

MICA Art History  
AH 341.01 Spring 2022

# Graphic Design History

## Course Description

3 credits. Explores the long and rich history of human communication with visual symbols. Posters, books, advertisements, typefaces, and useful objects have served the interests of commerce, political ideologies, religious beliefs, and artistic revolutions. This course examines both the dominant cultural ideas embodied by Graphic Design, as well as the counter-narratives it generates to express diverse cultural identities. Students in this course will question the meaning and form of graphic artifacts.

## Professor

Brockett Horne | [bhorne@mica.edu](mailto:bhorne@mica.edu)  
773 354-5095

## WeChat

Office hours Tuesdays before 12pm, Thursdays after 3pm or [schedule a meeting](#)

## Graduate Teaching Interns

Eric Ng | [eng01@mica.edu](mailto:eng01@mica.edu)  
Drishti Khokhar | [dkhokhar@mica.edu](mailto:dkhokhar@mica.edu)

## Learning Outcomes

- Explain how communication tools, processes, and theories have evolved through history.
- Examine the relationships between art and design history.
- Identify major movements and themes in design history.
- Demonstrate basic research and analysis procedures and skills: using databases, asking questions, reading primary texts.
- Examine the differences among users of design in local and global contexts over time.

## Required Texts

- All readings will be posted on [canvas, the course website](#).

## Suggested Texts

- Should it help you to have a comprehensive textbook, consider:  
Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish, *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide*. Pearson, 2013.  
or  
Ruben Pater, *The Politics of Design*. Counter-Print, 2016. Also see the website: [thepoliticsofdesign.com](http://thepoliticsofdesign.com)

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and course content

I believe that the critical study of history can disrupt the tradition of white supremacy in creative fields. I invite your voices to examine ways that the profession of design is both a product and a (re)producer of white supremacy, patriarchy, ableism, and elitism. Recognizing that no person has the right to determine what design should be recorded as part of history, I hope to challenge the notion of a canon by providing plural methods for interpreting designed objects and expressing their values.

## COURSE STRUCTURE:

**Lecture: synchronous, students choose to meet in person or remotely**

**2:45–3:45pm Tuesdays for all 80 students together**

[< zoom link >](#)

Usually, Brockett will present from 2:45–3:10, we will have a stretch break, and then an invited guest will present from 3:15–3:45pm. If you elect to attend remotely, be sure to complete the “challenge question” (see below). In addition, each student must attend a weekly synchronous small group meeting.

## Small Group Meetings: synchronous, some groups meet in person and others remotely

Small group meetings (8–10 students in each). Students must attend synchronously.

group A: 12–12:40pm (Drishti) in Brown 206

group B: 12–12:40pm ([Eric](#)) using zoom

group C: 12–12:40pm ([Brockett](#)) using zoom

group D: 12:50–1:30pm (Drishti) in Brown 206

group E: 12:50–1:30pm ([Eric](#)) using zoom

group F: 12:50–1:30pm ([Brockett](#)) using zoom

group G: 1:40–2:20pm (Drishti) in Brown 206

group H: 1:40–2:20pm ([Eric](#)) using zoom

group I: 1:40–2:20pm (Brockett) in Brown 320

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Challenge Question / Attendance

To demonstrate attendance at each lecture, engage in a “challenge question,” a quick creative exercise in response to the lecture (ex: “draw a cubist cube!” or “compare two images”). Challenge questions are used to track attendance, which is mandatory. Complete the challenge question 48 hours after class or the canvas module will close and you won’t be able to submit. According to MICA’s attendance policy, students who have the equivalent of more than three absences will fail the course.

However...It’s a pandemic! It is expected that we will experience some turbulence this semester. Please be gentle with yourself and advocate for what you need. If you become ill or have circumstances in which you must miss many classes in a row or step away from MICA for a bit, please contact the Student Development Specialist for support and to set a plan: [lcracknell@mica.edu](mailto:lcracknell@mica.edu). A great rule of thumb is to communicate your needs \*before the deadline\* or before class is set to begin rather than afterward.

