

Typography and Letterforms

Winter 2010 UCLA Design Media Arts

DESMA 25

GAIL SWANLUND and MATTIA

CASALEGNO.

tuesdays and thursdays 2pm 4.50pm

Consider the letterform.

The shape of the letter does not really resemble the sound we associate with it; it is a mark with which we've entered into an agreement with regard to what it represents. Letters are ordered and strung together into words, words into phrases, and sentences, paragraphs .. to communicate messages and meaning.

We take in and routinely see/read/process the typographic landscape untold times each day rarely pausing - or even needing - to reflect on this activity. Typography is meant to be read and looked at.

the project

1) design a book and 2) design a process book that chronicles your typographic explorations designing the other book over the term.

COURSE AIMS

This course is an introduction to typography and effective typographic expression. The course consists of discussions and a step-by-step project involving a process of increasing complexities. We'll examine the micro and macro of typographic practice, from the letterform and what defines its distinct character, to exploring the (inter)relational considerations of working with and manipulating typography. In addition to introducing you to working with typography, a goal of this course is to develop a critical appreciation for how typography works. We'll frequently discuss how/why manipulating the form in deliberate ways, affects the esthetics, reading (legibility) and the "read" (intent, language and meaning). Beyond setting type and creating layouts, the discipline and practice of typography is an interrelated exploration of language and ideas and communicating and form. The course will include several Indesign practicals. By the end of the course, you should be able to work with the software and have gained basic knowledge about working with typography, setting up a grid, column settings and intelligent visual editing. This is a studio and critical discussion course about a living and changing practice. Regard yourself and your work for this class seriously and as one component of a life-long field of study.

CONTENT

We have a selection of short stories and essays from which to choose the content to use for the term.

CLASS MECHANICS

The course is comprised of 8 assignments, each one building on the previous assignment, from simple to more and more complex. You will create 10 designs for each assignment. Tuesdays are reserved for class reviews, practical software demonstrations and information on typography. There will be an additional project along the way and a bookbinding demonstration.

PRESENTATION

Select 5 of 10 designs and hang them. Print out on tabloid-sized paper (landscape), pin-up pages with 1 inch between each sheet. Work must be in presentation mode (hairline rule around “live area,” output using the Indesign print menu “Page Information” checked, name your file with your name and assignment #). All sketches should be saved as digital files and printouts kept and filed showing the process (these designs will make up the bulk of the content for process book).

FINAL PROJECT

Present 1) a book designed specifically for the text you’ve selected and 2) a process book that includes a selection of all the work over the term, compiled and hand-bound.

RESOURCES

**** Thinking with Type by Ellen Lupton (also online at <http://www.thinkingwithtype.com>)

* Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out How Type Works by Erik Spiekermann

* Designing with Type: An Essential Guide to Typography by James Craig

Elements of Typographic Style by Robert Bringhurst

Type & Typography by Phil Baines and Andrew Haslam

**** just go get this book and read it. * books that are very helpful for this course.

general class rules

ATTENDANCE

Class will start at 2pm sharp. Please hang your work before class begins. On all-class critique days, work that isn't pinned up by the time we begin the discussion will not be critiqued (and you'll miss the benefit of your colleagues' comments and suggestions) plus, you will be marked absent. Repetitive lateness will lower final grade by half a grade each time. Each unexcused absence lowers the grade by one half grade. Excuses for absences must be received by email prior to the class meeting. If you are experiencing something that may be contagious, email us and please stay home.

Three unexcused absences results in a FAIL for the course.

GRADING

Your work in this class will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- + in-CLASS pArtiCipAtion 25% of grade
- + prESentAtion (quality of craft, skills, "objectness") 25% of grade
- + ExpLorAtion 25% of grade
- + rESoLUtion of projECtS 25% of grade

The final grade will be determined by averaging the grades with poor attendance, tardiness and unhung working as negative forces on that grade. Extra credit opportunities are available during the term. **OTHER THINGS**

Please remember to silence your cellphone.

Kindly refrain from sending and receiving email during discussions.

Please no food, drinks are OK.

The success of this class — and the community of which you're a member — relies on discussion and participation in critiques. Speaking about your work and your fellow designers' work, will develop critical and crucial skills to analyze, judge and further your own work. This conversation and critical discourse are essential to the practice. If you are wildly shy, please see the TA or the instructor to discuss.

If anything is unclear or the course isn't going well for you, please communicate this as soon as possible.

ENJOY THE PROCESS.