## LAB OPM

**The Lab at OPM**
Theodore Roosevelt Building
1900 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20415-1000
lab.opm.gov | @LabOPM

# Visual Communication for Everyone

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Participants will leave this course able to recognize fundamental visual design principles and use them to create work that visually aligns with their intentions. This will result in better collaborations with designers and improve the visual communications they produce every day.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Recognize fundamental design principles
- Immediately improve your visual communications
- Effectively connect with people
- Improve your collaboration with designers
- Tools & resources for further practice

### STRUCTURE OF THE CLASS

Total class time: 7 hrs.

| exercises | group discussions | content delivery | lunch + breaks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 hr. 25 min. | 1 hr. 55 min. | 2 hr. 20 min. | 1 hr. 20 min. |

**Tues. Dec. 11, 2018**
8:30am–4pm

**Instructors:**
Tim Vienckowski
Corinne Vizzaccero

**Location:**
Southern Maryland Higher Education Center (SMHEC)
Building I, Room 123
44219 Airport Road
California, MD 20619

### BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

We ask that participants bring to this class **an example of a visual design** that affected them. This could be in any medium: magazine page, screen-grab, logo, a photo of an ad you saw on the Metro. With it, we will practice our new vocabulary and go beyond opinion to critique.

We also ask that you **bring your own laptop**, loaded with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

# LAB OPM

→ **Visual Communication
for Everyone**
December 11, 2018

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**AGENDA**

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **E** Exercise | | |
| **D** Group discussion | | |
| **L** Lecture | | |

**9–9:40 am** — **Introduction**

- **L** Intros
- **D** Two Menus
- **L** Visual Design overview

**9:40–10:20am** — **Creating and Communicating Meaning**

- **E** Three Squares: Abstract
- **E** Three Squares: Color, Image, Text

**10:20am–12:20pm** — **Visual Design Principles**

- **L** Color, Image, and Typography

10 min. break

- **D** Hierarchy
- **E** Cake in the Break Room: Analogue
- **L** Elements of layout

**12:20–1:20pm** — **Lunch Break**

**1:20–2pm** — **Show & Tell**

- **D** Design critique

**2–3:40pm** — **Burn Your Defaults**

- **L** Document Dissection
- **E** Cake in the Break Room: Digital

10 min. break

- **D** Cake in the Break Room: Feedback

**3:40–4pm** — **D** **Wrap-up**

**OVERVIEW OF THIS MODULE**

**Everyone is a designer like everyone is a writer. Many people learn about the essentials of effective written communication—grammar, punctuation, style—in school. Although people create visual communication every day, most haven't been formally taught about *visual* grammar: the underlying principles that affect perceived value and user experience.**

We will provide a broad overview of visual design—its history, contemporary context, and the tools and processes that professional designers use. Through a mix of lecture and hands-on activities, we will identify principles like composition, hierarchy, color, legibility, and see how these build upon each other to express an idea.

**WHY 'VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR EVERYONE?'**

1. Even if "designer" isn't in your job title, your responsibilities might still include creating presentations, blog posts, email newsletters, or forms. We consider these all to be Visual Communications, and all can be improved with an understanding of fundamental Visual Design principles.

2. We understand that any of these principles could merit its own in-depth course. In a compressed timeframe, we will blend elements of both design history and technical training, to spur future practice and enable informed discussion.

3. For every design concept we discuss, we will point back to its practical application in everyday work.

4. We know that there are extra constraints to working in government; most people do not have access to professional design applications, and can't just buy or download new fonts onto their computers. That's where "For Everyone" comes into play. We will consider those constraints in our visual design instruction, knowing that every piece of technology is just a tool to help shape and communicate your thoughts.

## INSTRUCTORS

### Tim Vienckowski

Tim is a visual designer based in New York who specializes in distilling complex ideas into clear, engaging infographics. He brings to The Lab more than 10 years of experience as an editorial designer and art director at various magazines, he has brought a playful visual dimension to a multitude of subjects for publications such as *Hemispheres*, *Bloomberg Markets*, *Billboard*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Dwell*.
*timothy.vienckowski@opm.gov / 202-815-3896*

### Corinne Vizzacchero

Corinne is a visual designer with 20 years' experience and works on the Veterans Experience team based in New York City. Corinne studied art history and visual arts at Fordham University as an undergraduate, and has a master's in fine arts in graphic design from Yale University. Corinne has worked as an independent consultant and in-house designer for both large corporations such as Morgan Stanley and small studios like O.R.G. She also taught Introduction to Graphic Design at Fordham University. Corinne believes in the power of human-centered design tools and frameworks to create positive social impact, and her process is guided by curiosity, empathy, and optimism.
*corinne.vizzacchero@opm.gov / 202-748-2496*

# Glossary

### FORM

**Composition**
The arrangement of forms on a surface.

**Positive/ Negative Space**
Positive space refers to the area occupied by forms in a composition (i.e. text, graphics, imagery). Negative space refers to the empty area surrounding them. Often referred to as "white space" or "breathing room"

**Gestalt Principles**
Theories of visual perception related to the ways in which humans, when looking at a group of objects, perceive a whole before the individual parts. These theories form the basis of many established visual design rules.

