**LMC 6311 – Visual Culture and Design**

**Fall, 2013**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

1. **Professor/Instructor**

Instructor: Celia Pearce, [celia.pearce@lmc.gatech.edu](mailto:celia.pearce@lmc.gatech.edu)

Office: 316, Technology Square Research Building

Office Hours: By Appointment

1. **Objective**:  **[ *Visual experience* ]** How do we understand and derive meaning from visual images? Theoretical readings, the critical analysis of visual works and class discussions will provide a foundation for students to understand the way in which we experience visual imagery.**[ *Visual communication* ]** What are the basic elements of visual imagery and how can we use them to create images that convey meaning? Weekly design problems and creative exercises will provide the opportunity for students to express themselves visually and to explore in their own way the concepts covered in the readings and class discussions.
2. **Learning Outcomes:**
   * Demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate existing digital media artifacts, services, and environments using formal knowledge, and to explain and defend one's critical evaluation
   * Demonstrate ability to use common digital media authoring tools
   * Can design digital artifacts according to principles of image construction, layout, and typography
   * Can justify the design choices in their works
3. **Required Texts**
   * (Required) Dondis, Donis A., A Primer of Visual Literacy.
   * (Required) Sturken, Marita & Cartwright, Lisa, Practices of Looking: an introduction to visual culture.
   * (Optional) McCloud, Scott, Understanding Comics.
4. **Grading**:
   * **Class Participation and Reading (15 %)**
     1. Participation is expected in all lectures and lab sessions for this class and will affect your grade. Readings should be prepared for class on Monday each week since the discussions will be focus on related topics. The exception to this is Week 1, in which the readings should be prepared for class on Wednesday instead
   * **Weekly Design Exercises (40%)**
     1. There will be weekly design exercises focused on themes covered in class lectures and discussions. These will be presented and critiqued at the beginning of Wednesday lab sessions. Some time during lab sessions will be devoted to working on these exercises.
   * **Midterm Project Proposal (15%)**
     1. The midterm for this class will consist of a proposal for the final project. This should include both a written description of the project and goals, and preliminary design sketches and visuals. You may work individually or in groups of two or three. If you choose to work in a group, please indicate each group member's area of contribution.
   * **Final Project and Presentation (30%)**
     1. The final project should be completed by and presented in the final week of classes.
5. **Graded Assignments:**
   * **Exercise 0: Getting Started**
   * **A. Practicing Looking Due: Fri, Aug 25** Bring a picture to Friday’s class that “paints a thousand words.” It can be in any format, but should have the quality that it contains meanings that are not “obvious” to the viewer. This can include culturally situated meanings that may be different for people from different cultures or historical periods.
   * **B. Class Prep Due: Wed, Aug 30** Complete a preliminary design exercise that will get you setup with a webpage for your class work this semester. Do the following: Use Dreamweaver (or your favorite web design tool) to construct the webpage, Be prepared to post your weekly design exercises to this page (i.e. plan space on the webpage for your exercises).Create a graphical logo that in some way represents you. Use this logo as a heading for your webpage.Send the link to the webpage with logo to Instructor and course TA (tbd) by class time Monday, August 28.
   * **Exercise 1: Points and Lines Due: Tue, Sep 5, 5pm** This is the first in a series of creative design explorations based on the basic visual elements. The focus this week is points and lines. You are free to experiment with these elements as you wish, drawing inspiration from the readings and examples discussed in class, or from other works.You are encouraged to play with different versions and variations of your visual explorations. Document these variations, considering how the changes you make affect the overall image.Specific instructions:You may use any medium, digital or analog, including: Photoshop, pencil and paper, paints, collage, etc. or any other tools, including pencil and paper, paints, etc., to create your explorations.  Feel free to experiment with the media as well as the content of the exercise. Post your design explorations to your webpage with a brief textual description or analysis of your work (e.g. inspirations, artist intent, variations, etc.), and send a link to Instructor and TA by Tuesday September 5th at 5pm. Be prepared to discuss your design explorations in the lab session on Wednesday September 7th.
   * **Exercise 2: Shapes and Forms             
     Due Tue, Sep 12, 5pm** This is the second in a series of creative design explorations based on the basic visual elements. The focus this week is shapes and forms. You are free to experiment with these elements as you wish, drawing inspiration from the readings and examples discussed in class, or from other works.You are encouraged to play with different versions and variations of your visual explorations. Document these variations, considering how the changes you make affect the overall image.
   * **Exercise 3: Color and Value              
     Due Tue, Sept 19, 5pm**  
     This week is the third in a series of creative design explorations based on the basic visual elements. The focus this week is color and value. You are free to experiment with these elements as you wish, drawing inspiration from the readings and examples discussed in class, or from other works.You are encouraged to play with different versions and variations of your visual explorations. Document these variations, considering how the changes you make affect the overall image.
