, age, gender, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. All questions or inquiries regarding compliance with laws relating to non-discrimination and all complaints regarding sexual misconduct or discrimination may be directed to Amanda Reed, Executive Director of Human Resources/Title II/504/Title IX Coordinator and Employment Equity Officer, Gulf Coast State College, 5230 W. US Highway 98, Panama City, FL 32401; 850-769-1551, ext. 3516. Rules, policies, fees, and courses described in this catalog are subject to change without notice.

Syllabus Policy

For any syllabus posted prior to the beginning of the term, the instructor reserves the right to make minor changes prior to or during the term. The instructor will notify students via e-mail or Canvas announcement when changes are made in the requirements and/or grading of the course.

Student Support Resources

Gulf Coast State College is committed to providing you with the resources you need for success as a student and beyond. View all the academic and student support resources provided at GCSC on the [Student Services web page](#).

Course Technology & Support

To successfully participate in this online course, students must have basic computer and digital information literacy skills and meet the following technology requirements:

- **Computer:** Up-to-date web browser that supports the Canvas learning management system; please refer to the system requirements for compatibility and information on using the Canvas app on mobile devices.
- **Internet Speed:** Minimum bandwidth of 8 Mbps upload/download speed to effectively engage in online activities and access multimedia.
- **Office 365 software:** Available for free download through GCSC Information Technology Services (ITS).

If you need technical support, contact the ITS Help Desk, available 24/7 at (850) 913-3303.