

## **J359T | J395 Advanced Visual Design | Spring 2006**

### **SYLLABUS**

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**Unique Numbers: 06903 | 07063**

#### **Lecturer (Instructor)**

Shawn M. McKinney / E-mail: smckinney@mail.utexas.edu

Office: by appointment only | Phone: 791.8937 (cell)

#### **Teaching Assistant**

Brandon Bollom | E-mail: bwbollom@yahoo.com

**Lecture: CMA 4.316 | TTH | 9:30 – 11 a.m.**

**Lab: CMA 4.316 | TTH | 11 – 12:30 p.m.**

**Open Lab: TBA**

#### **Software Training**

Software training is NOT the focus of this course. Students are expected to utilize Lab and Open Lab hours in the 4th floor Mac labs, as needed, to complete assignments and projects. Open Lab sessions will be held regularly in either CMA 4.308 or 4.316. Hours will be posted soon after a new semester begins.

**Course Website: [www.typonica.com/j395](http://www.typonica.com/j395)**

#### **Prerequisites**

Previous completion of J336 Visual Design (with a grade of at least B), or equivalent course (or professional) work. Otherwise, admission is by instructor permission only.

#### **Objectives**

This graduate seminar focuses on advanced principles and processes associated with visual design and visual communication. We will examine and discuss the significance of visual design, as both a tool and a medium of cultural production. Students will complete a series of design projects, exploring themes such as identity, persuasion, promotion and authorship. Students will utilize computers, images, texts and hand skills to produce work of an experimental, complex and professional nature.

We will discuss design theory, practice, trends, products and themes. Assignments will involve creating, altering, and processing images; formulating, analyzing and refining letterforms; and preparing materials for production and publication. The course will employ lectures, readings, exercises, projects and brief written assignments. Regular attendance is essential. A group of supplies and a few (small) books are required. No exams will be given.

#### **Required Reading**

- Thinking With Type  
Ellen Lupton (Princeton Architectural Press, 2004); ISBN: 1-56898-448-0
- The Substance of Style  
Virginia Postrel (Harper Perennial, 2004); ISBN: 0-060-93385-2
- Shaping Things  
Bruce Sterling (Princeton Architectural Press, 2005); ISBN: 0-262-69326-7

## **Recommended Reading**

The following books are recommended (but not required), to further supplement and inform some of the issues and concepts we address in this course:

- Visual QuickStart Guide: InDesign CS2 for Macintosh + Windows  
Sande Cohen (Peachpit Press, 2005)
- Visual QuickStart Guide: Photoshop CS2 for Windows + Macintosh  
Elaine Weinmann and Peter Lourekas (Peachpit Press, 2005)
- The Elements of Graphic Design: Space, Unity, Page Architecture and Type  
Alex W. White (Allworth Press, 2002)
- Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design  
Michael Bierut, ed. (Allworth Press, 1994)
- Design Writing Research  
Ellen Lupton (Phaidon Press, 1999)
- Graphic Design: A Concise History, 2nd Edition (World of Art Series)  
Richard Hollis (Thames & Hudson, 2002)
- Understanding Comics, Reprint Edition  
Scott McCloud (Perennial Press, 1994)
- No More Rules: Graphic Design and Postmodernism  
Rick Poynor (Yale University Press, 2004)
- The Education of a Graphic Designer, 2nd Edition  
Steven Heller, ed. (Allworth Press, 2005)
- Emigre No. 68: American Mutt Barks in the Yard  
David Barringer, Rudy VanderLans (ed.) (Princeton Architectural Press, 2005)

Magazines and journals that may also prove of interest include: Eye, Communication Arts, Emigre (back issues), Print, I.D., Step, HOW, Baseline and VOICE: AIGA Journal (online).

## **Lab Sessions**

Regularly scheduled lab sessions provide students with access to computer hardware and software typically employed in this course. They provide students with both the time and the means to complete most of the required projects and assignments. While software training is not the focus of this course, specific software and/or design skills may be introduced and/or supplemented during lab sessions.

Open Lab hours will also be made available, enabling students to work on projects and assignments outside of class. A teaching assistant will monitor Open Lab hours for this course, and will be available to answer questions and/or provide assistance.

Students with an IF account may also use the Communications lab on the 3rd floor. This lab provides access to Macintosh hardware and software, but may not match facilities, software, or fonts available in our fourth floor labs.

