

GDES 222
CORE STUDIO II
M + W 2-5:20p
ONLINE

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(office hours by appointment)
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“Embark on a garden with a Vision
but never with a plan.”
—Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Selections*

Description

There is no right way to be a graphic designer. The key is to be open to any methods, forms, and processes that are appropriate to the content and which communicate effectively. That being said, there are so many ways to communicate. We have to be sensitive to our audiences and allow ourselves time to experiment and play to find the right solution.

We will use this course as a forum to experiment with various techniques and approaches, exploring effective communication, interpretation and translation, while critically questioning contemporary approaches to graphic design. The processes we will cover, include, but are not limited to: mark making, motion, cataloging, collecting, typography, the use of found objects, etc.

The ultimate goal of this course is to make and make and make in order to uncover a process for working and thinking that is unique to you—a process that is guided in equal parts by criticality, intuition, and joy.

Goals

1. To consider how methods of ideation and fabrication affect outcomes and meaning.
2. To exercise control and intentionality of form to generate meaning.
3. To identify and assess the effectiveness of expression, interpretation, and translation.
4. To employ research as a generative part of the design process.
5. To identify a practice and process that is inspiring and generative for you.

Assignments and Projects

In this course we will carry out a broad range of projects and exercises that build one on another and in sequence. The assignments require tangible, clearly defined outcomes, some large, some small, some with many parts. It is part of the culture of this course to deliver challenges incrementally and with some degree of surprise. Therefore, the details and topics of particular projects are not specified in this document. However, a general structure and key dates can be seen in the attached schedule.

The course takes very seriously its focus on design process. While final outcomes are important, the primary aim of the course is to demonstrate the importance of methods and processes that enrich your work and which lead to unexpected and exciting outcomes. This class is as much about play as it is about work.

Side Project

You will be responsible for establishing a “make-a-day” practice focused on exploring a particular “theme-and-variation” body of work. This daily, generative process is to be documented on your blog, created specifically for the course. We expect you to generate five unique contributions to this body of work per week.

Documentation

Each student will be required to create a blog specifically for this course. This will be used to display the ‘make-a-day’ process described above, your process work on various projects, and final works. I ask that you email me a link to this account by the end of the first week of class.

This blog can be hosted on a variety of platforms—I recommend using tumblr or are.na, but you could also use something like Instagram or Twitter. Keep in mind that you’ll be posting a variety of content and mediums (image, text, sound) so make sure that whatever platform you’re using is capable of posting more than just images/text. If you plan on using something different from what I have listed here, just send me an email so I can confirm that it is an appropriate space.

Online

This class will take place entirely online, with some flexibility on potentially meeting in person for individual meetings. Unless stated otherwise, we will regularly meet (synchronously) during the scheduled class times using Zoom. We will use the same zoom room for each class session so save the link/room for easy access.

Class Discord

As this class will take place online, we will be using a Discord server to centralize communication and announcements for the class. The class Discord will also serve as a space for feedback and comments during feedback sessions. If there are any updates/changes to the class I will announce them on the Discord, so be sure to check often.

Attendance/Presence

The standard VCU attendance policy states that student absences during the semester are not expected to exceed the number of times the class meets in one week (2). This semester, because we are facing unprecedented circumstances, we will be following a revised policy that addresses larger issues of expected engagement in the course, articulated below. Consistent engagement is a vital component of successful completion of the course objectives.

The progression of this course requires all participants to be present and actively engaged in class, both during synchronous on-screen meetings, in-person, and with asynchronous activities. Consistency of engagement is vital for a successful completion of the course objectives. Each of us carries different circumstances and capacities; we are accountable for our own agency. This is always true, but especially crucial now.

If at any point during the semester you are unable to be present, communicate this with me as soon as you can. While presence in class is important, my primary concerns with this class are your wellbeing. Please remember to prioritize your mental and physical health over school.

VCU Policies and Resources

The University requires all students and faculty to be aware of policies outlining expectations, requirements and student services related to academic life. Please visit the following link and review these at the start of each semester: go.vcu.edu/syllabus

COVID-19 Updates

For information regarding institutional adjustments, policies, and safety precautions during COVID-19 please consult the web page for One VCU: Responsible Together.

	Monday	Wednesday	
1/25	introductions	project 1	1/27
2/1	project 1	project 1	2/3
2/8	project 1	speculative space	2/10
2/15	speculative space	speculative space	2/17
2/22	reductive workshop	reductive workshop	2/24
3/1	research	research	3/3
3/8	vision	vision	3/10
3/15	vision	vision	3/17
3/22	vision	vision	3/24
3/29	vision	no class	3/31
4/5	space	space	4/7
4/12	space	space	4/14
4/19	space	space	4/21
4/26	space	space	4/28
5/3	space	finish (flag)	5/5