

ART 155-01 (40860) — Fall 2014

Visual Communication I

Monday / Wednesday
8:45am — 11:30am
XARTS 006 (orange lab)

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Office hours:
Tuesdays 1:00 — 3:00pm
or by appointment

Course Description

The Visual Communication course series will introduce students to the technical and conceptual study of graphic design as a wide-ranging practice for the creation, reproduction, and dissemination of visual messages. Through sustained project work, students will investigate the ways that text and image can foster both positive and negative cultural representations as instruments of information, identification, and persuasion. Lectures, readings, and student research will supplement project work, introducing students to the concentrated disciplines of semiotics, visual rhetoric, typography and design history. Course work will include directed critiques and guided demonstrations and discussions, placing equal emphasis on concept (the design process), craft (composition and digital print production), and technical fluency (the understanding of software and digital media).

In Visual Communication I, students will explore these issues while developing fluency in the Macintosh OS operating system and a comprehensive understanding of the Adobe Creative Suite applications used by designers to print and manipulate photographs (Photoshop), create complex vector-based artwork (Adobe Illustrator), set typography and publish print-based projects (InDesign). To successfully complete this course, students will be expected to demonstrate fluency with the formal (skill-based) and semantic (knowledge-based) strategies that have shaped graphic design practice throughout its Modern and contemporary histories.

Learning Outcomes

1. Exemplify key methods of visual representation, with an emphasis on the strategies that serve cultural identity, through oral/visual presentation of conceptual project plans and the submission of final project work.
2. Identify the key principles of semiotics and visual rhetoric, with an emphasis on the ways the ways in which texts and images function for different audiences, through participation in group seminars, participation in group critiques, and the submission of final project work.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of graphic design history, with an emphasis on the ways in the discipline has been influenced by the economic, social and/or political conditions of a place and time, through participation in group seminars, writing of annotated project bibliographies, and submission of final project text.
4. Establish comprehensive understanding of the Macintosh OS operating system, through successful completion of individual project exercises and longer-term project work.
5. Demonstrate functional fluency with the Adobe Photoshop application, with an emphasis on image exposure, color adjustment, image manipulation and image file standards, through successful completion of individual project exercises and longer-term project work.
6. Demonstrate functional fluency with the Adobe Illustrator application, with an emphasis on the construction of complex, vector-based drawings, through successful completion of individual project exercises and longer-term project work.
7. Demonstrate functional fluency with the Adobe InDesign application, with an emphasis on typesetting (including style sheets), publication construction (including master pages), and print production, through successful completion of individual project exercises and longer-term project work.

Academic Integrity

Work done in the Design Program at USF must consist of original work done by the student. Whenever content is appropriated from elsewhere, the original sources of any such borrowed elements, whether text-based (as in written work) or visual (as with photographs or other images) must be clearly credited.

Students will observe and respect the University's policy regarding academic integrity as noted in the USF Honor Code. As this policy stipulates, all written and visual work submitted for this course, whether in draft or final form, must not represent the words, visuals or ideas of another person without reference or citation. Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism, false citations, submitting the same work for multiple assignments, submitting false data, and falsifying documentation. Any student who violates the USF Honor Code can expect to receive a failing grade for the project and/or the course.

Plagiarism and creative integrity are not only of vital importance to the University and your academic career, but also to your professional career beyond graduation. Plagiarism of written or visual work is a serious offense punishable by law.

A full copy of the USF Honor Code can be found here:

<http://www.usfca.edu/catalog/policies/honor/>

Classroom Standards

Most of this course will be spent in guided discussion as lectures, project critiques, and seminars. This course will follow a hybrid lecture/studio format. A small amount of time for project work will be provided, but the majority of your individual project work must occur outside of class.

In-class work time must be used toward this course only. Please do not use this time for work for another course or extracurricular interests.

Please avoid email, text messaging, mobile devices, Facebook-ing, iTunes-playing, YouTube-watching, or other extraneous activities during class. Please turn your phones completely off (not just to “vibrate” or “silent”) when you enter the classroom.

Feel free to bring your own computer to class if that helps you work more efficiently.

