

George Mason University
Course Syllabus

Course Title:	Graduate Design Seminar
Course Code/Section:	AVT 611, Section 1
Session/Year:	Fall, 2017
Meeting:	Mondays, 4:30–7:10 pm, School of Art, Rm. 1020.
Professor:	Jandos Rothstein
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Course Description

Graduate Design Seminar is a laboratory for the exploration of contemporary design theory and practice through written work and the process of design making. Students will work together and separately to explore the boundaries between design, art, and culture and their emerging place in the world of design. This class must be repeated and will have a different emphasis and different content every semester.

Objectives

Continuing development of professional visual sensitivity and competency in graphic communication through the creation of written and designed work. Students will become more aware of their priorities and goals as a working designer, and develop broader awareness of their place as designers and design's place in the culture. We may also explore the design leader's responsibilities to the professional field and community.

Content

This class will have no technical content. Students are expected to have or to develop the professional computer and writing skills they need for projects completed outside of class. Students will produce a series of designed or written solutions to theoretical problems posed throughout the semester. Our sessions will be devoted to discussing our own design ideas and products, and the ideas of other people.

Attendance Policy

Seminars include substantial critique and discussion components. By their nature, they are dynamic educational environments—during critique periods and in the interaction of students on ongoing projects, the seminar provides resources and learning opportunities that cannot be “made up” by other means. In short, your attendance is just as important as mine. Therefore:

Students are required to attend all class meetings, to arrive on time, and to stay for the duration of the class.

Students arriving seven minutes or more late to class will be marked tardy. Students arriving 15 minutes or more late will be marked absent. Three tardy marks equals one absence. Students who leave before the class is dismissed will be marked absent.

Students who are having difficulty with the attendance requirement may be asked to drop the class.

For each absence beyond two absences your final course grade will be reduced one full letter grade from the earned level of all work for the course. For example: “B” quality design work for the semester with four absences results in a final course grade of “C.”

There are no excused absences.

Absence, tardiness, and early departure is regarded as de facto evidence of non-participation.

Incomplete

It is not possible to earn an incomplete in this class.

Semester Emphasis

This Semester, we will be exploring the opportunities inherent in using handmade letterforms in graphic design. Unlike traditional calligraphy which uses narrowly proscribed tools and traditional techniques, handmade letterforms as used in contemporary publications and web projects can incorporate almost any material and take on an almost infinite expressive range. Handmade type can be thought of as a cross between typography and illustration—letters can take on an expressive quality beyond what is achievable with an “out of the box” typeface or even become explicitly pictorial.

The use of words created by hand has been a persistent trend over the last few years, with several likely causes. While a designer who works by hand may be reacting against the rigidity of computer-generated type, he or she may also be desiring to work more organically and directly, or wanting to work with a personal and distinctive design vocabulary.

TEXT AND REFERENCES

Required:

Heller, Steven and Mirko Ilic, *Handwritten: Expressive Lettering in the Digital Age*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 2006.

Suggested:

Bringhurst, Robert, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, Hartley & Marks, Point Roberts, Washington 1992.

Perry, Michael, *Hand Job: A Catalog of Type*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007

Chen Design Associates, *Fingerprint: The Art of Using Hand-Made Elements in Graphic Design*, How Press, 2006.

All graduate students are expected to keep up to date with the design press and blogs. Suggested publications include *Print*, *Communication Arts*, *Eye* and *Baseline*. These are all available in Fenwick. Suggested websites include Print, Eye, Design Observer and AIGA Voice.

Materials & Supplies:

There is no set list of supplies. The materials you use will be dictated by your solution to each individual problem, and at various points in the semester may include paint, ink, papers, crayons, pencils, spray paint, found or purchased objects, post-consumer waste, string, clay, linoleum or wood blocks and more. Students will also need access to a photocopier and a camera (digital SLR suggested) and will use traditional graphic design equipment: a Macintosh computer and the Adobe Creative Suite and/or QuarkXpress. Students should assume a total supply cost of 100.00–200.00 for materials and printing for this class, but perhaps much in cases where students already own traditional art supplies. Students are also encouraged to share supplies.

