Spring 2015 Syllabus

Johns Hopkins University
The Center for Leadership Education
Visual Rhetoric for Science, Business and Industry
661.170.01
Instructor: Charlotte O'Donnell
Email: cod@charlotteodonnell.net
Class Meetings: Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:15PM
Classroom: Krieger 307
Instructor Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4pm, Daily Grind (café at top of BLC)
(also available by appointment)

Required Texts and Materials
Sketchbook
Please purchase one that is easy to photocopy/reduce to 8.5X11 paper.

USB Flash Drive
Please purchase a USB stick that does not need to install its own proprietary software.

Lynda.com subscription
You will be required to watch several hours per week of video tutorials that will teach you how to use Adobe Creative Suite software. Subscription is $25 per month. For those students who are reluctant to pay for their own subscription, the Digital Media Center has a subscription.

Strongly Recommended Materials
Adobe Creative Cloud student subscription

We will be working exclusively with Adobe Creative Suite software in this class. I don’t require that students purchase it, because the full package is expensive and it is loaded onto all the common Macintosh computers in campus computer labs. However, I will say that it can get be a real hassle to have to trek all the way to Krieger in the middle of the night just to fine-tune a logo.

The good news is that the university has recently provided an affordable solution to students in need:

You can purchase a student/teacher subscription to the Creative Suite for $20 per month through the technology store at Hopkins. I believe Adobe will require you show them some sort of proof of enrollment, like a transcript.

Course Description
We live in a world that is saturated with images – and yet it seems few of us understand what it is we’re looking at. Even fewer of us are able manipulate images from our own lives to communicate our ideas. Though most liberal arts institutions offer countless classes to make student proficient writers and speakers, they do a remarkably poor job helping students to become visually literate. This course seeks to fill that visual gap – a blind spot, if you will – in the university’s curriculum. Through a series of exercises using Adobe Creative Suite software, students will be introduced to the fundamental techniques involved in producing visual rhetoric. Students will learn basic principles of typography, color, composition, grids, sequencing, patterning and other methods of creating visual narratives. We will treat visual
design assignments the same way composition classes treat other language-based assignments – as problems that require elegant/articulate solutions. To help students master these concepts I will be giving weekly slide talks that will cover basic principles of design as well as a little bit of design history. We will also devote a certain portion of the class to critiques of student work. Any remaining class time not taken up by exercises and discussions will be dubbed “studio time,” during which students are expected to work on their upcoming assignments.

Over the course of the semester, you will

1. Become more attentive to the visual world
2. Begin to read visual elements like a language, treating each mark like a sense-making unit that both informs and is dependent on others around it to construct larger systems of meaning
3. Learn to talk about visuals, using a vocabulary from the commercial arts
4. Begin to apply theories of aesthetics to your own designs, to make visual works that captivate the viewer’s attention
5. Learn to communicate complex concepts through visual designs
6. Become proficient in the basic tools of Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop as they are used to produce commercial artwork

You’ll also leave class with the beginning of a design portfolio – a collection of work which graphic designers show to clients who are considering hiring them (or sometimes to graduate school committees which are looking to admit MFA candidates).

**ABET Requirements**

- Understanding of professional and ethical responsibility (f).
- Ability to communicate effectively (g).
- The broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global and societal context (h).
- Recognition of the need for and an ability to engage in life-long learning (i).
- Knowledge of contemporary issues (j).
- Ability to use the techniques, skills and modern engineering tools necessary for engineering practice (k).

**Grading Breakdown**

- Logomark 5%
- Logotype 10%
- Poster 15%
- Storyboard 10%
- Brochure 15%
- Slide Talk 10%
- Data Visualization Critique 10%
- Sketchbook and Final Portfolio 15%
- Class participation 10%

Please note that grades are non-negotiable. While I’m perfectly happy to talk to you about design theory and any issues that arise in your work, I find that it’s generally counterproductive to discuss grades directly. Also, I won’t be giving any extra credit in this class.

