A FEW POINTS ABOUT OUR GRAPHIC DESIGN COURSE

Welcome to Graphic Design. I'm thrilled that you want to learn more about designing like a pro. I think you'll find it easier to do great work than you may have thought. Before we start, though, I want to talk with you about a few things.

Prerequisites for this Course: You'll run across this elsewhere on our course pages, but it bears repeating: Because we want to focus on design and *not* on computer applications, students in this course should be somewhat fluent in the use of software capable of basic graphic design. Presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint and Apple's Keynote, will allow students to do everything covered in this course. Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign would be ideal applications to use as well.

Keeping Things Short and Sweet: If you've already taken the Business Writing part of this specialization, you'll know that our overall teaching style is to keep things short and sweet. Graphic design lends itself beautifully to this approach in that building a project up, from the blank canvas, is best done incrementally and with intention. The lessons here will be short and the learning linear.

Quizzes vs. Exercises: Graphic design is mostly a hands-on, subjectively assessed endeavor. For this reason, you'll find only a few quizzes in this course. Most of your work will be aimed at using course principals in your own compositions and sharing the results with the class discussion group. Please be honest, respectful, and constructive in critiquing the work of others and take criticism of your *own* work as an opportunity to move ahead. As it turns out, this is *exactly* how graphic design works in the real world.

Course Resources: I'll be sharing a few resources with you that I think you may find helpful. My articles are based on helping students at CU Boulder become better designers, and my lists are based on personal work experience.

As we move into the part of this course in which we start using basic design "tricks," you'll see that a fictional ad for Clarity Guitars (starring my colleague, Quentin McAndrew!) is employed as a working model. You can find all of the pieces for the ad in the course resources directory. (If you'd like, feel free to take an "old art school' approach to learning, and copy the ads exactly, as best you can, as a way to get more comfortable with composition. This is a great way to build a foundation for discovering your own style later.)

Dummy Text: For designers, the look of text on the page is extremely important. But, because we often start projects before clients have supplied the finished copy, we use "dummy text" as a placeholder. Because using made-up English would be distracting, Latin fits the bill perfectly. I've included some Latin text in the course resources folder, but you can find it easily online by searching "Greeking."

Designing is Fun: When you're onto a good idea, time stops and you forget about lunch. I know this sounds silly, but it's true. If a project feels as if it's fighting you and you're not having fun, it's very likely you're chasing a flawed solution. Take a break, start from scratch, and see what develops. In my experience, doing your best work is frictionless (but never effortless – there's a huge difference). See if you don't agree.

Ready to make your world a more beautiful place? Let's start designing!

Dave