## **Supplies**

A basic Supply Kit is required in this course. Total cost of supplies for this course ranges from \$50 to \$75 U.S. dollars (closer to \$50 if purchased as a Supply Kit from the University Coop).

The Supply Kit for this course is a simpler version of one formerly used in J336 Visual Design. Some students may already possess some of the required supplies, and only need to replenish a few.

Click on Supplies, on the course website, for a current list.

### **Grades: Method of Evaluation**

Each student's final grade (GPA) is based on how many points they earned during the course; they can earn a maximum of 1,000 total points. Items are tabulated as follows:

1. A lecture attendance and participation score	200 points	(20% of final grade)
2. A series of class exercises and/or short papers	100 points	(10% of final grade)
3. A series of short creative projects	400 points	(40% of final grade)
4. A final, independent, creative project	300 points	(30% of final grade)

This course uses the 10-point grading scale, as follows: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = 59 or less. Thus, final point totals = final grades, as follows: A = 900-1000; B = 800-899; C=700-799; D = 600-699; F = 599 or less.

### **Lecture Attendance and Participation (20% of Final Grade; No Excused Absences)**

Lecture attendance (Please Ask Questions!) is essential. A student can earn as many as 200 total points for lecture attendance and participation. Important information and updates are often delivered during lectures. Please follow the lecture attendance guidelines listed below. No absences will be excused. (A student can miss two or three classes and still achieve the final grade they desire.)

1. **BE PUNCTUAL.** It is unprofessional and disruptive to be LATE. It can distract the instructor, as well as students who are trying to pay attention.
2. **BE RESPONSIBLE.** If you miss class, borrow someone's notes. Get a copy of any handouts you missed (usually available on the course website). Do not bother the instructor.
3. **BE COURTEOUS.** Please do not make disruptive noises, ask pointless questions, use a cell phone, check e-mail, surf the Web, or do work for another class, during this class.
4. **BE RESPECTFUL.** If you have to come late to class, or leave early, clear this with the instructor ahead of time. Open and close doors, or move seats, quietly.
5. **BE PREPARED.** Always come to class prepared for discussion. Ask questions. Bring whatever you need to be productive. Check the online schedule regularly to see what's next.

### **Lab Attendance, Participation**

This semester, lab may often be simply a continuation of lecture; attendance and participation are essential. Knowledge of computer software applications is solely the responsibility of the individual student in this course; however, additional software and/or design skills may be introduced and/or supplemented during lab sessions. Each time a student misses lab the student is responsible to find out what they missed.

Lecture attendance guidelines also apply during lab sessions, with these additional points:

1. **DO NOT** leave personal (or other) belongings in the lab.
2. **DO NOT** bring food or drink into the lab.
3. **DO** keep computers and work surfaces dry, clean and orderly.
4. **DO** clean up your own mess (including printouts) after working in the lab.
5. **DO** use personal headphones if you plan to listen to music.

### **Design Projects (70% of Final Grade)**

A student can earn as many as 700 total points by completing a series of design projects in this course. Projects are due at the beginning of lecture, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Project briefs and examples of student work may be available for viewing on the course website.

### **Design Projects: Guidelines: ORIGINALITY**

Student work must be original work. Although students are encouraged to discuss their work with others, students may only submit their own, original work for evaluation.

**Design Projects: Guidelines: EXHIBITION**

Student work may be exhibited. Projects and assignments submitted for evaluation in this course are subject to being exhibited, published or reproduced, on the course website or elsewhere, in print or digital form, for educational purposes only.

**Design Projects: Guidelines: EVALUATION**

**FOLLOW THE RULES.** Read project briefs carefully. Design projects (and other works of art), are inherently subjective. They resist attempts to evaluate them on a purely quantitative basis. Thus, neither hard work nor a record of high achievement in previous courses of study will guarantee any student a high grade on any project in this course.

In order to be fair, the instructor emphasizes quantitative aspects, such as attention to detail (e.g., following instructions and specifications) and pride of craft (e.g., precise trimming, mounting), often at the expense of qualitative aspects (e.g., creativity, exertion). Thus, a student's ability to **FOLLOW THE RULES** is weighed more heavily than anything else, when evaluating student work in this course.