Student Evaluation/Methods of Assessment:

All project grades will be based on creativity, visual impact, effective use of materials and clarity of communication.

Project 1: Four Words 20%

Project 2: Integrating Handmade and Computer Generated Components. 20%

Project 3: Location Specific Type 30%

Project 4: Final Series of Posters 30%

The class grade will also take into account participation (including three turns making presentations and discussion leading) and attendance.

Class, Department and University Policies:

All projects are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. Late projects will be reduced one letter grade for each week late or portion thereof. After two weeks, projects will not be accepted. The final project is due on the last day of class. No extensions will be given.

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.

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).

Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by the instructor.) Violations must be reported to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously. Using someone else's words or ideas without attribution is plagiarism, a very serious Honor Code offense. Plagiarism will also result in a failing grade.

Students must be completely prepared for class to be considered present, ie. they must have all necessary supplies and computer files and all ongoing (ungraded) projects with them.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

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.

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Students are responsible for the content of university and class communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly. Students are responsible for the content of messages that bounce due to "over limit" errors.

Cell phones and pagers must be turned off during class. The use of headphones is permitted during work periods.

Students may redo work for a higher grade if the piece was originally turned in on time. Revisions must be a substantial reconsideration of the original—not merely a correction of errors. The deadline for revised work is the last day of class.

The instructor evaluates your work in line with the course syllabus, university catalog and guidelines, and documented prepared course participation and performance throughout the course. The course grade is determined by a careful assessment of your overall performance in the course that includes attendance, prepared participation, project evaluations, project revisions, and final project(s) presentation all of which is described in detail in the course syllabus, handouts, and lecture presentations.

All work created in this class must be specifically for this class and this class only. It is not permitted to use class projects as a platform for producing professional work or projects intended to be submitted to other teachers. The reuse of a previously completed project (already gone to press, or previously graded) for assignment two is permitted.

Useful Information:

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.

ArtsBus Students enrolled in the graduate graphic design program do not require ArtsBus credit, but may enjoy and benefit from the experience of visiting New York Galleries with Mason students and faculty at a reasonable cost. Extra bus tickets are available to SoA students and the Mason community on a first come/first serve basis. See the ArtsBus web site for scheduling information. There are three ArtsBus trips every semester. The dates for this fall's ArtsBus trips are September 25, October 23 and November 13.

Important Deadlines

Last Day to Add:	September 5
Last Day to Drop:	September 29
Selective Withdrawal Period:	October 2–27
Incomplete work from previous Fall due to instructor:	October 27

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for late adds (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the SoA office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid processing). Requests for non-elective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For SoA majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

Course Outline (Subject to change)

Class Presentations: In addition to producing design and participating in critiques, each student will make one presentation, lead one discussion, and present their own work to the group. Presentations will be about a contemporary designer or firm (currently active and unaffiliated with the student). Choose someone you are finding influential or pertinent to your own practice. The presentation must include visuals, either printed, or in digital form for overhead display. The discussion will be on the topic of a design article(s) or provocative blog post(s) distributed by the student one week ahead of time, either via printouts/photocopies or link. (All students are expected to have read the distributed article by the presentation date.) All articles and posts must be published within the last 6 months. The discussion may include visuals. Expect to lead the class for a minimum of 15 minutes each time. Discussions may go longer if the extra time is warranted. Students will sign up for their dates on the first day of class.

08/28 Monday: introduction to class and first assignment, sign up for presentations and discussion dates.