   * **Exercise 3b: Coloring Experiment** Try coloring in an abstract design (to be posted on course web page). We'll see how everyone's results compare!
   * **Exercise 4: Ambigrams Due Tue, Sep. 26** In class this week we discussed typography and the visual design of text-based communication. We looked at some examples of ambigrams including:John Langon's ambigrams Scott Kim's inversionsThis week's design exercise should be an interesting challenge: try to design an ambigram! This will involve playing with the visual properties of the letters and the overall structure and potential for symmetry in the word(s) you choose.
   * **Exercise 5: Digital Collage Due Tue, Oct 3, 5pm** To complement our discussion on composition, this week's exercise is to develop a collage that explores combinations of basic elements and/or media types to illustrate a point or theme of your choice. You may create an entirely original work or use found elements as desired. Document your creation process, providing brief textual explanations to accompany your visual designs.
   * **Exercise 6: Abstraction Due Tue, Oct 10, 5pm** In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud charts visual works in a triangle where the corners represent reality, language and the picture plane. The chart thus describes two different kinds of abstraction: from reality towards the realm of language and from reality towards the realm of the pure art object. This week's exercise explores these two kinds of abstraction.
   * **MIDTERM: Proposal for Final Project              
     Due Wed, Oct 18, classtime *Develop and present proposal for final project (see final project description). Be prepared to give an in-class presentation of your proposed project on Wed, Oct 18 during class.***
   * **Exercise 7: Space            Due Tue, Oct 24, 5pm** This week's topic is the creating the illusion of space through two-dimensional design. Using the same 5-10 basic forms, create four separate visual sketches that create a sense of different kinds of space: flat space, depth, open space, and constrained space. You may vary attributes like color, brightness, scale, position, orientation, texture, etc.
   * **Exercise 8: Time as Water Flow Due Tue, Oct 31, 5pm** This week's topic is the representation of time in visual communication. The novel Einstein's Dreams by Alan Lightman envisions a series of dreams that Einstein might have had about the nature of time as he worked on his theory of relativity. The dream vignette from April 16, 1905, describes a world in which time is like a flow of water. The goal of this week's exercise is to create a visual representation that conveys the sense of time as it is described in this short dream sequence.
   * **Exercise 9: Narrative Collage Due Tue, Nov 7, 5pm**This week's exercise revisits the idea of a digital collage. This time, create a collage using digital tools that tells a story with still images, and without use of text. The selection and arrangement of visual imagery will be critical to the creation of narrative flow across your image. For instance, you might adopt strategies or conventions used in continuous visual narratives or in comics. Provide a brief write-up of your story as well as the conventions used in the assignment.
   * **Exercise 10: Animation/Anthropomorphimation              
     Due Tue, Nov 14, 5pm** This week's exercise looks at how animation can be used to give basic visual shapes a life-like quality. Create a short animation (max 15 seconds) that in some way anthropomorphizes one or more simple shapes.As an example, consider this short film used by Heider and Simmel for a psychological study in 1944. The animated geometric shapes were invariably anthropomorphized and assigned attitudes when described by viewers.
   * **Exercise 11: Interactivity            Due Tue, Nov 21, 5pm** This weeks’ exercise experiments with viewer interaction. For this assignment, take any one of the previous 10 assignments, and adapt it as an interactive flash animation. Consider the themes of the class, of visual literacy seeing and looking: create an interactive experience that asks the viewer to *look* differently while at the same time having some form of agency with the material.
   * **Final Project              
     Due Mon, Dec 4 by classtime**
   * **Final Project Proposal & Presentation** Create a product of visual communication of your choice in digital form. The design and execution should demonstrate knowledge of the conventions of visual language discussed throughout the course. You may work individually or in groups of 2 or 3 (more substantial projects are expected for group work) You are encouraged to play with different versions and variations of your visual explorations. Document these variations, considering how the changes you make affect the overall image.
   * **Midterm Proposal              
     Due Oct 17, 5pm**  
     **Written proposal due Tue, Oct 17th by 5pm via email to Instructor and TA**  
     **In-class proposal presentations and critiques, Oct 18-20**
     1. Proposal contents  
        - What do you want to produce and why?  
        Provide preliminary design sketches and ideas  
        - Who is your audience and what will they gain from your product?  
        - What is your project timeline? Identify project tasks and goals
   * **Final Project              
     Due Dec 4, classtime**  
     **Completed project due Dec 4**  
     **Project presentations Dec 4-8**
6. **Class Material Documents**: Photoshop, Flash, Dreamweaver. Students are encouraged to use other graphical tools and/or programming languages as desired, such as Illustrator, Processing and Java. If needed, some time during Friday lab sessions may be devoted to software tutorials.
7. **Honor Code**: Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code of the Georgia Institute of Technology. Information on the Honor Code can be found at: <http://honor.gatech.edu/>. Violations to the Honor Code have serious consequences and will be enforced at all times.
8. **ADAPTS**: **Information for Students with Disabilities** Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>
9. **Weekly Schedule**

