

# George Mason University

## AVT 311 Spring 2018

GRAPHIC DESIGN METHOD/PRINCIPLES

Syllabus and Policies

Instructor: Shanshan Cui

Location: Art and Design Building 1022

Class meeting days and time: MW 10:30-1:10

Prerequisite:

AVT 215—or permission of instructor

## Syllabus and Policies

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*The syllabus and project statements serve as your guide throughout the semester.  
Refer to them frequently. You are expected to know and understand this information.*

### Course Description

The course emphasizes developing multiple design solutions that require some research as to the demographics, history, and/or culture. It further develops skills in design and typography, introduces conceptual problem solving, audience considerations, and the broad-based tools that designers must use to develop effective visual communication solutions.

### Objectives

To develop visual sensitivity and competency in graphic communications by following a disciplined design process  
To define problems, research, conceptualize, establish priorities, and develop graphic alternatives  
To develop computer design skills in page layout and image creation programs  
To develop the ability to effectively communicate graphic design concepts visually as well as verbally

### Content

There are three major content areas for this course:

*Type and Image*  
*Design Method and Principles*  
*Form and Communication*

Through lecture, studio, and critique, students will design a series of projects developed from rough schematic level to final mounted presentation. The learning objectives in these areas are achieved through a series of sequential projects. The knowledge and concepts learned in one content area will be immediately transferred and applied in the next project. I will give lectures to clarify and expand the concepts and objectives from the project statements. Students shall provide a few solutions to the visual communication problem, as well as records of development and exploration of ideas that lead to the solutions.

### Course Expectations

The projects require one to be disciplined and to work within very strict parameters. In professional practice, graphic designers solve clients' problems, which requires them to be comfortable working within strict requirements set forth by the clients. The projects in this course will prepare you to work within these limitations.

You will be given as much time as possible to work during the studio. But lectures 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

The process of design is critical. You shall follow the recommended design process as outlined in the Project Statement. In many cases, you shall follow specific methodologies, as they are known to increase ideation and to enhance production efficiency. Evaluation of your design process will always factor heavily in the final project grade. You are required to present many ideas for the critique and develop a final solution based on these ideas.

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### Process Documentation and Notebook

Students are required to keep well-organized, well-presented documentations of your design/learning experience 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 also be required to keep a sketchbook, which will also be used to document your process.

- You will create four project boards (one for each project) and one assignments/exercises board. Your Pinterest project boards should contain project spec sheets, design brief, notes, research, thumbnail ideation, sketches, roughs, refinement, and final solutions of all class projects. Your assignment board should document all the work you have completed.
- Your Pinterest boards must be well organized, comprehensive but not redundant. You should include a heading/subheading, and a description.
- Your process Pinterest account will count toward a significant part of your final grade.

**Be forewarned!** Take your design process seriously. Use your process notebook to help you advance from one idea to another; not only use the notebook to 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 process boards current as you progress through each project and assignment/exercise.** Students have often mistakenly believed that they could finish their project first, and organize and assemble their process boards/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. Students arriving late for thirty minutes or more will be marked absent. Three tardy marks equal to one absence. Students who leave before the class is dismissed will be counted as absent.

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. Students who are having difficulty with the attendance requirement may be asked to drop the class. Student who miss four or more classes in a row, and do not otherwise contact the teacher are subject to receiving an SA grade.

After two unexcused absences your final grade of the semester will be lowered by one full letter grade (B to B-, or B- to C+) for each accumulative absence beyond two.

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. Critiques may last one or two class periods. Individual or group critiques will be held at each stage of a project. Attendance to critiques is mandatory. Students who fail to have adequate work to present will lose a valuable opportunity to learn, which will also directly affect their grades. You may be counted as absent if you do not have the required work to present at the progress and final critiques.

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I enforce deadline strictly. Final projects are due at the beginning of class. Projects and process boards turned after the start of class are automatically reduced 1/2 letter grade. Late submissions receive a full letter grade down for each class day late (i.e. A to B, B- to C-, or 60 to 50, 50 to 40). No extensions will be given. A late process board/notebook means that the entire project will be counted late. Make sure that your instructor can access your Pinterest project boards before the deadline. Projects will not be accepted one week past the due date. Failure to turn in any project will automatically result in a fail grade

There will be no makeup for a project. A project may not be redone for a higher grade. Personal communication devices must be turned to “silent mode” and put away.

### Grading Policy

I grade each project according to the criteria stated in the Project Statement. Each project will be given a letter grade based on the + or – system. This evaluation includes your performance in meeting interim deadlines, presenting adequate research and the required quantity of sketches (and I do mean QUANTITY), and participating in critiques and other class activities. I will provide an evaluation sheet when returning your design.

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

- Concept/Development/Process—is defined as research, schematic thumbnail sketches, and computer roughs.
- Execution—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 re-search and class/instructor feedback?
- Presentation—is defined as the final production quality of your project, as well as, your professional presentation (attendance, deadlines, verbal/written articulation, and participation).

### Teaching/Design Archives

A non-returnable digital portfolio on a flash drive or DVD of all final projects (four projects and assignments/exercises) in both pdf and jpg formats must be turned in on the last day of class. Each project and file should be clearly labeled.

The final semester grade is determined by project 1 (10%); project 2 and 3 (20% each); assignments and exercises (10%); class participation (10%); teaching archives (5%). In lieu of a final exam, there will be final semester project (25%).

### Grading Scale (Overview of grading standards)

#### *A. Excellent*

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. Good*

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.

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### *C. Satisfactory*

Average execution, concentration, organization, and attitude; some imagination and originality; lacks some consistency in work ethic; some improvement.

### *D. Poor*

Poor execution and improvement; limited originality; little concentration and organization; poor judgment; evades responsibility and cooperation; lacks work ethic, concentration, organization.

### *F. Unacceptable*

Fails to execute to minimum standards, insignificant improvement; no originality; minimum concentration and organization; evades responsibility and cooperation; no work ethic.

## Required Textbook

*Design Elements: A Graphic Style Manual*, by Timothy Samara

## Recommended Readings

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

*Type Image Message*, by Nancy Skolos, Thomas Wedell

*Type & Image: The Language of Graphic Design*, by Meggs, Philip B.

*Graphic Design: The New Basics*, by Ellen Lupton

## Materials

CDs or USB Drive. *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, cutting pad, Xacto™ knives & blades, self-healing cutting mat (all for home use) for final project submission

Other materials for sketching and taking notes

## University and School of Art Policies

Important University Dates:

Martin Luther King Day (no classes)

Mon Jan 15

First day of classes; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed

Mon Jan 22

Last day to add classes—all individualized section forms due

Mon Jan 29

Last day to drop with no tuition penalty

Mon Jan 29

Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty

Mon Feb 12

Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)

Fri Feb 23

Immunization Record Deadline

Thu Mar 1

Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via Patriot Web

Mon Feb 19 – Fri Mar 23

Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)

Mon Feb 26 – Fri Mar 30

Spring Break

Mon Mar 12 – Sun Mar 18

Incomplete work from Fall 2017 due to Instructor

Fri Mar 23

Incomplete grade changes from Fall 2017 due to Registrar

Fri Mar 30

Dissertation/Thesis Deadline

Fri May 4

Last day of classes

Sat May 5



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### 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's 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](http://ittraining.gmu.edu) to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.