### COLOR

**Palette**
A defined set of colors.

**Hue**
The location of a color along the spectrum.

**Saturation**
The richness of a color. 100% saturation indicates the full expression of a color. 0% appears grey (or white, or black).

**Value**
The lightness or darkness of a color. A color with white added is a *tint* of that color. A color with black added is a *shade* of that color.

**Opacity**
The degree to which an object obscures what is behind it. Opposite of transparency. Something with 70% opacity is 30% transparent.

**Contrast**
The degree to which one color is different from another in value. Values too similar lack contrast and are difficult to distinguish from each other.

**CMYK**
Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Black. Refers to the standard set of 4 inks used to reproduce color in print.

**RGB**
Red, Green, and Blue. Refers to the 3 colors that combine to reproduce color on a digital screen.

### IMAGE

**DPI**
Dots Per Inch. Refers to the *resolution* of an image. 300 DPI is the standard for printing "hi-res" as opposed to "lo-res." If a photo is printing 1 inch square, it should measure 300 pixels on each side, or risk *pixelation,* in which the perception of individual pixels diminishes legibility.

**Vector**
A digital format in which an image is rendered by mathematical curves instead of by square pixels. This makes an image infinitely scalable with no risk of pixelation.

### TYPE

**Glyph**
An individual character or symbol.

**Typeface**
A set of glyphs of a single design.

**Font**
A digital file used to display a typeface.

**Serif**
The little feet. Help ground text along a horizontal line, especially in large bodies of text. Also, a typeface with serifs.

**Sans-serif**
A typeface without serifs. Became popular in the 20th century, seen as more modern.

# Glossary

**Slab-serif**
A serif typeface with chunky, squared-off serifs.

**Display typeface**
Most legible at large sizes.

**Novelty typeface**
A typeface designed with an eccentric or highly specific connotation, usually to convey levity.

**Point**
The measure of type size. There are 72 points in an inch.

**Leading**
The space between lines of text.

**Tracking**
The overall spacing between letters in a body of text.

**Kerning**
The spacing between two individual characters.

**Baseline**
The imaginary line upon which a line of text rests.

**X-height**
The distance from the baseline to the tops of the lowercase letters.

**Cap-height**
The distance from the baseline to the top of the uppercase letters.

**Ascender**
Part of a lowercase letter that reaches above the x-height.

**Descender**
Part of a lowercase letter that dips below the baseline.

**Widow**
The last line of a paragraph that consists of one word or is very short. It decreases legibility by creating a distracting pool of white space.

**Orphan**
A single word or short line of text at the end of a paragraph which sits at the top of a column, separate from the rest of the paragraph.

**Left-aligned**
In which a paragraph of text is aligned along its left edge.

**Right-aligned**
In which a paragraph of text is aligned along its right edge.

**Justified**
In which the words of a paragraph of text are shifted along the baseline to fill the full width of the column.

**"Rivers of White Space"**
In paragraphs of justified text, especially in narrow columns, the shifting of words along the baseline sometimes creates distracting channels of space between words across multiple lines.

**Distortion**
Digitally manipulating text to be wider, narrower, slanted, or otherwise different in shape than how the typeface was originally designed. Creates unevenness, decreases legibility.

**LAYOUT**

**Alignment**
Arrangement of elements along a straight line.

**Line-length**
The horizontal length of a line of text. The longer it is, the harder it is to read.

**Margin**
A defined space around the inner edge of a surface.

**Column**
A vertical block of content.

**Gutter**
Space between columns.

**Grid**
A repeating, underlying structure comprising intersecting vertical and horizontal lines

**Modular**
Made up of smaller parts that can be rearranged while maintaining a cohesive quality.

# Tools & Resources

### COLOR

**color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel**
Adobe Color CC online color theme designer
and explorer.

**webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker**
Color Contrast Checker

**usecontrast.com**
Contrast app, if you use a mac.

**color-blindness.com/color-name-hue**
Tool for colorblind designers: you input
numerical color values, it outputs color name

### IMAGES / DATA VISUALIZATION

**unsplash.com**
Free, mostly high quality stock photos for web
mockups.

**flickr.com/creativecommons**
Public domain content for different uses,
including from the Library of Congress

**thenounproject.com**
The Noun Project: "Icons for Everything."
Free if you give credit. Pay nominal fee for
unlimited access.

**datavizproject.com**
Taxonomy of different types of data
visualization, what they depict, how the data
should be formatted, real-world examples

**informationisbeautiful.net**
Information is Beautiful by David McCandless

**duarte.com/diagrammer**
Diagrammer: Download pre-created diagrams
for PowerPoint. From Duarte Design.

### TYPE

**thinkingwithtype.com**
Guide to anatomy and application of
typography by Ellen Lupton. There's a printed
book, too.

**fontsinuse.com**
Searchable examples of typefaces spotted
"in the wild"

**google.com/fonts**
Google Fonts:  Large, well-presented library,
mostly free

**pbs.org/independentlens/helvetica/film.html**
Helvetica, the documentary

**99percentinvisible.org/episode/
interrobang**
Podcast episode about the noble "‽" symbol

**practicaltypography.com**
Butterick's Practical Typography

**chengyinliu.com/whatfont.html**
Chrome plugin to identify web fonts

### INSPIRATION, ETC.

**itsnicethat.com**
UK-based blog showcasing contemporary
graphic design, illustration, art and
photography

# Tools & Resources

**designsystem.digital.gov**
U.S. Web Design System: A design system for the federal government

**99percentinvisible.org**
99 Percent Invisible podcast

**halloffemmes.com**
Hall of Femmes aims to highlight the work of women in art direction and design

**ted.com/talks/alice_rawsthorn_pirates_
nurses_and_other_rebel_designers**
Alice Rawsthorn's TED Talk

**accessibility.digital.gov**
Accessibility for Teams: a 'quick-start' guide for embedding accessibility and inclusive design practices into your team's workflow from the Accessibility Guild and Digital.gov in GSA's Technology Transformation Services

**medium.com/microsoft-design/
inclusive-design-principles-77f7c5f639da**
Microsoft's Inclusive Design principles

**ndm.si.edu**
National Design Museum, the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design.

## BOOKS

*Design for Non-Designers* (4th Edition), Robin Williams

*The Visual Display of Quantitative Information,* Edward Tufte

*Slideology*, Nancy Duarte

*Graphic Design: The New Basics*, Ellen Lupton

*Good Charts*, Scott Berinato

*Change by Design*, Tim Brown

*The Best American Infographics*, Edited by Gareth Cook (2014, 2015, 2016 editions)

*The Design of Everyday Things*, Don Norman

*Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out How Type Works*; Spiekermann, Ginger

*The Little Know-It-All: Common Sense for Designers*; Bilz, Mischler, Klanten

*Helvetica and the New York City Subway System*; Shaw

*Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History*; Kinross

*Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design*, by Steven Heller, Karen Pomeroy

*Understanding Comics*, by Scott McCloud

*Interaction of Color*, by Josef Albers

*Ways of Seeing*; Berger

*Graphic Design History*; Drucker, McVarish

*Graphic Design, Referenced: A Visual Guide to the Language, Applications, and History of Graphic Design*; Gomez-Palacio, Vit

**Based at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the Lab at OPM is a practice and a space that builds a human-centered design capacity for innovation across the federal workforce. The Lab brings together a unique combination of private sector fellows, public servants, and students to design for the public sector.**

## ABOUT THE LAB'S DESIGN EDUCATION MODULES

Fulfilling its mission to bring human-centered design to the U.S. government at scale, The Lab at OPM's educational portfolio is constantly expanding with new offerings. Our Design Education Modules are daylong, topic-specific sessions that bring key aspects of design and design methods to a broad audience. With an emphasis on applicability, our Modules cover a broad range of topics associated with problem-solving, creative thinking, and communication.

## EXAMPLES OF HOW WE'RE CREATING CHANGE

**A design-led approach has the potential to transform government.**

- **Facilitating learning across the government** with a printed guide to the human-centered design discovery phase. Produced first for the Veterans Experience Office, we then repurposed the guide to train a broader interagency audience.

- **Increasing our educational scope** with Spring and Summer Design School and Design Modules, which expand how we teach design.

- **Recruiting the best talent** to federal service by transforming USAJOBS from a job board into a career site using feedback from actual users.

**Human-centered design** is a creative and strategic approach to solving challenging problems. Our method puts people at the center of our process, taking into account their complex behaviors, mental models and needs. This allows us to quickly generate ideas and test new prototypes that meet the true needs of the people with whom we're designing.