## **Weekly Readings and Reading Reports**

Our weekly readings offer a range of types of writing, including theories authored by designers, historical analyses, and criticism from contemporary writers. This range of genres encourages you to imagine diverse ways of thinking and writing about history. Readings are brutally excerpted with respect to your workload, but please see suggested additional readings posted on canvas. To demonstrate comprehension of the readings, complete the reading report each week on canvas.

## **Object Interrogations**

Each week, students will contribute to a collaborative google slides document interrogating an object relevant to the theme. This is collaborative research! Your contributions will be discussed in small group meetings. Post your response by 8am Tuesday mornings. [View a sample object interrogation here.](#)

## **Final Project**

In the last month of the course, students will work on a research project about an item of their choice. Complete a slide deck using the template, summarize it into a short essay, and design a visual way to present your ideas (such as a zine, illustration, book, poster, website, social media campaign, animation)

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Communication Systems**

- [Zoom for video conferencing](#)
- [Google docs](#) and [canvas](#) for course content
- Communicate with Brockett through email, text, [WeChat](#) or [schedule an appointment](#).

Regarding the myriad of ways we digitally communicate with one another, practice the utmost respect for classmates and your own intellectual development during designated course times. Please come to class present and engaged. For remote instruction, is easier for me to teach if your camera is on, particularly for small groups, but it is not required. In order to maintain our community, please match your zoom name to your preferred name on MICA's roster, or let me know if there is a conflict.

### **Academic Integrity during a Pandemic**

All students must agree to the following code of conduct:

1. By uploading my project to our course website I affirm the originality and integrity of my work.
2. I will not share my private solutions to online assignments with others.
3. I will not engage in activities that will dishonestly improve my results or hurt the results of others.

Any illegal, unethical, politically inappropriate, offensive verbal / non verbal behaviors (e.g., any discrimination on the basis of racial / ethnic / cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, etc.), sexual harassment are completely unacceptable.

### **Grading**

30% Attendance / Challenge Questions: 2 points each for 15 weeks

20% Object Interrogations: 2 points each for 10 weeks

18% final research project due May 4

15% small group attendance: 1 point each for 15 weeks

12% reading reports: 1 point for each week

5% extra credit option for scheduling a [research consultation with Decker Library staff](#) and/or meeting with [the Writing Studio staff](#) for support on your course assignments.

### **Excused Absences**

In the event that you must miss a small group meeting, please email \*before your meeting is scheduled to begin\* so that you can be excused. If you email after, we cannot excuse you or provide support to catch up.

### **Snow Days or Unexpected Cancellations**

In the event that MICA is closed for any reason, all work for this course is due on the class website at the regularly scheduled time.

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## **Course Schedule**

**Jan 18 | remote session 12–2pm**

### **Introduction | Othering the Alphabet**

*Writing systems are the backbone of Graphic Design History, but perhaps the alphabet is overemphasized among other structures.*

Course overview;  
Syllabus review and demonstrate assignments.

Object Interrogation sample: *quipus*, 16th century  
“Othering the Alphabet” lecture

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### **Jan 25 | Printing and Power**

*Early printing technologies allowed for the distribution of diverse ideas to broader audiences, but mimicked the visual styles of hand-written documents created by those in power.*

### **Guest speaker Caspar Lam on Printing in China**

Object Interrogation: *Jikji*, 1377

#### **REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Ruben Pater, “The Story of Broken Script,” *Politics of Design*, p.38–41.
- A 16th Century Book of Trades excerpt.
- Hara, Kenya, “On Letters,” *White*, 2010.

#### **Optional readings:**

- Newman, Sophia, “The Buddhist History of Moveable Type.” *Tricycle* 2019.
- Bradbury Thompson, “A Bible for This Age.” *The Art of Graphic Design*, 1988.

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### **Feb 1 | Decoration and Cultural Appropriation**

*Theories of decoration in 19th century Europe and America—particularly in the Arts and Crafts movement—equated good taste with morality.*

### Guest speaker: Dare Turner on Symbolism in Lakota Beadwork

Object Interrogation: William Morris, *Strawberry Thief* wallpaper, 1883

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Pater, "The Cost of Colour," and "Some Cultures Are Bigger than Others," *Politics of Design* p70–77 and p123.
- (visual essay) Jones, Owen, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856, (archive.org) and General Principles.  
< note that Decker Library has an original edition in Special Collections for next time you are on campus >
- Loos, Adolph, "Ornament and Crime" 1910 excerpt.
- Bantjes, Marian, "The Politics of Wonder & Ornament" excerpt from *I Wonder*, 2010.