**Design Projects: Guidelines: IMAGES**

The use of found images is permitted. This is an educational environment; therefore, students are permitted to use found images as part of design projects they create in this course, unless otherwise specified by the instructor. However, the use of original, student-generated images is typically encouraged and preferred.

**Class Exercises and Writing Assignments (10% of Final Grade)**

A student can earn up to 100 total points by completing Class Exercises and/or Writing Assignments (also referred to as Response Papers). These will be assigned periodically as a means of responding to specific reading topics, field trips, lecture topics, and so forth. (Note: Content of any writing assignment must be a student's original work.) Topics, focus and length to be determined by the instructor. Class exercises may include surveys, creative exercises, field trips, and so forth. Critical thinking is required.

Written assignments must be typed and printed from a computer. They must be neatly printed on good quality, clean white paper. They should be succinct, error-free and carefully edited. Accuracy is required. Points may be deducted for spelling, grammar or punctuation errors, or sloppy appearance. Students should proofread all written materials before submission.

**Creativity**

Creativity is an inherent component of visual design. However, students who think they lack creative ability should not feel discouraged or intimidated. Any student sincerely interested in visual design, who consistently attends lecture and lab, pays close attention to details, follows project rules and specifications and asks meaningful questions will position themselves to earn the final grade they desire.

**Late Assignments (Projects, Papers, etc.): Not Accepted**

Late assignments will not be accepted or earn points. Late assignments will receive a grade of F (zero points). Assignments are due at the beginning of lecture, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Meeting deadlines and paying attention to details are crucial aspects of visual design practice.

**Make-ups, Redos and Extra Credit: Not Available**

Opportunities to submit extra credit assignments or to make-up or redo assignments or projects will not be available. To earn a satisfactory grade, a student must strive to do good work, as determined by the instructor, on every assignment or project, the first time around.

**Criticism**

Like writing, effective design typically depends on editing and revision. This course will employ extensive discussions and critiques focused on student work-in-progress and/or finished work. The intention is to identify strengths and weaknesses, provide positive feedback and make suggestions for improvement. All criticism is intended to be constructive; the aim is to develop and improve individual design skills.

**Papers and Exams: Property of the Instructor**

Submission of a paper (i.e., writing assignment) does not constitute public disclosure of ideas. Graded papers may be kept by the instructor, or they may be returned to students.

**Computer Literacy**

Students enrolled in this course are individually responsible for learning how to use a Macintosh computer and relevant software programs. Resources are available in this building and/or elsewhere on campus to assist students in achieving the level of computing proficiency they desire.

**Instructor Availability**

The instructor is available to meet, briefly, by appointment. Contact the instructor by e-mail to schedule an appointment. Students are welcome to discuss any issue, as long as they do so in a respectful manner.

**Accommodations and Disabilities**

Early in the semester, students with disabilities who need special accommodations should notify the instructor by presenting a letter prepared by the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office. To ensure that the most appropriate accommodations can be provided, contact the SSD Office at 471-6259, or 471-4641 TTY, or visit Services for Students with Disabilities, at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>.

**Scholastic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment (or creative project) for two courses without the prior permission of faculty members.

By accepting this syllabus and participating in the course, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of work and career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from The University. For more info, visit Student Judicial Services at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

**Content Disclaimer**

The instructor reserves the right to include written, visual and/or audio content, as course material, that some students may find disturbing or offensive. Such materials will only be utilized for educational purposes. For instance, the nude human form, slang or swear words, song lyrics, lines of prose or poetry, or images related to controversial topics will be considered, in the context of this course, as Fair Use, both as elements of visual communication and as part of our visual environment.

**Thoughts on Grades**

Precise and consistent alignment, mounting and printing results are among the fundamental principles by which visual design presentations and products are defined and evaluated. The instructor reserves the right to deduct points, on any assignment or project, for alignment, mounting or printing errors, even if such details appear insignificant to some students. This is a Journalism class; the instructor also reserves the right to deduct points for spelling, grammar or punctuation errors.

**Educational Philosophy**

Educational psychologist Carl Rogers noted: "You cannot teach anyone anything, you can only facilitate their learning." The purpose of this course is to assist students who want or need to learn about visual design and visual communication. What a student gets out of this course depends, in large part, on what they put into it. Visual design principles and practices are learned by discussing, making and evaluating things. Lectures, projects, readings and other course materials provide students with learning opportunities; it is up to each student to make these count.