Spring 2015 Syllabus
Johns Hopkins University
The Center for Leadership Education
Visual Rhetoric
663.615.01
Instructor: Charlotte O’Donnell
Email: cod@charlotteodonnell.net
Class Meetings: Thursdays 3:00– 5:30PM
Classroom: Krieger 307
Instructor Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4PM, The Daily Grind (café at top of BLC)

Required Materials

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

Strongly Recommended Materials

Lynda.com subscription
I will be teaching basic skills in Adobe Creative Suite software in class. For those of you that want advanced tutorials in the program, I recommend the video tutorials on Lynda.com. Subscription is $25 per month. For those students who are reluctant to pay for their own subscription, the Digital Media Center has a subscription.

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
This class is designed to help graduate students in the sciences become better visual communicators. We’ll spend the semester learning fundamental techniques involved in producing visual designs – with an emphasis on applying them to conference posters, technical photographs and other data visualizations.

Through a series of in-class exercises, you’ll learn the basics of Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. You’ll apply principles of visual perception, typography, color,
composition, photography, grids to the design of various visual documents typically used in the sciences. The assignments will build toward the design of a conference poster, which you will produce at the end of the semester.

**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photo / Data Visualization</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**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**
Module terms are very short, and we’re going to be doing most of our work in class. For this reason, attendance is required for all classes this semester. Each absence will result in a 10 point deduction from your final grade. Please note that a late arrival to class (7 minutes) counts as half an absence.

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.

**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/lesen_undergraduate_handbook/academic-ethics-manual](http://eng.jhu.edu/wse/lesen_undergraduate_handbook/academic-ethics-manual)) for more information.
This is what I have to say: Please, please don’t make me fail you!

**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](http://jhuaa.org/DSS/index.html)

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**Tentative Course Schedule**

T 1/29  
Course Intro / What is Design? / Visual Perception / Image as Symbol
• IN CLASS: Exercise TBA
• IN CLASS: Image research exercise

T 2/5  Visual Unity / Figure, Ground / Page Layout
• PREP: Come to class with a topic for a poster project. You can choose to create a poster for a project which you’re currently working on, or you can do a poster for another lab group, or you can revise an old poster.
• IN CLASS: Adobe Illustrator basics: document setup, creating guides, selection tools, type tool, layers, shape tool, pen tool, clipping masks
• IN CLASS: 10 different ideas for images your poster might contain
• IN CLASS: 20 different page layout sketches

T 2/12  Intro to Photography
• PREP: Bring an object you’d like to photograph to class
• IN CLASS: You’ll take commercial grade photographs of your object and learn to touch up that photo in Adobe Photoshop
• IN CLASS: Adobe Photoshop basics: image resolution, layers, brightness and contrast, color adjustment, adjustment layers, healing brush, history brush

T 2/19  Rhythm, Balance / Scale / Color / Intro to Typography / Grid
• PREP: Bring the text for your poster to class with you. Try to come with an idea about the sections into which the text might be divided – and the most effective headlines that announce those divisions
• IN CLASS: You’ll create a baseline grid on which to lay out your text

T 2/26  Intro to Data Visualizations
• PREP: Bring a data visualization to class with you that you’d like to revise. Tables, graphs, maps and other diagrams are all game!
• IN CLASS: You’ll refine that visualization, stripping it of any chart junk and making it easier to read.

T 3/5  Studio Day
• IN CLASS: You’ll have the entire class period to work on your poster

T 3/12  Poster Critique
• PREP: Come to class with a printed version of your poster. We’ll critique the final design. We’ll also discuss printing issues and how to troubleshoot.