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ADES 1500.001: Introduction to Communication Design

Teaching Philosophy

This course is designed to help you explore the broad field of communication design while developing visual literacy, critical thinking, and confidence. You are not expected to arrive as a designer—you are here to learn. My goal is to create a classroom where curiosity, respectful discussion, and thoughtful participation are valued as much as getting the "right" answer.

Course Description

This course is an overview of the field of Communication Design. In the class we will explore the fields of User Experience Design and Graphic Design. You will spend a majority of your time looking at and interacting with images of graphic design, advertising, illustration, websites, and user experience design in order to understand and identify terminology, examples of metaphorical thinking, principles of Gestalt, form analysis, and semiotics. We will also explore ethics, creative teamwork, design planning, creative processes, and human communication.

Prerequisite(s): None.

Not offered every term/semester.

Course Structure

In this face-to-face course all lectures will be delivered in class. The rest of the content (Discussions, quizzes, assignments, and exams) will be facilitated online in our Canvas Module. There are 15 weeks of content that you will move through. I will open a new module each week on Monday morning.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, learners will be able to:

- Examine and state your own goals related to your future professional life.
- Identify the diverse areas of professional practice in the field of Communication Design.
- Describe the roles design plays in the contemporary and future world.
- Identify the spectrum of design settings, from graphic-focused to human-centered.
- Identify examples of the elements and principles of design at play in visual communication.
- Conduct formal analyses of graphic design and user experience design.
- Analyze and identify the grouping principles in gestalt theory as manifest in examples of design.
- Name and explain the basic tenets of semiotics as they relate to design.
- Identify and apply a variety of metaphor and related metaphors as a means of conceptual development.
- Recognize and apply a variety of brainstorming techniques.
- Recognize and demonstrate how theories and methodologies are used and applied in graphic design.
- Recognize and demonstrate how theories and methodologies are used and applied in user experience.
- Evaluate your strengths, interests, and weaknesses that pertain to a variety of fields in Communication Design.

Prerequisites

There are no required prerequisites for this course.

Required Texts.

There are no required textbooks.

Suggested Texts.

Graphic Design: the New Basics, 2nd ed., by Ellen Lupton and Jennifer Cole Phillips. Princeton Architectural Press, New York, and Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore.

Thoughts on Interaction Design, 2nd ed., by Jon Kolko. Elsevier.

Course Schedule

The schedule below is subject to change. Guest speakers may be added or rescheduled based on their availability. Any updates will be announced in class and posted in Canvas.

Week 1 (Aug. 17-23) – Syllabus & Course Introduction

Discussion 1

Week 2 (Aug. 24-30) – Creativity & Brainstorming

Quiz 1, Quiz 2, Discussion 2

Week 3 (Aug. 31-Sept. 6) – Introduction to User Experience

Discussion 3

Week 4 (Sept. 7-13) – User Experience Design I

Quiz 3, Discussion 4

Week 5 (Sept. 14-20) – User Experience Design II

Quiz 4, Discussion 5

Week 6 (Sept. 21-27) – User Experience Design III

Quiz 5, Discussion 6, Assignment 1

Week 7 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4) – Introduction to Graphic Design

Discussion 7

Week 8 (Oct. 5-11) – Graphic Design I

Quiz 6, Discussion 8

Week 9 (Oct. 12-18) – Graphic Design II

Quiz 7, Discussion 9. **NOTE: Class on October 15 will be virtual.**

Week 10 (Oct. 19-25) – Graphic Design III

Quiz 8, Discussion 10, Assignment 2

Week 11 (Oct. 26-Nov. 1) – Elements & Principles of Design

Quiz 9, Discussion 11, Exam 1

Week 12 (Nov. 2-8) – Gestalt Theory & Analysis

Quiz 10, Discussion 12

Week 13 (Nov. 9-15) – Semiotics

Quiz 11, Discussion 13

Week 14 (Nov. 16-22) – Metaphor in Design

Quiz 12, Discussion 14

Fall Break (Nov. 23-29)

Week 15 (Nov. 30-Dec. 6) – Comprehensive Review

Discussion 15, Exam 2

Week 16 (Dec. 7-11) – Final Exams

Comprehensive Exam 3

Attendance Policy

Students will be responsible for checking themselves into class using iClicker to verify attendance. [To check in, use this invite link to join our class.](#) ➞ A slide with the same instructions and a QR code will be displayed at the beginning of class.

Regular attendance is expected and is an important part of your success in this course. You are allowed **three (3) absences** without penalty. Four tardies is equivalent to one absence. Early departures or tardies of more than 30 minutes will constitute an absence. Beginning with the third absence, your final course grade will be reduced as follows:

- **4 absences:** Final course grade reduced by **one letter grade**
- **5 absences:** Final course grade reduced by **two letter grades**
- **6 absences:** Final course grade reduced by **three letter grades**
- **7 or more absences:** Final course grade reduced by **four letter grades (F)**

For example, a final average of **91 (A)** would become an **81 (B)** after four absences, a **71 (C)** after five absences, a **61 (D)** after six absences, and a **51 (F)** after seven absences.

The only excused absences will be due to a death in your immediate family, or by a medical excuse. Please review the UNT Policy 06.039 (<https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.039%20Student%20Attendance%20and%20Authorized%20Absences.pdf>) ➞ It is the student's responsibility to contact the professor in advance of an excused absence as regards religious holidays, participation in an official university function, required military service, or pregnancy or parenting under Title IX. In matters of illness, please work directly with the instructor if you miss a class. If your illness keeps you away from classes for 5 consecutive days, then you will work with the Dean of Students to verify the absence. Once verified, they will contact all of your professors concerning your absence. Here is a link to the Student [FAQs](#) ➞ from the Dean of Students concerning absences.

