

Applied Design Principles & Practices/SPDA 3030/501/520

Instructor Information

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Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

Good design expresses insight into human behavior, psychology, perception, and meaning-making. This course balances a scholarly understanding of design with the practical execution of the design. The course surveys design principles applicable to a variety of industries and professions. You will gain a foundational understanding of universal laws of design, human factors, and design methodologies that you may use throughout your education and career. For non-art/design majors only.

The course is divided into weekly modules, each building upon the previous one. The course integrates your project with the principles we are studying whenever possible. I also strive to expose you to the skills you need to succeed professionally.

These skills include:

Problem-Solving: Developing skills to identify design problems, analyze them, and propose effective solutions.

Design Thinking: Understanding the principles of design thinking, a problem-solving approach that emphasizes empathy, ideation, and prototyping.

User-Centered Design: Focusing on designing products, services, or experiences with the end user in mind, involving user research, personas, and usability testing.

Critical Thinking: Analyzing and evaluating design choices critically, considering their impact on the user and the overall design objectives.

Ethical Considerations in Design: Considering ethical implications in design decisions, including accessibility, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.

Collaboration and Communication: Working effectively in a team, communicating design ideas to stakeholders, and incorporating feedback.

Upon successful completion of this course, you will:

- Identify principles of design in digital and analog objects
- Create artifacts using design principles
- Explain and effectively execute a design process (application)
- Demonstrate ability to critique designs using design principles rather than opinions

How to Succeed in this Course

One important way to succeed in this course is to take responsibility for asking questions, seeking clarification, and participating in discussions. While I will make every effort to communicate my expectations and to explain assignments clearly, I will depend on you to request clarifications.

I encourage you to contact me via email or come see me during my office hours.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

UNT strives to offer you a high-quality education and a supportive environment, so you learn and grow. As a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can be successful at UNT, go to unt.edu/success and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Required/Recommended Materials

Required reading materials:

- William Lidwell, Kritina Holden, Jill Butler (2010). Universal Principles of Design, Revised and Updated: 125 Ways to Enhance Usability, Influence Perception, Increase Appeal, Make Better Design Decisions, and Teach through Design, Rockport Publishers; 2nd Second Edition, ISBN-10: 1592535879, ISBN-13: 978-1592535873
- Supplemental required reading materials will be posted on Canvas as Perusal assignments.

Required course materials:

- An unlined sketchbook
- Pencils
- A sharpie
- An ultra-fine point marker

Technology requirements for courses with digital materials:

- This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Course Requirements/Schedule

The first section of the course introduces you to design ethics, unpacks the question: What is Design? and identifies design principles in digital and analog objects while demonstrating your ability to critique designs using design principles rather than opinions. The remainder of the course targets specific design theories and principles to support you in creating artifacts using design principles and explaining and effectively executing a design process (application.)

You will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class and the calendar is subject to change, citing the [Emergency Notifications and Procedures Policy](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049>).

Week	Main Topic	Assignment / Deliverable	% of Final Grade
1	What is Design? (orientation, definitions, scope)	Read & Respond; Exit ticket reflections	2%
2	Elements of Design (line, shape, color, texture, space)	Micro-composition redesign	3%
3	Visual Organization & Hierarchy	Studio sketching & critique	3%
4	Perception & Psychology of Design I (Gestalt, illusions, affordances)	Diagram & Reflection	4%
5	Perception & Psychology of Design II (bias, preference, similarity)	Bias Mapping Workshop response	4%
6	Hierarchy, Function, & Communication	Redesigned artifact + 1-page rationale	5%
7	Environmental & Spatial Design	Environmental Intervention Sketch (2D/3D mockup + reflection)	5%
8	Perception in Practice: Visual Clarity	Poster Critique / Redesign	5%
9	Perception in Practice: Aesthetic Appeal	Mood Board + Visual Appeal Audit	5%
10	Perception in Practice: Usability	Usability Audit + Redesign Exercise	5%
11	Perception in Practice: Learnability	Progressive Disclosure Sketching	5%
12	Design Across Modalities (print, digital, environmental)	Visual Matrix Mapping Workshop	5%
13	Play to Learn (design games, improvisation)	Design Charades Game participation + critique	4%
14	Designing to Teach (mentoring, education kits)	1-Page Teaching Kit	5%
15	Thanksgiving Break	—	—
16	Reflection & Integration	Mini-Portfolio (Cover, Artifact Gallery, Reflection Essay, Looking Forward Statement)	40%

Assessing Your Work

Assignment of Letter Grades:

A = 900-1000

B = 800-899

C = 700-799

D = 600-699

F = 0-599

Grades are based on mastery of the content. As a rule, I do not grade on a “curve” because that is a comparison of your outcomes to others. I do, however, encourage you to find opportunities to learn with and through others. Explore [Navigate’s Study Buddy \(https://navigate.unt.edu\)](https://navigate.unt.edu) tool to join study groups. Maximize your learning with our coaching staff at the Learning Center. Focus on areas where you are struggling in this course by attending scheduled study group sessions with me the week before each exam. Forward together!

Generative AI Permitted Use: *In this course, you are encouraged to use Generative AI (GenAI) tools such as [insert tool(s) here, e.g., Claude, ChatGPT, Gemin] to support your learning and develop skills for a GenAI-oriented workforce. This use will help us stay technically proficient and ethically grounded. However, GenAI should complement, not replace, our course materials. If something seems unclear, feel free to ask.*

I use GenAI to [insert action(s) here, e.g., enhance materials, streamline tasks, generate prompts, create scenarios, draft syllabi, build study guides, analyze performance]. I will always disclose how I use GenAI, and I expect the same from you.

In line with the UNT Honor Code, all work you submit must be your own. Using GenAI tools without attribution or relying on them to complete assignments violates academic integrity and will be addressed according to our policy.

Attendance and Participation

Research has shown that students who attend class are more likely to be successful. You should attend every class unless you have a university excused absence such as active military service, a religious holy day, or an official university function as stated in the [Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy \(PDF\) \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039). Please let me know if you cannot attend a class due to an emergency. Your safety and well-being are important to me.

Because this course involves collaboration, participation is essential to learning. Our project-based activities require actively engaging in discussions and group work. I understand tardiness and absences may occur. If you are late to class, please email me to let me know the circumstances. If you must miss class, please let me know before your absence.



UNT Policies

You can access these policies on the [Student Support Services & Policies](https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies) page (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>).