ART 155-02 — Fall 2012

Visual Communication I

Tuesday / Thursday
1:00 pm — 3:45 pm
XARTS 006 (orange lab)

Scott Murray
shmurray@usfca.edu
xarts.usfca.edu/~shmurray
Kalmanovitz Hall 475

Office hours:
Wednesdays 9:00–11:00am
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**

Each project in this course must consist almost entirely of original work, done by you. Whenever content is appropriated from elsewhere, you must clearly credit the original sources of any such borrowed elements, whether text-based (as in written work) or visual (as with photographs or other images).

You must observe and respect the university’s policy regarding plagiarism as noted in the college’s Academic Honesty Policy. As this policy stipulates, all writing submitted for this course, whether in draft form or final form, must not represent the words or ideas of another person without reference or citation. All writing projects for this course, including research papers, annotated bibliographies, and project text must be submitted to the TurnItIn website when requested by the professor. Any student who violates plagiarism
standards or any other Academic Integrity standards can expect to receive a failing grade for the project and the course.

**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. Any student found doing work for another course, or concentrating on extracurricular interests, will be asked to leave class and will be given an absence for the period.

**Please** no email, text messaging, mobile devices, Facebook-ing, iTunes-playing, YouTube-watching, or other extraneous activities during class. Please turn 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
- black-core matte board
- high-quality paper for color printing (e.g., Epson Ultra Premium Presentation Matte inkjet paper, 13”x19”)
- 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 grade by one entire grade level, and 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.

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.

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 like backblaze.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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Successful fulfillment of the project’s communication goals, and adequate process documentation. Project planning, design, and execution performed at an average level.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>Did not fulfill the project’s communication goals, and process documentation was inadequate. Does not meet the minimum requirements for the course.</td>
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**Grade Weights by Project**

Each of this course’s three 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.

- **20%**  **Project 1**  **Pixels** — Design three visual compositions of photographs that convey a thematic message. Using original photographs of your own, compose and manipulate the design with Photoshop.
Project 2  Lines — Develop a personal visual identity by crafting a monogram that expresses the intended qualities. Using Illustrator, artfully merge your initials into a single visual element and create an identity document illustrating how the monogram would be used in different contexts.

Project 3  Pages — Research, write, and design a historical timeline that covers some topic in this history of design. Using InDesign, design, print, and assemble a multi-page, full-color booklet that presents important elements in the timeline along with historical images.

In-class 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.

Readings and responses — For each assigned reading, you will write a brief response paper of 2-3 paragraphs. Papers are due to me, already printed, at the beginning of each class session. For each reading, I will provide questions for you to reflect on in your response.

Response papers will be scored on a 2-point scale:
2—Referenced the reading and offered original thoughts in a cohesive and reflective form
1—Referenced the reading, but offered no original response
0—No reference to the reading, or no paper submitted

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

ISBN-10: 1856697355

ISBN-10: 0495915777

Other Required Readings

Arnheim, Rudolf. “Form”.

Barthes, Roland. “Rhetoric of the Image”.


Hollis, Richard. “Graphic Design a Concise History”.

Lupton, Ellen. *Thinking with Type*.

Mitchell, W.J.T. “What is an Image”.

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

Course Website

http://xarts.usfca.edu/~shmurray/viscommi/

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 check for updates 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).

Week 1  Tue  Aug 21  Introductions / What is design?
Thu  Aug 23  XARTS lab and computers
            Photo safari

Week 2  Tue  Aug 28  Pixels
Thu  Aug 30  Photographs as pixels
            Importing photos
            Pixels project introduced

Week 3  Tue  Sep 4  Conceptual Structures
Thu  Sep 6

Week 4  Tue  Sep 11  Unity
Thu  Sep 13  Aesthetic consistency and message

Week 5  Tue  Sep 18  Color
Thu  Sep 20  Pixels interim critique

Week 6  Tue  Sep 25  Pattern and Texture
Thu  Sep 27  Pixels final critique
            Lines project introduced
            Special guest (TBD)

Week 7  Tue  Oct 2  Signs
Thu  Oct 4  Form versus content

Week 8  Tue  Oct 9  Fall Break
Thu  Oct 11  Line

Week 9  Tue  Oct 16  Shape
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td><strong>Symmetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Lines interim critique&lt;br&gt;Special guest (TBD)</td>
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<td>Oct 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td><strong>Grid</strong>&lt;br&gt;Lines final critique&lt;br&gt;Pages project introduced</td>
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<td>Nov 1</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td><strong>Visual Structures</strong>&lt;br&gt;Field trip (TBD)</td>
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<td>Nov 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Nov 13</td>
<td><strong>Form and Content</strong>&lt;br&gt;Special guest (TBD)</td>
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<td>Nov 15</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Nov 20</td>
<td>Pages interim critique&lt;br&gt;Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>Nov 22</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Nov 27</td>
<td>Studio time</td>
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<td>Nov 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Pages final critique</td>
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