#### Optional readings:

- Weil, Thomas, *New Grammar of Ornament* excerpt
  - National Museum of Scotland, Owen Jones' Grammar of Ornament animation.
  - Jones, Owen, "On the True and the False," lecture excerpts, 1863.
  - Morris, William, "Art and Socialism" lecture for the Secular Society of Leicester, 1884. (morrisociety.org).
  - Morris, William, "Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," from *The Graphic Design Reader* edited by Teal Triggs
  - Pevsner, Nikolaus, "Theories of Art from Morris to Gropius," in *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 2006.
  - Morris, William, "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing," 1881 (morrisociety.org)
  - Gonzales Crisp, Denise, "Toward a definition of the Decorational," 2003.
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## Feb 8 | Reclaiming Nature

*Fuelled by ideas about natural evolution at the turn of the century, European and American design expressed a fascination with organic forms and human's control of nature.*

Object Interrogation: Peter Behrens, *The Kiss*, 1898

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Pater, "The Tyranny of Normalcy," *Politics of Design* p182.
- (visual essay) Ernst Haeckel, Art Forms in Nature / Kunst-Formen der Natur, 1899 (archive.org).

#### Optional readings:

- Benjamin, Walter, "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books," Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, edited by Marcus and Michael W Jennings Bullock, 1996.
  - Silverman, Debora L. "Art Nouveau. Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism" from *West 86th*.
  - Keyser, Barbara, "Ornament as Idea: Indirect Imitation of Nature in the Design Reform Movement," *Journal of Design History*, 1998.
  - Bing, Siegfried, "Where Are We Going," 1898.
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## Feb 15 | Cubism and the Harlem Renaissance

*High-concept movements in art and literature informed Graphic Design in the early 20th century, particularly in the cultural centers of Paris and New York.*

### Guest speaker: Jon Key on Queer Literature in the Harlem Renaissance

Object Interrogation: Winold Reiss, cover of *Survey Graphic*, 1925

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Pater, "[Ethnic Typography](#)" *Politics of Design* p42–45.
- Goesser, Caroline, [Harlem Renaissance Print Culture](#), 2007).
- Edelstein, Teri, "[The Underground's Alchemist of the Modern](#)" (excerpt) from McKnight Kauffer: *The Artist in Advertising* excerpt, 2020.

#### Optional Readings

- Thurman, Wallace, [FIRE! Manifesto](#), 1926.
  - Alcalá, Antonio, "[Looking Harlem in the Eye](#)" [designobserver.com](#), 2017
  - Meraji, Shereen Marisol, Demby, Gene, and Qureshi, Bilal. "[The Birth Of A 'New Negro'](#)." Produced by NPR, Code Switch. December 25, 2019. Podcast, MP3 Audio, 37:19.
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### Feb 22 | Dadas and Futurisms

*Design movements that emerged after World War I expressed modernism in satirical and radical ways.*

#### Main speaker: Ellen Lupton

Object Interrogation: Fortunado Depero, Vanity Fair cover), 1931

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Marinetti, F. T., "[Futurist Manifesto](#)," 1909.
- Ball, Hugo, "[Dada Manifesto](#)," 1916.
- Pendleton, Adam, "[Black Dada Manifesto](#)" with a [transcription here](#), 2013.
- Womack, Ytasha L., "[The Divine Feminine in Space](#)," from *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci Fi and Fantasy Culture*, 2013.

#### Optional Readings:

- listen to an [Afrofuturist playlist like this one](#).
  - Syms, Martine, [Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto](#), 2013
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### March 1 | Constructivist Revolution

*Between WWI and II, Soviet designers envisioned a new society without hierarchy through bold, dynamic, and geometric graphic design.*

#### Main speaker: Ellen Lupton

Object Interrogation: Stenberg brothers, Symphony for a Great City poster, 1928

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Pater, "[Words Divide, Pictures Unite](#)" p130–131 and "[Reading Images](#)" p145–146.
- Rodchenko, Alexander "[Manifesto of Constructivism](#)," 1922.
- El Lissitzky, "[Our Book](#)," 1926.

