

# Semester Reflection for ENGL 4618

## Document Design

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To: Dr. Lane  
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A quick reflection on the assumptions and outcomes that I had throughout each of this class' assigned units. A personal tone, but still informative of my experience.

### *Definition of Design*

On Assignment 1, you asked us to implement our own definition of design. Back then, I said that I thought it "*referred to an object's purposeful composition.*" I went on to describe a design's goals as having the specific characteristics of allurement, effectiveness and enticingness, which are claims that I still believe in today. For the most part.

Alluring is good, as it's exactly what I would use to describe the one-age résumé examples I looked at, and enticing is a great term to describe the classic rock billboards off Sunset in my design glossary.

But, I think labeling *effectiveness* as a part of design was kind of a cop out, as I've learned it to be such an ambiguous description. Through the London 2012 Summer Olympics case study, I saw exactly how a design could be effective to the marketing team, brand creators, and designers, yet fall so flat with its target audience. While researching the logo, it was a constant back and forth between some articles interviewing members of Wolff Olins, (the design firm behind it) where they would be citing their reasonings and outlining their goals. It all sounded so informed that they had to be right. But, after reading all of the backlash, from both respected critics and consumers, it proved to me that

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effectiveness isn't really a term you can harp on as a designer. It's more nuanced than that.

## ***Unit 2 & the Future***

While Unit 2's major and minor assignments are closely related in the tasks needed to complete them, the skills each assignment required were vastly different.

The minor assignment was much closer to that of what we had been working on in Unit 1, and I felt pretty comfortable completing it. It was very typical of my academic experience so far in undergrad, in the fact that I did quite a bit of reading about the Olympic brand, I took some notes, and then I compiled all the information into an essay like format— a normal day for me. The biggest difference in this assignment, and what I can take away for the future, is in two areas. One is the obvious act of designing a document in InDesign, as this was only the second time I had done it (the first being the design glossary). I experimented a lot more with colors, typography and shapes in that document, so if I'm ever required to make a really impressive looking, professional document again, I've got it. Yet, oddly enough, I also gained a lot of experience working with older documents. It seems antithetical to a modern Document Design class, but researching and trying to find the guide books for the 1976 Montreal Olympics, and looking at the (albeit scanned) print guidebooks from those days was super cool. It was also harder to dig for than any manuscripts I've needed in a literature or philosophy class so far.

As for the Unit's major assignment, I gained a lot of experiencing in working with partners in an online only format. I'm always online (most of my friends live in the Pacific Northwest even) so communicating and working exclusively remote wasn't something I expected to be so challenging. Deciding which platform everyone was comfortable communicating with (they didn't use Slack, I didn't use Facebook, they preferred to write in Google Docs simultaneously, I liked emailing attachments separately) and agreeing upon one we could work in was tough. Also, time differences were weird! I had experience this before, whether it be now with friends a few hours behind, or last year

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when I lived in England several hours ahead. But I didn't expect to face this problem with people in the city. Yet, when you're remote, and you have jobs and other responsibilities, you fit in work when best. A time that is late at night works for me, whereas early in the morning is good for others. So while I didn't particularly do well on the City Year brand guide in my opinion, just the action of completing it helped me learn a lot of workplace skills that will be helpful as a future lawyer in 2019, as the occupation leans much more heavily into the remote market.

## ***Internet Safety in Memphis***

Via the engagement project, I introduced myself to an interesting task unknowingly. I talked about this previously a bit in my quick introduction to the material of Unit 3, but I truly started this project with a specific, narrow understanding of the issue, and then sought to broaden it out in regard to whole community. I knew of an instance or two of Memphians being victims of Phishing attacks, and I knew of plenty of people that are harassed by Robocalls every day. So I figured I could find a way to make this a campaign directly targeted at the entirety of the local community, and it would have an actually good impact because nothing like it had been created for the community before. Every year we see traffic safety campaigns like *Click it or Ticket*, or just consumer safety campaigns about warranties and recalls, yet nothing about internet safety.

So, with those true intentions established, it was very quick for me to explicate on my prejudgments about Memphis as a tech city. I had always assumed since we had no large STEM companies to work for, and only a small number of STEM academy charter schools, we were behind in tech literacy. And, after looking at the analytics for Robocall victims and targeted communities, as well as the average age of a Memphian, it seemed like I was right. Which, isn't really the best lesson to be fair. A great lesson would be, "*oh, I assumed X and after researching and finding out about Y, I now know it is Z.*" But, I think it is fair to say that *by committing the time to research the assumptions*, and to back them up inside of the engagement guide, I acted in much better faith than many

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other writers might usually do on topics such as this. And in the end, I'm more pleased with the final product, because I feel like I really do understand its target audience.

### ***Articulating my Time in Doc Design to an Outsider***

In the most sincere way possible, I would tell anyone about to take this class that it's probably not what they are expecting, because it surely wasn't what I was. As one of the final classes required for my concentration, I assumed it would be much like the previous ones. Technical Writing and Persuasive Writing with Dr. Duffy were both classes that required the formal and assumed skills you would expect of an English degree. Heavy writing capabilities, such as complex narratives and hard copy edits, were of the many things I worked on that were not too far off from what I expected. So, when I saw *Document Design* was next, I don't know why, but I thought I would be working with professional, white-collar manuscripts like contracts, briefs, and such.

Which we have to a certain extent. We've created memos and briefs, each with professional tones, and I'm sure those will help me in an office environment in the future. But, I'd have to warn someone about the creative aspects of design they would be working with, and the technological skills they would be asked to hone in on.

I've never been a creative person, (I enjoy showing my niece how to draw birds by creating long and narrow *m's*), so working with Illustrator was extremely difficult for me, just as thinking of what to create in InDesign was sometimes. Despite that difficulty, I do believe it was a challenge that pushed me, and that maybe I can be more creative in the future because of it. Probably not in a design or artistic capacity, but maybe in my word choice in writing short essays and pieces! Working with the programs themselves though, learning the shortcuts, toolbars and unique features, was a blast. Every time I get to work in the Adobe Suite, whether it be Aftereffects or Photoshop, I have fun and I feel like I'm learning a skill that could be useful in numerous unpredictable circumstances of the future. I'd recommend them the class solely on that point.