**Class Participation**
I firmly believe that communications classes, when taken seriously, are some of the hardest classes a student can take at this university. It takes guts to put yourself out there during class – whether in a presentation or in contributions to class discussions – but at the same time it is one of the most important experiences a young student can have. I want the atmosphere in this classroom to foster lively and productive discussion of design theory and student work. To do this, it is important that both students and faculty maintain a sense of mutual respect. There are a lot of elements that foster this sense of mutual respect that are easy to lose track of as we become enmeshed in the chaos of the semester. To clarify (lest we forget later on – and I sincerely hope I do not have to return to these points later in the semester) my expectations for class participation will include the following:

• You will arrive on time. Note the attendance policy below. Punctuality and regular attendance are non-negotiable.
• You will arrive prepared for class. You will need to have the texts for that day on hand and all assignments completed. You will also need to be alert. I understand that many of you have heavy workloads and will staying up late studying, but we cannot accomplish anything without your full participation, which means you need to be awake. Bring a large cup of coffee to class, or take a power nap right before – whatever it takes!
• On days when we use computers in the classroom – and this will be nearly every single class – you will not go on Facebook, or check your email, or succumb to any of the other temptations that the internet has created for us of late.
• You will turn off your cell phone before class. I don't want to hear any ringers go off in the middle of our discussions, and I certainly don't want to see you texting.
• You will clear any visitors you want to invite into the classroom with me first.
• You won't gossip or comment about what it took for certain students to finish their assignments on time – or why certain students are late or absent on any particular day. Let’s keep all discussion focused on course material (rather than students’ personal lives), please!
• You will respect each student’s right to express themselves in the classroom. When someone else is talking, don’t interrupt – and for goodness sake, obviously, don’t yell. Listen to him or her and try and think about what they are saying. It will help your case when it is your turn to speak.
• On the flip side, you won’t hold back because you feel that your idea may be unpopular or incorrect. Keep in mind that the study of communication can be a subjective thing at times. The strength of all classroom discussion comes from the diversity of opinions within the group.

If you do not adhere to the above-mentioned policies, I reserve the right to kick you out of class for the day. We will discuss any impact this may or may not have on your attendance record (and your participation grade) after the fact.

Class Attendance Policy
Attendance is required. You get one unexcused absence over the course of the semester – you should reserve them almost exclusively for situations of serious illness or other true personal emergencies. Please note that a late arrival to class (7 minutes) counts as half an absence. Each absence after #1 will result in a 10 point deduction from your final grade. On rare occasion, I will excuse a student’s absence with a doctor’s note (but we’re talking the kind of note you get from the hospital – not Health Services, because they don’t give notes). The only other way to get an excused absence is to go through the Dean of Students or Counseling Services (generally for religious observances, extreme personal illness, or a death
in the family). That said, if you’re having a really bad semester and have a truly legitimate excuse, please come talk to me!

If you know that you will be absent on a particular day, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor in advance and to obtain class notes and assignments from your peers.

If work was due on that day, you still need to send it to me – by email. Please see file type/size restrictions below. I am quite fussy about this.

**Late/incomplete work**
Just like every other working profession, designers have to meet deadlines. In the real world, if you fail to meet a design deadline, you get fired. Accordingly, in the class, if you miss deadlines, you risk failing the assignment.

I will deduct three (3) points for every day the sketchbook work comes to me late.

I will deduct ten (10) points if you fail to submit the sketchbook work with the final assignment.

I will deduct ten (10) points for every day a final assignment is turned in late.

I will fail you for an assignment if you attempt to send me an Adobe Illustrator (.ai) or Photoshop (.psd) file by email. Please only send low-resolution PDFs (less than 5MBs) to me via email. You will learn how to do this in class.

**University Plagiarism Statement**
This is what the university has to say about plagiarism:

> The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on "Academic Ethics for Undergraduates" and the Ethics Board Web site (http://eng.jhu.edu/wse/asen_undergraduate_handbook/academic-ethics-manual) for more information.

This is what I have to say: Please, please don’t make me fail you!

**Sketchbook**
For this class you will be asked to maintain a sketchbook. This is the place to work out your ideas for your major design assignments. Drawings, photographs, bits torn out of magazines, writings, thought diagrams – all of this should go in your sketchbook. I also encourage you to carry it with you everywhere you go this semester.

I will give you regular assignments which must be completed in your sketchbook. Many of these assignments will ask you to draw things by hand. I don’t require you to be good at drawing, but I do require you to practice this skill and to do your best to improve. Not all designers are amazing drawers, but most find that a lively drawing practice enhances their
work greatly. You don’t have to be as technically proficient as Picasso to create a lively sketch that animates a poster or logotype.

Please keep in mind that these drawing/prep assignments are really the bare minimum amount of work I expect to see in your sketchbook. A good designer will produce a great number of sketches, notes, diagrams and doodles in order to arrive at a polished and elegant visual scheme.

You’ll be turning in this sketchbook – along with copies of your major projects (your final portfolio) – to me at the end of the semester.

Final Portfolio

You’ll be asked to revise all your assignments, re-print them and submit them to me in a portfolio at the end of the semester. The final portfolio and your sketchbook work will account for a significant portion of your grade.