#### Optional readings:

- Heller, Steven, "[Five Graphic Design Ideas from the Russian Revolution](#)," [royalacademy.org](#), 2017.
- Rowel, Margit, "[Constructivist Book Design: Shaping the Proletarian Consciousness](#)," in *The Russian Avant Garde Book* MoMA exhibition catalog, 2002.

- The Futur's short [youtube video on Russian Constructivism](#).

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## **March 8 | Design with a Lens**

*Designers have adopted the language of film to create compelling and photorealistic communication expressions.*

NO REQUIRED READINGS, OBJECT INTERROGATIONS,  
FINAL PROJECT WILL BE DISCUSSED IN SMALL GROUPS

Optional Readings:

- Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo "[The Future of the Photographic Process](#)" and "[Typophoto](#)," 1925;
- Manovich, Lev "[Designing and Living Instagram Photography](#)," 2016
- Maasri, Zeina, "[The Print Culture of Film](#)" in *Tonight: Cinema in Lebanon 1929–1979*, 2015.

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## **March 12–19 | Mini Break**

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## **March 22 | Machines for Living**

*The Bauhaus, a failed German art school, brings a compelling case study about usefulness, beauty, and a new system for living.*

**Guest speaker: Ellen Lupton**

Object Interrogation: Herbert Bayer, *Lonely Metropolitan*, 1932

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Pater, "[Decapitating Language](#)," in *Politics of Design*, p46–47.
- Van Doesburg, Theo, "[Neo-Plastic Architecture](#)," 1924.
- Bayer, Herbert, "[Universal Type](#)," 1939.
- Perriand, C. "[Wood or Metal?](#)", *The Studio*, vol. 97, 1929. (or see the [transcription here](#))

Optional readings:

- Winton, Alexandra Griffith, [Overview of the Bauhaus](#), Met Museum feature, 2016
- [Original Bauhaus workbook](#)

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## **March 29 | Design for Utopia**

*This presentation examines ways that minimalism and simplicity have become associated with utopias.*

Object Interrogation: Kenya Hara, Tokyo 2020 Olympics logo (rejected)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Yanagi, Soetsu, "[The Beauty of Miscellaneous Things](#)," 1926.
- Hara, Kenya, "[MUJI: Nothing Yet Everything](#)," 2007).

Maeda, John, *The Laws of Simplicity* excerpts, 2006.

Optional Readings:

Aggie Toppins, "Good Nostalgia Bad Nostalgia," from Design and Culture journal, 2021.

Roy Sieber, "African Furniture between Tradition and Colonization," 2002

Castillo, Greg, Esther Choi, and Alison Clarke (eds), *Hippie Modernism: The Search for Utopia*, 2015.

Blauvelt, Andrew, *Designs for Different Futures*, 2019.

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## **April 5 | Steinmetz Designer Lecture Signature Event**

NO READINGS OR OBJECT INTERROGATION

NO SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

Optional reading:

To come, based on speaker

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## **April 12 | New Typographies**

*Typographic theorists have posited ideas about ideal ways to communicate with text—breaking from tradition, keeping the reader in mind, and employing technology.*

**Guest speaker: Aasawari Kulkarni on feminist typography**

Object Interrogation: Jan Tschichold's design system for Penguin Books, 1930s

REQUIRED READINGS:

Pater, "Modernist Men," *Politics of Design*, p50–53.

Tschichold, Jan, "The New Typography," 1928

Warde, Beatrice, "The Crystal Goblet," 1932

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## **April 19 | Postmodernisms**

*Problems with the concept of the universal in symbol design arose as European modernism was applied to the rise of corporate America. A disruptive mixture and contradiction of styles erupted in Graphic Design with the advent of the personal computer and desktop publishing.*

Object Interrogation: Emmett McBain album cover, 1958

REQUIRED READINGS:

Pater, "Logotypes and Archetypes" from *Politics of Design*, p134–144:

Venturi Robert, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, excerpt) 1972.

Wolfgang Weingart, "My Way to Typography," 2000.