I want to remind you that it is in your best interest to attend the lectures. As there are no textbooks for the semester, the only place you will hear any description and explanation of the concepts we are studying will be in class.

Grading Points and Percentages

Discussions. 225 total points.

Quizzes. 220 total points.

Assignments. 200 total points.

Exams. 300 total points.

Total Points Possible: 945 total points.

Office Hours

Instructor: Whitney Rush

Office: Art Building, Room 345E

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays from 9:30-11:00am

Email: whitney.rush@unt.edu

Communication

All student communication and course updates will be conducted through Canvas. When contacting the professor or the TAs, please do so through Canvas. As a rule of thumb, if your question requires more than a few sentences in reply, please schedule or utilize office hours.

I want this course to feel approachable, and I encourage you to ask questions. Chances are, if you're wondering something, someone else is too.

For questions about course content, lectures, assignments, due dates, or logistics, please use the **Course Q&A Discussion Board** in Canvas. Posting questions there allows everyone to benefit from the answer, and often a classmate may be able to help before I see it. I also encourage you to exchange contact information with a classmate early in the semester so you have a study partner or someone to check in with if you miss class.

If your question is personal or involves grades, accommodations, or another private matter, please email me directly. I typically respond to emails within **one business day** (and often sooner). Emails sent during evenings, weekends, or university holidays will be answered during the next business day.

Because this course enrolls approximately 200 students, thoughtful feedback takes time. I appreciate your patience.

Feedback

My goal is to return feedback on major assignments within **two weeks** of the due date. If circumstances require additional grading time, I will communicate an updated timeline through a Canvas announcement.

I regularly monitor the Course Q&A discussion board and will participate throughout the semester to answer questions, clarify expectations, and provide additional guidance as needed.

Grading

A: 90-100% (Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs well above the minimum criteria.)

B: 80-89.99% (Good, impressive work. The student performs above the minimum criteria.)

C: 70-79.99% (Solid, college-level work. The student meets the criteria of the assignment.)

D: 60-69.99% (Below average work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria.)

F: 59.99-0 (Failing work. The student fails to complete the assignment, or does so in an unacceptable manner.)

Grade-related Policies

Grading

Grades will be rounded up to the nearest 1% at the end of the semester.

Late Work

I will not accept late work in this course. All work turned in after the deadline will receive a grade of zero (0) unless the student has a [university-excused absence](#) ➞ and provides documentation with 48 hours of the missed deadline.

Turnaround Time

I aim to return graded work to you within two weeks of the due date. When this is not possible, I will send an announcement to the class.

Grade Disputes

You are required to wait 24 hours before contacting me to dispute a grade. Within that time, I expect that you will review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work you turned in. If you would still like to meet, email me to set up a zoom meeting (I will not discuss grades over email). You should attend to our scheduled meeting with specific examples that demonstrate that you earned a higher grade than you received. If you miss your scheduled meeting, you forfeit your right to a grade dispute. If you do not contact me to schedule a meeting within seven days of receiving your grade, you also forfeit your right to a grade dispute.

Extra Credit

Extra credit may be offered at my discretion provided it enhances the learning experience.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and may result in failure of an assignment, the class, or result in removal from the university. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. The student will first be notified in writing via email to schedule a zoom meeting with the instructor to determine the next level of action. If further action is warranted, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose an additional penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d) dual submission of a paper or project, or re-submission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e) any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. Plagiarism is also literary or artistic theft. It is the false assumption of authorship; the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind and presenting it as one's own. Copying someone else's writing or art, intact or with inconsequential changes, and adding one's name to the result constitutes plagiarism.

Generative AI Usage

UNT's policy states that the unauthorized use of any person or technology that assists in a student's assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating under the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 06.003). Unless explicit authorization is given by the instructor, AI tools cannot be used to assist in the completion of assignments, projects, or papers, doing so will result in a cheating violation. All submitted work must be your original creation.

Academic Integrity

According to [UNT Policy 18.1.16](#) ➞, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment & Assault

Sexual harassment means unwelcome sex-based verbal or physical conduct that unreasonably interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from educational programs or activities. For purposes of this policy, conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive if it is frequent, or threatening, or humiliating in nature, unreasonably interferes with or limits the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the University's educational program or activity—including when the conduct reasonably can be considered to create an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive educational environment. Conduct constituting sexual harassment, as defined herein, toward another person of the same or opposite sex is prohibited by this policy. Examples of conduct which might be considered sexual harassment under this policy may be found here: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/16-005> ➞

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that teasing and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0 ➞. UNT's Student Advocate she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help. But please know up front: if you share that you have been a victim of sexual or domestic abuse, the faculty or staff member you share that information is required by law to report that to appropriate authorities in the university. There can be no exceptions.

Disability Accommodations

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 Accommodation (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 see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda> ➞. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Grades of "Incomplete"

An Incomplete Grade ("I") is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if a student (1) is passing the course and (2) has a justifiable and documented reason, beyond the control of the student (such as serious illness or military service), for not completing the work on schedule. Please consultation with your instructor if you believe you have reason to request an Incomplete Grade. Please note: A grade of Incomplete is not automatically assigned to students.

Emergencies

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers and contact information at <https://www.my.unt.edu/links-to-an-external-site>) ➞. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. The website for UNT Emergency Guide is <https://emergency.unt.edu/about-us/links-to-an-external-site>) ➞.

However, in the event of a closure at the physical university, you may still be expected to complete your required work in this hybrid course (this will be based on whether or not I was able to deliver the week's lecture).

Final Note

This syllabus is intended to provide a roadmap for the semester. Reasonable changes may be made as needed to support student learning or accommodate university scheduling. Any significant changes will be communicated through Canvas and announced in class.