Supply List

Please bring an unruled sketchbook to *every session*. In addition, during this course, you will need the following:

- a mechanical pencil and erasers
- pens (in a variety of thicknesses)
- glue stick
- an X-Acto knife
- high-quality paper for color printing (e.g., Epson Ultra Premium Presentation Matte inkjet paper, 8.5" by 11")
- an external storage device for transferring files
- a digital camera (may be borrowed from the [Media Studies Equipment Desk](#))

Cutting mats and rulers are provided in the classroom.

Attendance

Attendance in every class session for the full session is vital to succeeding in this course.

Each student will be allowed **two** absences. Three absences will lower a student's final grade by one entire grade level. Four absences will result in an unconditional failing grade for the course.

Students will be counted as late if they appear in class more than ten minutes after class has begun. Two such late arrivals will equal one absence. Students arriving more than ten minutes late for any project critique or final presentation will be asked to leave their work and will be given an absence for that day.

Absences may be excused only in rare cases, such as if you must miss class for a medical appointment, family emergency or other conflict. If you must miss class, please advise me in advance or immediately thereafter. You will be referred to the Center for Academic and Student Achievement (CASA), who will verify whether or not the absence is excusable, and then relay that information to me.

Field trips, outside lectures, and any other special events that take place outside of the classroom during class time will also count towards final attendance.

Student Athletes

All University Athletes must provide the Professor with an official letter from the Athletics Office noting any excused absences at the start of the semester. Only absences indicated on the official letter will be excused from class.

Data Management

Much of your work for this course will be stored in digital form, so it's critical to manage your files carefully. "My hard drive crashed" is not a valid reason for failing to submit work on time. (Imagine yourself giving that excuse to a client or colleague!)

Think about how much work you are willing to lose:

_____ minutes / hours / days / weeks / months
(fill in number) (circle one)

You should back up all of your digital files *more frequently* than the duration above. I recommend either using an online service (e.g., backblaze.com or mozy.com) or investing in an external hard drive (RAID-1 mirrored) and automated backup software (like Time Machine).

Do *not* rely on a single hard disk or flash drive for your backups.

Email Communication

On some occasions, I will need to send you course-related information outside of class. My expectation is that you will check your email **at least once each day**. Since I only have access to your @usfca.edu email address, be sure to check that account daily. If you primarily use another email account, I recommend setting your USF account to forward all mail to your primary account, so you never miss a message. (For help with this, please see me after class.)

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or disabling condition, or if you think you may have a disability, please contact USF Student Disability Services (SDS) at 415-422-2613 within the first week of class, or immediately upon onset of disability, to speak with a disability specialist. If you are determined eligible for reasonable accommodations,

please meet with your disability specialist so they can arrange to have your accommodation letter sent to me, and we will discuss your needs for this course. For more information, please visit usfca.edu/sds or call 415-422-2613.

Grading

In each course within the Design program, an average amount of work, participation, and progress at the level expected of a college student will earn a “C” grade. “A” and “B” grades will be awarded to those students whose effort or improvement reaches levels above average. Semester grades will incorporate a variety of factors, notably conceptual development, engagement with design process, quality of presentation, effort, and level of interest and participation in class.

Any project that receives a grade below “D” must be reworked. No student will be able to pass the course with an “F” grade for any project, and no student will be able to achieve prerequisite status with a “D” or “F” grade for the course.

Project work assumes that each student will devote an equivalent amount of time to homework assignments as to time spent in class (i.e., **six hours per week**).

Each project must be turned in for grading following the final presentation, and projects cannot be returned until grading is completed. High-resolution, digital files of each project in its final form (including visuals and text) must be submitted to the professor at the end of the semester.

If you ever feel that a given grade does not accurately reflect the quality of your work, please contact me by email *within a week*. Provide a written argument that references the project’s grading criteria and explains why a higher grade is justified.

Letter Grade Definitions

- A** Successful fulfillment of the project’s communication goals, superlative process documentation, and an original, attractive and cohesive visual aesthetic. Project planning, design, and execution performed at the highest level.
- B** Successful fulfillment of the project’s communication goals, excellent process documentation, and a cohesive visual aesthetic. Project planning, design, and execution performed at an above average level.

- C** Successful fulfillment of the project's communication goals, and adequate process documentation. Project planning, design, and execution performed at an average level.
- D** Did not fulfill the project's communication goals, and/or process documentation was absent or inadequate. Project planning, design, and execution performed was below average.
- F** Did not fulfill the project's communication goals, and process documentation was inadequate. Does not meet the minimum requirements for the course.

