

# DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

## CHALLENGE

The phrase, "Going down the rabbit hole," comes from Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. In this tale, Alice follows a white rabbit in a waistcoat and falls down a rabbit hole into Wonderland, a fantastic and nonsensical world. The rabbit hole serves as a portal to this alternate reality, a gateway to curiosity, bewilderment, and exploration. The idea has been metaphorically used across many disciplines. Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" from The Republic has often been compared to the rabbit hole as it also serves as a metaphor for awakening to a new, more complex reality. In the movie, The Matrix, Neo is offered a red pill to go down the rabbit hole to learn the truth. Rabbit holes in DESIGN 301 won't involve psychedelics. They will involve you pursuing sparks to new places, gathering data, and making meaning out of your landing spots.

This quarter-long, accumulative assignment is about honing your ability to notice. It's about building your capacity to articulate what's interesting. It's about spotting possibility and making connections. It's about drifting. To drift is to follow your hunches, to allow them to take you somewhere new and unexpected. It's also about building our collective class awareness of design in society.

Each week, you'll individually go down a rabbit hole. On alternating weeks these rabbit holes will be either (1) **Unconstrained** or (2) **Constrained** with regard to their boundaries. Each as its own protocol. For both, you'll capture your rabbit hole journey and then share it back to the class repository. On **Constrained** weeks, a pair of students will be responsible for synthesizing the group's individual rabbit hole journeys and presenting that work back to the whole class.



## UNCONSTRAINED PROCESS\*

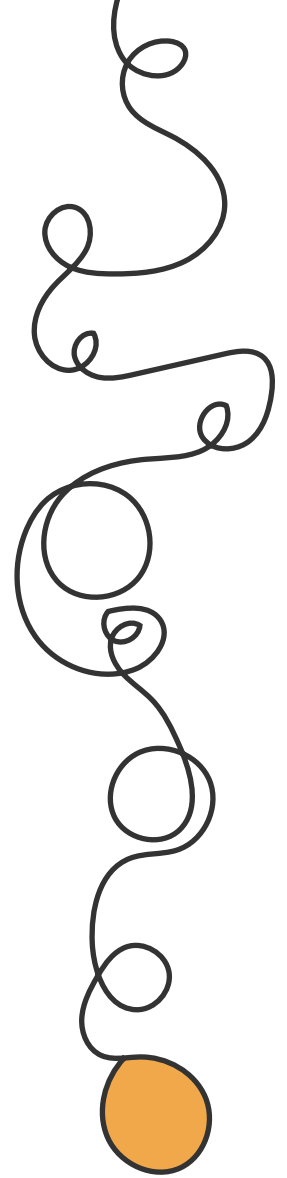
On **Unconstrained** weeks, you let the journey take you until you reach an interesting moment. Figuring out what is “interesting” will take practice. You’ll capture your rabbit hole journey and then share it back to the class repository.

1. **Select a news story that interests you.** It should be from the current week. Read or listen to it. What jumps out? Why? What does that make you wonder about? Search for it!
2. What does that make you think of? **What new questions does it spark?** Research it!
3. Take it a step farther. **Drift! What are you noticing now?** What are you wondering about?
4. Take stock of what’s interesting to you from your journey. **Why are these themes fascinating?** In what ways do they relate to design work? Is anything happening in the design space related to this topic presently?
5. Draw up / write up / talk up. **Create a piece of media for sharing with the class.** This might be a drawing, a written document, an audio or video clip, etc.

**Your piece needs to convey (and will be evaluated on):**

- a) The rabbit hole you went down, why and how.
- b) The elements of your exploration that were most fascinating.
- c) Your insights about how this applies to design work.

Your assignment needs to stand alone. It must be fully understandable without you there to explain it. You will submit an ‘artist’s statement’ along with your media. Submit your assignment on the Rabbit Hole Mural AND on Canvas by Monday, 12 noon.



UNCONSTRAINED Weekly Individual assignments due Monday by 12 noon:  
Sept. 30, Oct. 14, 28, Nov. 11

\*Your process may evolve throughout the quarter on **Unconstrained** weeks. Experiment with all types of starting places and methods of exploration.

## LEARNING GOALS

1. **Pursue creative hunches** through active physical or digital experimentation.
2. **Communicate deliberately** with a range of audiences in a variety of storytelling media.
3. **Synthesize information** from disparate sources, quantitative and qualitative.
4. Integrate historical, environmental, **cultural and contextual awareness** into design work.
5. Move fluidly between **abstract ideas and concrete details** on design projects.
6. **Integrate learning** from across a wide range of life experiences to develop habits and mindsets that foster life-long learning; essential preparation for tackling emergent design opportunities.

## EVALUATION

Individual weekly assignments: 20pts. x 8 weeks  
Paired synthesis share: 40pts.

## CONSTRAINED PROCESS\*

On **Constrained** weeks, you will be assigned a specific starting place and method and volume of data capture. You'll share your gathered data and a piece of media built off of your individual insights and then share both on the class repository.

1. **Begin with the starting point given in class.** Reflect on it, and where you might go with it before proceeding.
2. **Gather the type and volume of data specified in class.** Pay attention to specifics here.
3. Take stock of what's interesting to you from your gathered data. **What do you notice?** Is anything happening in the design space related to what you find interesting in your data?
4. Draw up / write up / talk up. **Create a piece of media for sharing with the class.** This might be a drawing, a written document, an audio or video clip, etc.

