

Syllabus and Policies

Graphic Design: Methods & Principles

Instructor: Yathrib “BeBe” Ragsdale

Office Hours: By Appointment

Email: yelhilla@masonlive.gmu.edu

Class meeting days and time: T/Th 4:30–7:10 p.m.

Location: School of Art Building 1022

Prerequisite

AVT 215—or permission of instructor

Course Description

AVT 311 Graphic Design Methods and Principles (3) emphasizes developing multiple design solutions that require research as to the demographics, history, and/or culture surrounding a project. This class further develops skills in design and typography, introduces conceptual problem solving, audience considerations, and the tools that designers must use to develop effective visual communication solutions. An emphasis is placed on the design methodology.

Objectives

- Develop visual sensitivity and competency in graphic communications by following a disciplined design methodology
- Define problems, research, conceptualize, establish priorities, and develop graphic alternatives
- Introduce students to design history, perceptual psychology, and information design
- Further develop computer design skills in page layout and image creation programs
- Develop the ability to effectively communicate design concepts visually as well as verbally

Content

Through lecture, studio, and critique, students will design a series of projects developed from rough schematic level to final mounted presentation. The learning objectives are achieved through a series of sequential projects. We will build on concepts learned in the initial content areas and apply them in subsequent projects. Students will provide a solution to the visual communication problem, and keep record of the process, conceptual development, and exploration of ideas that lead to the solution.

Course Expectations

In professional practice, graphic designers solve client problems that often have tight time requirements. Our projects will also have deadlines to hit so you can get a feel for the pace set in professional practice. You will be given as much time as possible to work during the studio, but discussion and critiques will consume a significant amount of the time. The time spent in the studio may only be a fraction of the time that is necessary to complete the projects successfully so be prepared to make headway outside of the classroom. The primary objective of the course is to provide creative solutions to design problems, not to learn design software from the beginning. You should have basic skills in design software and use it as a design tool with certain proficiency.

Design Process

You will be following the recommended design process as outlined in the Project Statement. In many cases, you will follow specific methodologies, as they are known to increase ideas and enhance production efficiency. Evaluation of your design process will always factor heavily in the final project grade. This evaluation includes your ability to meet interim deadlines, to present the required quantity of sketches and to participate in critiques. The process of design is critical. The best final solutions come from practicing a methodology that can be repeated for a variety of design problems. You will be examining and cataloging your process for all of the projects during the semester. The process includes library research, word lists, thumbnail sketches, collected imagery, and objects. You are required to present many ideas for the critique and develop a final solution based on these ideas and their revision and refinement.

Process Documentation and Notebook

Students are required to keep well-organized, well-presented documentations of your design/learning experience (research, idea generation, and refinement) in this class. These documentations should be arranged in chronological order. You will have to submit your process with the final design of each project on Pinterest.com. You will have to choose your best-documented process to put into a process book for your final review. You will also be required to keep a sketchbook, which will also be used to document your process.

- Your Pinterest boards should contain project spec sheets, notes, research, design exploration (including sketches) and final solutions of all class projects.
- Your Pinterest account must be well documented. You should include a heading/subheading, and a description.
- Your process Pinterest account and book will count toward a significant part of your final grade.

Take your design process seriously. Use your process boards to help you advance from one idea to another. Use your notebooks to not only record what you are doing, but to maintain a dialogue with yourself, identify why you are making the design decisions you are making. Keep your notebooks current as you progress through each project. Students have often mistakenly believed that they could finish their project first, and organize and assemble their process books later. This is a daunting task to do shortly before a deadline. Your work will suffer if you do not follow the design process.

Performance Requirements, Critiques, and Class Participation

Due to the dynamics of the course your attendance, participation and punctuality are critical to your successful completion of the class. You must be on time—and prepared—with no exceptions. Not being properly prepared with required assignments is considered an absence from the class. Final projects are due at the beginning of class. Projects turned after the start of class are automatically reduced 1/2 letter grade. Late projects will be docked **1 LETTER GRADE PER DAY**. If compelled to miss a class, you must email/ask me with an acceptable explanation within 12 hours to be excused. If absent, you are responsible for materials covered in class. Please “buddy-up” with a classmate for this information. Two un-excused absences will gravely effect successful completion of the course. Excessive tardiness will also affect your final grade (3 unexcused late arrivals equals an unexcused absence). Personal communication devices must be turned to “silent mode” and put away.

Final critiques may last one or two class periods. Be prepared to participate in the entire final critique. Individual and group critiques will be held at each stage of a project. Students who fail to have adequate work to present will lose a valuable opportunity to learn, which will also directly affect their grades. Students must be prepared for class to be counted as present, i.e. having all necessary supplies and computer files, and process notebook with you. Critiques are an important opportunity to shape verbal skills. Designers in professional practice need to be able to convey ideas to clients, ask relevant questions, and understand client concerns.

Textbook

Required: *Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual (2- Edition)*, by Timothy Samara

Recommended: *Universal Principles of Design*, by William Lidwell, Kritina Holden, Jill Butler

Evaluation

All final projects will be graded by the following criteria: concept/development/process, execution, and presentation (project and personal).

- **Concept/Development/Process (1/3 of project grade)**—is defined as research, schematic thumbnail sketches, and computer roughs.
- **Execution (1/3 of project grade)**—is defined as the implementation of the design (visual organization, typography, communication). Basically, how successful is your design solution? How well did you incorporate your research and class/instructor feedback?
- **Presentation (1/3 of project grade)**—is defined as the final production quality of your project, as well as, your professional presentation (attendance, deadlines, verbal/written articulation, and participation).