Grade Weights by Project

Each of this course's projects will explore issues of visual representation and semiotics, design principals, and elements of design history. At the same time, we'll be learning the technical skills of how to use design software. You will be graded on both your technical understanding of the tools, and written assignments that pertain to course readings.

Detailed descriptions of each project will be distributed in class.

Pixels

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---|
| 5% | Swatches | Create a composition featuring an original photograph, plus swatches of three colors sampled from that image. Include the RGB, HSB, and hex values for each. |
| 15% | Montage | Design three visual compositions of photographs that convey a thematic message. Using original photographs of your own, compose and manipulate the design with Photoshop. |

Lines

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---|
| 5% | Monogram | Design a monogram to function as a personal visual identity. Using Illustrator, merge your initials into a single visual element. |
| 15% | Symbols | Design a series of symbols that communicate different concepts, and create a usage document illustrating how the symbols could be employed in different contexts. |

Pages

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|--|
| 5% | Ipsium | Using dummy “lorem ipsum” text, design, print, and assemble a small booklet employing a consistent and clear grid. |
| 15% | Timeline | Research, write, and design a historical timeline that covers some topic in the history of design. Using InDesign, design, print, and assemble a multi-page booklet that presents important elements in the timeline along with historical images. |
| 15% | Participation | Come to class well-prepared to present your projects, proposals, and ideas. Ask lots of questions, offer thoughtful, critical responses to the readings, and provide helpful, considered feedback during group critiques. |
| 15% | Readings | Complete each assigned reading, and write thoughtful responses, engaging in a discussion of each text with your fellow classmates. |
| 10% | Quizzes | Occasional in-class quizzes will help evaluate your technical learning, so we can ensure you’re learning everything needed to complete each of the projects successfully. |

Required Books

Please note the **edition** of each book.

Hall, Sean. *This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics (Second Edition)*. Laurence King Publishing, 2012.

Lupton, Ellen. *Thinking with Type (Second Edition)*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2010.

Lupton, Ellen and Jennifer Cole Phillips. *Graphic Design: The New Basics*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.

Other Required Readings (Electronic Reserve or Online)

Abbott, Edwin A. *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. 1884.

Arnheim, Rudolf. "Form".

Barthes, Roland. "Rhetoric of the Image".

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*.

Gabriel, Sebastien. "Designer's Guide to DPI." 2014. <http://sebastien-gabriel.com/designers-guide-to-dpi/home>

Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation".

Hollis, Richard. "Graphic Design a Concise History".

Mitchell, W.J.T. "What is an Image".

Peirce, Charles S. *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs*.

Thody, Philip and Piero. *Introducing Barthes*. Totem Books, 2011.
<http://0-site.ebrary.com.ignacio.usfca.edu/lib/usflibrary/Doc?id=10484257>

Online Resources

99% Invisible, 99percentinvisible.org

Radiolab, radiolab.org

TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design), ted.com

This American Life, thisamericanlife.org

Design Matters, soundcloud.com/designmatters

Course Website

<https://usfca.instructure.com>

The course website includes the current schedule, plus links to handouts, project assignments, and other online resources. It will be updated and changed *frequently*. It is your responsibility to read all notifications and stay on top of deadlines.

Schedule

The schedule below is *tentative*. Always check the website for the current schedule. Also note that each project includes many interim milestones, due dates for which will be announced in class (and posted on the website).

Pixels

Week 1	What is Design?	
Week 2	Pixels and Color	Introduce Swatches
Week 3	Semiotics	
Week 4	Transparency	Swatches due / Introduce Montage
Week 5	Points in Space	
Week 6	Scale and Texture	<i>Guest speaker (TBD)</i>

Lines

Week 7	Lines	Montage due / Introduce Monogram
Week 8	Text and Type	
Week 9	Symbols	Monogram due / Introduce Symbols
Week 10	Unity	
Week 11	Hierarchy and Layers	<i>Guest speaker (TBD)</i>

Pages

Week 12	Grid	Symbols due / Introduce Ipsum
Week 13	Systems	<i>Guest speaker (TBD)</i>
Week 14	Structure	Ipsum due / Introduce Timeline
Week 15	Framing	
Week 16	Diagram and Rules	Timeline due