The Digital Media Center

Feel like you don’t have the tools necessary to complete an assignment the way you want? The DMC might be able to help you out. They stock a vast array of cutting-edge hardware, software, equipment and peripherals. The majority of the DMC’s tangible resources are available for use outside the lab. Equipment such as still and video cameras, audio recording and editing equipment, and a wide range of peripherals and accessories may be borrowed, free of charge, by full-time Homewood students. Typical borrowing periods are limited to three days, but items may be renewed if no one else has them reserved.

They also have a small computer lab set up specifically for students looking to do design work. In the past DMC staff has helped students troubleshoot technical problems they have run into while using Adobe Creative Suite software. They have also helped students who have run into printing issues (see below).

Printing on and off Campus

The DMC has a large-scale poster printer as well as several color inkjet printers. There’s a color printer on A level in the library. Black and white printers/copiers (acceptable for most prep assignments) are all over campus. For last minute emergencies, there’s a FedEx/Kinko’s on North Charles Street that’s open late.

Extensions

Available on request. You need to give me more than just a few days notice (I prefer 72 hours notice).

Email Policy

Though I am happy to answer any course-related questions you might have, please keep in mind that I am not tethered to my computer – and I don’t check email on my phone regularly. My personal email address is listed at the top of this syllabus. I usually respond to student emails within 48 hours.

Also, please know that I don’t send out emails to confirm that I’ve received student work. It’s your responsibility to check your inbox/spam folder to make sure that your communication has gone through. (I check my spam folder all the time to make sure I’m receiving what you’re sending…)

And just to reiterate one more time in case you missed it in the above sections: Under no circumstance are you to send me large design files. If you send me a file over 10MBs

Special Needs and Learning Disabilities: If you need an accommodation due to a
documented disability, please come visit me during office hours the first week of class or at your earliest convenience. I am fully committed to helping you succeed in this class. If you have no documentation, please register first with the Director for Disability Services. More information can be found here: http://jhuaa.org/DSS/index.html
Tentative Course Schedule

T 1/27  Course Intro / What is Design? / Mark Making / Drawing Basics
   •  **IN CLASS:** Point, Line, Plane Exercise
   •  **AS SOON AS YOU LEAVE HERE:** Begin sketching (by hand!) 50 straight-edged objects that you associate with food service, libraries or cell phone companies

T 2/3  Visual Unity / Figure, Ground / Intro to Logomarks
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Illustrator CS6 Essential Training” tutorials chapters intro-4
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Illustrator CS6 Essential Training” tutorials chapters 5-7

T 2/10  Rhythm, Balance / Scale
   •  **PREP:** 50 variations on your logomark (by hand!) due
   •  **PREP:** Final Point/Line/Plane exercise due (printout from Illustrator PDF)

T 2/17  Intro to Typography
   •  **PREP:** Final logomark design (printout from Illustrator PDF) due
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Illustrator CS6 Essential Training” tutorials chapters 8-11

T 2/24  Logotypes / Color
   •  **PREP:** 40 curved shapes that represent your character/yourself due
   •  **PREP:** 10 logotype sketches that incorporate shapes and initials
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Illustrator CS6 Essential Training” tutorials chapters 12-end

T 3/3  Brief History of Poster Design / Image as Symbol / Framing
   •  **PREP:** Final logotype design due
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Photoshop CS6 Essential Training” tutorials 9-14

T 3/10  Texture / Pattern / Layers / Transparency
   •  **PREP:** Poster studies due
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Photoshop CS6 Essential Training” tutorials 15-19

T 3/24  Time, Motion, and Narrative / Photography
   •  **PREP:** Final poster design due
   •  **PREP:** Watch “Photoshop CS6 Essential Training” tutorials 20-22

T 3/31  Lighting Experiments / Intro to Image Rights
   •  **PREP:** Storyboard study due
   •  **PREP:** Come to class with your object. You will do a light study on the object in class. If you’re ready, you could potentially shoot your entire storyboard after class on this night.

T 4/7  Grids / Modularity / Rules and Randomness
   •  **PREP:** Final Storyboard due

NO CLASS SPRING BREAK
T 4/14  Intro to Text / Page Layouts  
   • PREP: Brochure study

T 4/21  Intro to Data Visualizations  
   • PREP: Final brochure due

T 4/28  Slide Talk Day  
   • PREP: Be prepared to give a presentation on a famous graphic designer of your choosing!

TBA  Final Portfolios / Data Visualization Critiques / Sketchbooks due