The final semester grade is determined by final project grades (45%); assignments/exercises (10%); process boards (10%); and class participation (10%). In lieu of a final exam, there will be final semester project (20%) and portfolio review (5%). A non-returnable digital portfolio on CD of all final projects must be turned in at your portfolio review. Creative presentation of the digital portfolio CD (i.e., case, labeling, layout & design) will be part of the grade. You may resubmit projects one time for a higher grade within two weeks (unless they are late), except for the final semester project.

Grading Scale (Overview of grading standards)

- A. Superior execution; maximum originality; excellent concentration and initiative; cooperative with peers; excellent judgment; superior attitude and dedication; highly imaginative, original, and experimental; very consistent in work ethic; significant improvement
- B. Strong execution and originality; adequate concentration and initiative; cooperative with peers; good attitude, dedication, and judgment; imaginative and experimental; consistent in work ethic; noticeable improvement.
- C. Average execution, concentration, organization, and attitude; some imagination and originality; lacks some consistency in work ethic; some improvement.
- D. Poor execution and improvement; limited originality; little concentration and organization; poor judgment; evades responsibility and cooperation; lacks work ethic, concentration, organization
- F. Fails to execute to minimum standards, insignificant improvement; no originality; minimum concentration and organization; evades responsibility and cooperation; no work ethic.

+ above average

✓ average

– below average

Course Outline

Project 1: Object Semantics – Ad Series // Weeks 1–4

An object of your choice will be studied. A composition depicting the graphic qualities of the object will be developed. Copy will be developed. Students will design a series of three advertisements. **Deliverables:** Design brief, Photography, Collection of imagery, Process board, three compositions.

Project 2: Type, Image, and Design History – Three Book Covers // Weeks 3 – 6

Students will design three book covers at 7 x 9 inches. Each book cover can be a variation from one chosen designer with one quote incorporated on the cover or three different designers with different quotes. Each cover will have a different design constraint: type only, type dominant, image dominate. A common grid will be employed for each design. **Deliverables:** Research on your chosen designer, Design brief, Image collection, Process board, three book covers.

Project 3: Infographic Poster – The Examination and Organization of Information // Weeks 6–9

Students will design an infographic poster at 11 x 17 inches. This infographic will require the student to collect information and organize it in a way that is visually powerful and appealing. All imagery used must be illustrated or adapted. **Deliverables:** Audience assessment, Design brief, Process board, Poster, and other materials as assigned.

Final Semester Project: It's all in the bag! Corporate Campaign // Weeks 7 – 14

Students will randomly choose one of five names. Students will decide what the company sells or does. From here, students will design a logo, letterhead, business card, homepage or app screen, and an 8-page brochure. Students then need to decide, depending on the type of company, one more piece to design (packaging, animation, exhibit booth, giveaway). **Deliverables:** Process board, Design brief, Letterhead, Logo, Business Cards, Brochure, homepage/app screen, and Selected item.

Portfolio Review // Final Exam Day

Students will schedule a time slot for a final review of their process boards and book, as well as, your and final projects. **Deliverables:** Process boards and book and Project CD

Materials

- USB flash memory, blank CD-R disks (It is important to backup your work)
- Project-dependent materials that will vary per concept
- Super-Black mounting boards, thin super-black boards, acetate, spray mount, black or white mounting tape, large black portfolio for housing final projects for review, cutting pad, Xacto™ knives & blades, self-healing cutting mat (all for home use) for final project submission
- Sketchbook

University and AVT Department Policies

Important University Dates:

Consortium Registration Deadline	TBD
First day of classes ; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date	August 28
Labor Day, university closed	September 4
Last day to add classes —all individualized section forms due Last day to drop with no tuition penalty	September 5
Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty	September 19
Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)	September 29
Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via Patriot Web	September 25 – October 20
Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)	October 2 – October 27
Columbus Day recess (Monday classes/labs meet Tuesday. Tuesday classes do not meet this week)	October 9
Incomplete work from spring/summer 2017 due to instructor	October 27
Incomplete grade changes from spring/summer 2017 due to Registrar	November 3
Thanksgiving recess	November 22 – 26
Last day of classes	December 9
Reading Days Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular classes or exams may not be held.	December 11 – 12
Exam Period	Wed December 13 – Wed December 20
Degree Conferral Date The Winter Graduation Ceremony will be held on Thu December 21.	Sat December 23

ArtsBus - Dates for Fall 2017:

September 23 | October 21 | November 18

ArtsBus Credit and Policies: You are responsible for knowing and following Artsbus policies and rules. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for important information regarding ArtsBus policy. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment. * If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300* Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need Artsbus credit BUT may need to go on the Artsbus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus trip at the Center of the Arts. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.

Visual Voices Lecture Series Fall 2017 Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20-9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater: <http://soa.gmu.edu/visualvoices/>

August 31...Simon Schwartz

Sept 14... Andy Birnbaum

Oct 5...Patricia Bello-Gillen

Oct 19...Sadie Barnette

Nov 11... Walter Kravitz

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need academic accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Disabilities Resource Center (SUB I room 234, 703-993-2474). You must provide your instructor with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through the DRC.

Cell Phones: School of Art Policies in accordance with George Mason University policy, turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

Commitment to Diversity: This class will be conducted as an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design: As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards

and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Open Studio Hours: SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

Official Communications via GMU E-Mail Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Attendance Policies Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, and are responsible knowing the rules, as stated on the George Mason University website' Academic Integrity page (<http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>). "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, trust, and fairness among all members of the Mason community, and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Mason's Commitment: To create an environment that is innovative, diverse, entrepreneurial, and accessible-helping you avoid accidental or intentional violations of the Honor Code."

Writing Center Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis. The Collaborative Learning Hub Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects, Macs are also available; as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit ittraining.gmu.edu to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.