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| **[ Week 1 ]**  Aug 21 – Aug 25 | History / Context | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, [Intro](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/sturken_intro.pdf) & [Ch.1](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/sturken_ch1.pdf) Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, [Ch.1](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/dondis_ch1.pdf)  [Intro Lecture](http://lcc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/Lectures/6311VisCult.ppt" \t "_blank)  ["Meaning" Lecture](http://lcc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/Lectures/6311Meaning.ppt" \t "_blank) |
| **[ Unit 1 ]** | **Basic Visual Elements (4 weeks)** | |
| **[ Week 2 ]**  Aug 28 – Sep 1 | Points / Lines | Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, Chs. [Point](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/kandinsky_point.pdf) & [Line](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/kandinsky_line.pdf) |
| **[ Week 3 ]**  Sep 5\* – Sep 8 (\*Labor Day Sept 4) | Shapes / Forms | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.2 Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch.3 |
| **[ Week 4 ]**  Sep 11 – Sep 15 | Color / Value | Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch.2 Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, [Ch.5](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/tufte_envisinfo_ch5.pdf) |
| **[ Week 5 ]**  Sep 18 – Sep 22 | Text / Typography | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.3 Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, [Ch.1](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/bringhurst_ch1-granddesign.pdf) Mengelt, [*Visual Aspects of Type*](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/mengelt_aspects-of-type.pdf) Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, [Ch.7](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/bringhurst_ch7-history.pdf) (Optional)  [Lecture](http://lcc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/Lectures/6311Type.ppt" \t "_blank) |
| **[ Unit 2 ]** | **Visual Synthesis (3 weeks)** | |
| **[ Week 6 ]**  Sep 25 – Sep 29 | Composition | Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch. 4 & 5 Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, [Ch.4](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/arnheim_ch4.pdf) [Lecture](http://lcc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/Lectures/6311Composition.ppt) |
| **[ Week 7 ]**  Oct 2 – Oct 6 | Abstraction | Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, [Ch.9-10](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/arnheim_ch9-10.pdf) McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, [Ch.2](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/mccloud_ch2.pdf) |
| **[ Week 8 ]**  Oct 9 – Oct 13 | Realism | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.4 Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch.6 |
| **[ Week 9 ]**  Oct 18\* – Oct 20 \*Fall recess Oct  16-17 | Midterm Presentations of Project Proposals | |
| **[ Unit 3 ]** | **Visual Organization (3 weeks)** | |
| **Week 10**  Oct 23 – Oct 27 | Space | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.5 Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch.7  [Lecture](http://lcc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/Lectures/Space.ppt" \t "_blank) |
| **Week 11**  Oct 31 – Nov 4 | Time | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.6 Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, [Ch.6](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/tufte_envisinfo_ch6.pdf) |
| **Week 12**  Nov 6 – Nov 10 | Story / Narrative | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.7 McCloud, *Reinventing Comics*, [The Infinite Canvas](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/mccloud_infinite-canvas.pdf) |
| **[ Unit 4 ]** | **Towards Interactivity (2 weeks)** | |
| **Week 13**  Nov 13 – Nov 17 | Animation | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.8 Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch.8 |
| **Week 14**  Nov 20 – Nov 22\* \*Thanksgiving Holiday Nov 23-24 | Interaction | Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, Ch.9 Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, Ch.9 Meadows, *Pause & Effect*, [1.4](http://lmc.gatech.edu/%7Ecpearce3/lcc6311f06/readings/meadows_interaction.pdf) |
| **Week 15**  Nov 27 – Dec 1 | Project Progress Report / Discussion | |
| **Week 16**  Dec 4 – Dec 8 | Final Project Presentations | |