Rand, Paul "Good Design is Good Will" (from Armstrong, *Readings from the Field*)



Optional Readings:

Hyland, Angus, *Symbol* (excerpt), 2011.

Bierut, Michael, "How Pentagram's Michael Bierut Picks a Typeface." (Fast Company)

Meggs, Phil, "The Crash of the NASA logo," from *Design Culture: An Anthology of Writing from the AIGA Journal of Graphic Design*, 1997

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## **April 26 | Final Project Discussions**

**Course evaluations**

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## **May 3 | Final Project Discussions**

**Course evaluations**

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## **MICA-WIDE ACADEMIC POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **Academic Disability Accommodations**

MICA makes reasonable academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All academic accommodations must be approved through the Learning Resource Center (LRC). Students requesting accommodation should schedule an appointment at the LRC (410-225-2416 or e-mail LRC@mica.edu), located in Bunting 110. It is the student's responsibility to make an accommodation request in a timely manner. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS): Students are responsible to follow health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Operations Plan and attend EHS training. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate for their major or class. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection are in place. Students are expected to abide by the MICA Social Contract for Students to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **Plagiarism**

Each discipline within the arts has specific and appropriate means for students to cite or acknowledge sources and the ideas and material of others used in their own work. Students have the responsibility to become familiar with such processes and to carefully follow their use in developing original work.

### *Policy*

MICA will not tolerate plagiarism, which is defined as claiming authorship of, or using someone else's ideas or work without proper acknowledgement. Without proper attribution, a student may NOT replicate another's work, paraphrase another's ideas, or appropriate images in a manner that violates the specific rules against plagiarism in the student's department. In addition, students may not submit the same work for credit in more than one course without the explicit approval of all of the instructors of the courses involved.

### *Consequences*

When an instructor has evidence that a student has plagiarized work submitted for course credit, the instructor will confront the student and impose penalties that may include failing the course. In the case of a serious violation or repeated infractions from the same student, the instructor will report the infractions to the department chair or program director. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the department chair or program director may then report the student to the appropriate dean or provost, who may choose to impose further penalties, including expulsion.

#### *Appeal Process*

Students who are penalized by an instructor or department for committing plagiarism have the right to appeal the charge and penalties that ensue. Within three weeks of institutional action, the student must submit a letter of appeal to the department chairperson or program director, or relevant dean or provost related to the course for which actions were taken. The academic officer will assign three members of the relevant department/division to serve on a review panel. The panel will meet with the student and the instructor of record and will review all relevant and available materials. The panel will determine whether or not to confirm the charge and penalties. The findings of the panel are final. The panel will notify the instructor, the chairperson, division, the student, and the Office of Academic Affairs of their findings and any recommendations for change in penalties.

#### **Title IX Notification**

Maryland Institute College of Art seeks to provide an educational environment based on mutual respect that is free from discrimination and harassment. There are multiple ways to report sexual harassment/misconduct/assault and reports are encouraged. Students requiring academic adjustments due to an incident involving sexual harassment or discrimination should contact Student Affairs at 410.225.2422 or Human Resources at 410.225.2363. Keeping with institutional commitments to equity and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, faculty and staff members are required to report disclosures of gender based discrimination made to them by students. However, nothing in this policy shall abridge academic freedom or MICA's educational mission. Prohibitions against discrimination and discriminatory harassment do not extend to actions, statements, or written materials that are relevant and appropriately related to course subject matter or academic discussion.

#### **Students with Extended Illness or Absence**

**\*\*This includes quarantine for Spring 2021.**

In the case of extended illness or other absences that may keep the student from attending a class for more than three meetings, undergraduate students must contact the Student Development Specialist in the Division of Student Affairs or have an official disability accommodation letter issued by the Learning Resource Center that specifically addresses class absences.

For students who have not been approved for academic disability accommodations, the Student Development Specialist will work with the student to determine the cause and appropriateness of the absences and subsequently notify instructors as necessary. Graduate students must contact the instructor, director, and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Students in professional studies programs must contact the Associate Dean for Open Studies. The appropriate administrator will facilitate a conversation with relevant faculty to determine whether the student can achieve satisfactory academic progress, which is ultimately at the sole discretion of the faculty member.