

Designing a Lecture Course on Wikipedia and Wiki Technologies

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Photo: Grigor Gatchev,
Wikimedia Commons

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- Bulgarian Wikipedia:
 - Established in December 2003
 - Language speakers: ~ 9.1 mln people
 - #34 by number of articles (119 000+)
 - #21 by speakers per article (76.50)
 - #27 by edits per article (28.76)
 - #12 by sample of articles
- University wikiprojects in BG WP:
 - Organized as of Fall 2007/2008
 - In 3 Bulgarian universities
 - In 5 different subjects



Map: NuclearVacuum
Wikimedia Common



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- Title: “Wikipedia and Wiki Technologies” (elective)

NB! This is the first university lecture course in Bulgaria especially devoted to studying Wikipedia and wikis.

- Lecturer: Vassia Atanassova (User:Spiritia)
- Duration: The 3 trimesters of the 2011/2012 academic year, 10 weeks per trimester, 4 hours per week
- Students: Open to all students in Maths and Computer science, 2-4 grade, 30 students per trimester



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- Host institution: Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”



Map: Petko Yotov, Wikimedia Commons

Logo: © Plovdiv University

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- Theoretical pedagogic foundations from the book “Design of a University Lecture Course” by Dr. Roumiana Peytcheva-Forsyth (in Bulgarian)
- Studying a number of research papers on the role of wikis in education
- Research of existing syllabi, mainly
 - <http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Wikipedia/syllabi>
 - “Using Wikipedia as a teaching tool: Sample syllabus”
- Public consultation with other editors from BG WP
- Our own experience 😊



Goals and objectives

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- Goals of the course:
 - To build an **in-depth understanding** of the philosophy and technology of wikis, and especially of Wikimedia.
 - To promote **contribution and positive attitude** to Wikimedia within a promising target group.
 - To present the opportunities of **applying wiki** technology in other contexts, relevant to the students.
- Objectives:
 - To discuss contemporary **problems and trends** within Wikimedian community.
 - To facilitate the acquisition of **knowledge and skills** needed for more efficient use of wikis and Wikipedia.



Expected competences

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- Knowledge:
 - the key principles and policies of Wikipedia,
 - the main rules for editing and organizing the Wikipedia content,
 - the specifics of the free content, free software and free licenses used over the Internet,
 - the criteria of notability of subjects in Wikipedia articles,
 - the criteria of text and multimedia encyclopedic content.



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- **Skills:**
 - to freely navigate and use all functionalities of wikis,
 - to adequately use and cite Wikipedia as a source of information in the rest of their studies and work,
 - to critically evaluate their sources of information,
 - to express themselves in an encyclopedic style,
 - to create, edit, format wiki pages, use texts, tables, multimedia, templates, etc.,
 - to install, configure and administrate a wiki website.



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- **Topic #1: Introduction**

- Encyclopedias – definition, overview, history of worldwide and Bulgarian encyclopedias.
- Wikipedia as an encyclopedia and a voluntary community. Philosophy and technology of wiki. History of Wikipedia. Sister projects of the Wikimedia Foundation.
- Navigation. Elements from the interface, namespaces, search, recent changes.
- Account registration. Preferences. Personal user space.



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- Topic #2: Edit mode and wiki mark-up
 - Editable namespaces.
 - Read mode and edit mode, menus, page history, watchlist. Minor edit, edit summary, preview, show changes.
 - Sections, bold, italic, indent, bulleted and enumerated list, table of contents box. Links, categories, interwikis.
 - Citing sources.
 - Moving and redirecting pages.



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- Topic #3: Principles of writing in Wikipedia
 - Verifiability, Neutral point of view, no original research, biographies of living people.
 - Notability criteria.
 - Specifics of the encyclopedia style of writing:
 - *content structuring,*
 - *admissible verb tenses,*
 - *no temporary expressions,*
 - *impersonal expression,*
 - *no peacock and weasel words,*
 - *punctuation,*
 - *stay on topic,*
 - *provide context,*
 - *make omissions explicit.*



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- Topic #4: Copyright and legal issues
 - Copyright issues. Free software and free licenses. Public domain, fair use, freedom of panorama.
 - Wikimedia licensing policy for texts and multimedia.
 - Terms of use and terms of contribution.
 - Translations from other Wikipedias and external sources



Guest lecturer: A lawyer, specialized in copyrights.



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- Topic #5: Wiki etiquette and psychology
 - Communication and interaction. Assume good faith, Civility, Consensus, Conflict resolution.
 - Psychology of the wiki community. Inclusionism, deletionism, immediatism, eventualism, etc.
 - Article / user talk pages, Village Pump.



Make `[[Wikilove]]`, not `[[war]]`.

Illustration: Barracocco,
Wikimedia Commons

Guest lecturer: A fellow wikipedian sharing experience with privacy issues, and vandals, trolls and spammers.

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- **Topic #6: Multimedia**
 - Criteria for encyclopedic illustration
 - Policies in Wikimedia Commons. Licensing (again 😊).
 - Creation and sharing of multimedia. EXIF data.



Extensive hands-on practice. Visit of a museum and/or a public event and taking photos to illustrate articles in Wikipedia.



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- **Topic #7: Organization of the information.**
 - Organization of the information in categories, lists and templates. Wikiprojects and portals.
 - Types of templates, types of parameters. Transclusion and substitution. Parser functions.
 - Special pages and logs.
 - MediaWiki namespace. Translation and localization of interface messages.



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- **Topic #8: User groups and rights**
 - Main user groups: Anonymous users, autoconfirmed editors, administrators, bureaucrats, bots.
 - Main administrative rights: Protection, blocking, deletion.
 - Other user groups and rights.
 - *Guest lecturer: Bot operator*



Photo: Arria Belli,
Wikimedia Commons



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- **Topic #9: Wikis beyond Wikipedia**
 - Wikimedia sister projects.
 - Applications of wiki websites in business and education.
 - Wikia.com.
 - MediaWiki and other wiki distributions.
- **Topic #10: Installation**
 - Installation of a MediaWiki website.
 - Configuration with selected extensions.



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- The lecture course is elective, so we expect that it will be mostly attended by interested and motivated listeners.
- This academic experience will be a chance for Bulgarian Wikipedia to get an invaluable feedback from users, as well as turn these into fresh and well trained contributors.



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- Related publicity activities can draw positive attention from the academic circles and media.
- After the full academic year we will share the results and the good practices with the members of the Wikimedia Outreach.



Thank you for your attention!

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