Assignment 1: Exploring the expressive range of non-traditional typography. Students will choose the theme Fire-Water-Earth-Air or Summer-Spring-Winter-Fall (or Autumn) to explore a range of techniques for creating type without a computer. Students will create four compositions, each with a different one of the four words featured. The quality of the design, media and colors chosen, and background or additional elements (if any)

should be appropriate to the meaning of the words. All compositions should be presented at the same size and proportions on a 2 x 2 grid, but may be sized up or down from original on the computer. One piece must be executed with wet media (paint, ink, etc.), one with dry media (pencils, crayons, charcoal, ballpoint, etc.), One with collage (2D or 3D) and one using mechanical/photographic means—using either a photocopier or camera as a creative tool. Plastic media such as clay, Lego, fabric or yarn are also possibilities when students are working photographically. Students can, at their option, alter one of the compositions on the computer (Photoshop) provided digital “fingerprints” are not obvious in the results. Students may use computer-generated type for reference only, for up to two compositions, but everything that appears in the final must be created using analog methods. Limited mixing of media is also allowed (for example it might be necessary to collage drawn letters), but all compositions should feature the specified media type. All four compositions should work together as a group as well as individually. Each composition should be a minimum of 8.5 x 11” This project may be presented digitally (on CD) or mounted on Jet Black Presentation board. Digital presenters: include individual files for all four compositions sized for print at 100% (300 dpi min) and a fifth file of all four set up as a grid, and down-sampled if size exceeds 40 mb.

- 09/06 No Class, Labor Day.
- 09/11 First critique of “four words” project. Presentations. Introduction to assignment two.
- 09/18 Final critique of “four words” project. Approval of Assignment 2 project proposals. Presentations.

Assignment Two: Integration of handmade and computer generated elements. Students will create an integrative, multi-component design. (appropriate choices might be a brochure, informational poster, Magazine feature layout, Ad campaign, business suite, etc.) that integrates hand-created type with computer generated components. At their option, students may use this project to revisit an appropriate classroom or professional assignment if it did not originally include handmade components and is suitable to this approach. This project will be presented mounted on jet black mounting boards and digitally with all source files and pdfs included. Your project is subject to the approval of the teacher.

- 09/25 First critique of “Integration” project. Presentations.
- 10/02 Second critique of “Integration” project. Presentations, Introduction to location-specific project.
- 10/09 Final critique of “Integration” project. Presentations.

Assignment Three: Location specific/environmental type. Students will make a typographical statement that integrates location into a communicative whole. All words must be written by the student, and must be tailored to the environment to make a visual and linguistic statement. The environment can be private or public and of any size, and students can use any manipulatable material to make words—ranging from something relatively permanent like paint to something fragile and ethereal like toilet paper or leaves. Students will document their work with photographs and, when feasible and useful, the class may visit the location. Students can choose to integrate computer-generated as well as handmade components. Students will present three photographs as part of this project: A “best” or primary angle and two supplementary images to help explain how the installation works in 3 dimensions. Students may wish to think of the primary photograph or the location as the work product. The grade will take quality and effectiveness of documentary or illustrative photography into account. The final may be submitted on disk or as prints. Your project is subject to the approval of the teacher.

- 10/16 Discussion of ideas for location-specific project. Presentations.
- 10/23 Presentation of mockup of location piece—critique. Mockup can be submitted as sketch, digitally altered photograph, or test shot. Discussion of final project. Presentations.

10/30

Final critique, location-specific project. Presentations.

Final Project: Series of three posters. Poster purpose can be up to you—informative/educational, political, social or decorative—pick a topic you feel passionate about and would like to spend some time exploring. Posters should work together individually and as a group as a graphic statement (they should be unified by color range, thematic range, stylistic range and size/proportions). Results should be appropriate for a poster—ie graphically interesting enough to justify placing on a public wall or in a private home, attractive or dramatic, readable at a distance, content-appropriate to the large sheet. Assume a minimum area of four feet square, although dimensions are up to you. You may, at your option include computer set type and authored images, but the typographic focal point must be created by hand. All written content should be authored by you. Your project is subject to the approval of the teacher.

11/06 Discussion of project proposals, presentations.

11/13 Submission of first roughs, presentations.

11/20 Critique of work in progress, presentations.

11/27 Critique of work in progress, presentations.

12/04 Final due, final critique. Enjoy your break!