**Your piece needs to convey (and will be evaluated on):**

- a) The elements of your exploration that were most fascinating.
- b) Your insights about how this applies to design work.

You will be able to include an 'artist's statement.'

5. You must also submit your raw data.

Submit your assignment and data on the Rabbit Hole Mural AND on Canvas by Monday, 12 noon.

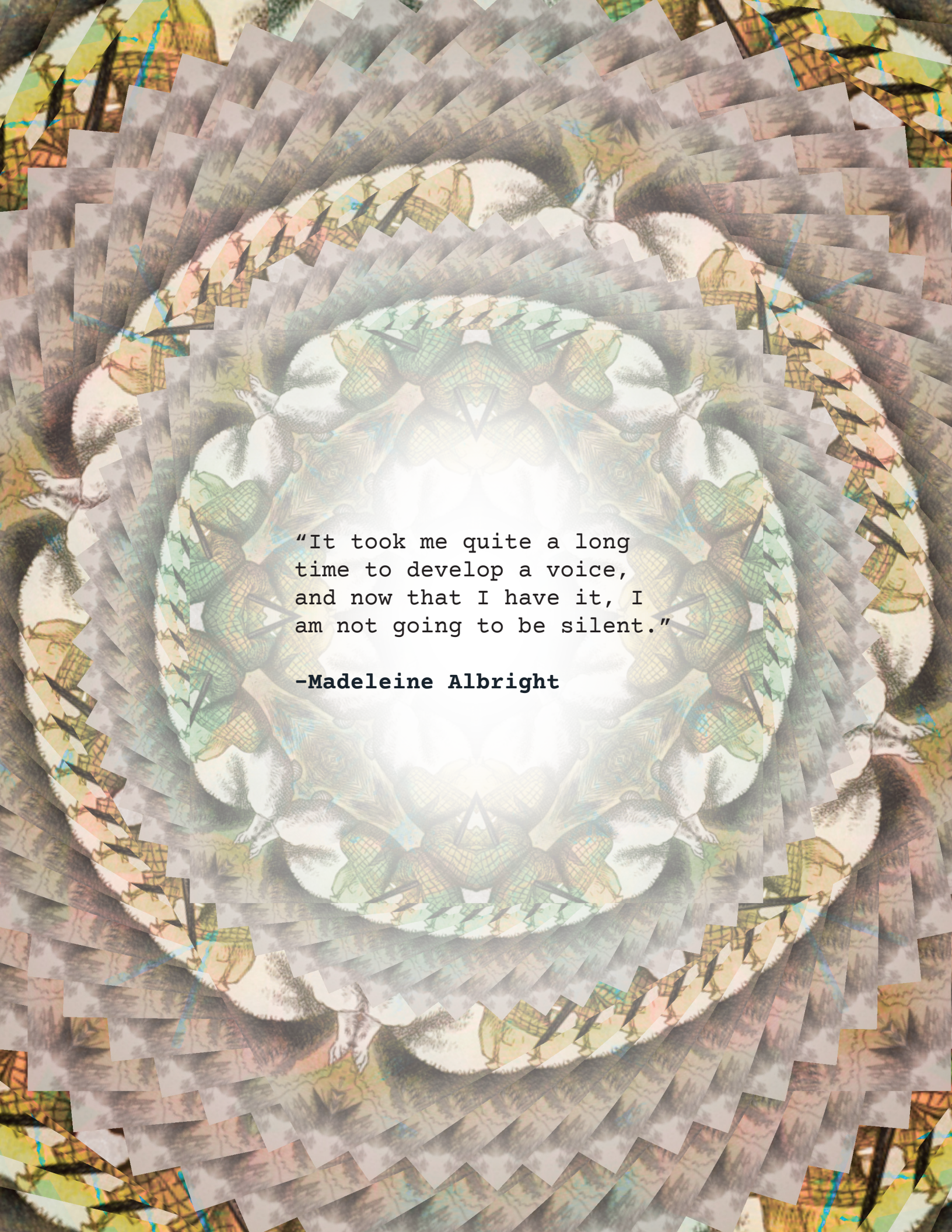
CONSTRAINED Weekly Individual assignments due Monday by 12 noon:  
Oct. 7, 21, Nov. 4, 18

## ONCE IN THE QUARTER:

6. On weeks where we follow a **Constrained** process, you will work in a trio, examine all of the raw data from your peers, and do a synthesis of that data together. The teaching team will assign you a specific synthesis tool to use. You should plan to research your assigned tool and how to use it before beginning. **What insights emerge across the full class data set?**
7. As a trio, share your synthesis with the class during the first 15 minutes of Wednesday. Your presentation should include: (1) Your assigned synthesis technique, how it works, and what you discovered about what it's good for uncovering. (2) Three insights. These are more than observations. **If you didn't need the synthesis tool to get to the insight, it's not an insight.**

CONSTRAINED Trio 15min. Synthesis Presos: Oct. 9, 23, Nov. 6, 20  
[sign up for one synthesis week on the class mural]





"It took me quite a long  
time to develop a voice,  
and now that I have it, I  
am not going to be silent."

**-Madeleine Albright**