Course Introduction

Graphic Design is a practice of input and output—keen observation feeds thoughtful creation. Design begins with sensitive, broad seeing, training the eye for informed making. Building on a rich and varied history of fine and commercial art, graphic design today touches nearly every material, form, purpose, and audience. It is applied in turn to share, intrigue, question, and implore.

In this course we will explore the fundamental methods, concepts, and tools for graphic design practice, laying the foundation for experimentation, strategy, and agency in design. Coursework will address the core topics of composition, typography, image-making, and color, and their utility in service of conveying information and/or narrative.

Objectives and Class Structure

Class time will consist of lectures, demonstrations, studio work hours, in-process critiques—both in small groups and individual—and full class critiques when projects are due. We will view selections from the special collections at Olin Library, screen relevant films, and learn about prominent figures in the field from student presentations throughout the semester. Students are expected to consult with required readings in developing concepts for coursework.

Expectations and Course Policy

Arrive on time and be prepared with all necessary coursework, materials, and tools. Progress and projects that are due must be exported, cut, trimmed, and assembled before arriving to class.

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory. If you need to miss class, prior notice must be given and approved by the instructor, and more than two unexcused absences will affect your grade.

You are expected to be an active participant in critique and class discussions. It is equally important to learn how to speak about design as it is to be skilled in practice.

All work—design and writing—must be original and of your own making, in keeping with the University Honor Code. Any external sources (image, text, or otherwise) must be appropriately referenced.
Required Materials
— The Adobe Creative Suite (Illustrator, InDesign, and Photoshop) will be used for all projects. Select projects will be printed. This requires extra preparation and time for trial and error. Course printing should fit within the course materials fee, but any printing beyond will be at your own cost.
— Cutting mat and x-acto blade for trimming work
— Digital camera (smartphone should be sufficient for project needs)
— Bookbinding materials may be required for the final project, depending on the selected binding method.

Craft
Graphic design is a practice that demands a high level of attention to detail and craft. This must be reflected both in the work itself, and in the presentation of projects. This includes leaving time in your process for editing text, printing early enough to account for mistakes, and neatly trimmed, glued, taped, and bound work. Plan ahead, and do not print work or prepare files right before class or a critique.

Critique
A crucial part of the design process, and this course, is generous, open dialogue about our work. We learn from the constructive criticism of our own work as well as that of our peers and colleagues, together bringing work to its potential. Key to this process is helpful and respectful dialogue of a professional tone. Thoughtful comments assess work based on the graphic design principles we are studying, rather than personal preference.

Evaluation
Students will be assessed based on their participation and commitment, depth and variety in process, and on the overall body of work produced in the course.

Commitment
— Punctual and consistent attendance
— Participation in critiques and discussions
— Multiple, varied iterations that demonstrate a thoughtful and invested progress
— Work that is demonstrative of research conducted in tandem with design

Body of Work
— Demonstrated, clear relationship between concept and design
— Quality of research and writing for projects and presentations
— Originality and variety in approach
— Neat and considered craft for final projects

Grade Structure
15% Participation
10% Presentation
75% Studio Projects
**Assignments Overview**

Detailed assignment sheets will be handed out for each new project.

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**Presentations**

Throughout the semester each student will give a 10-minute presentation about a prominent graphic designer, sharing their life and work with the class. Presentations can be made in PDF, Keynote, or Powerpoint format, and should demonstrate thorough research, supported by relevant images.

**Project 1**

**Letter Form**

An introduction to composition as well as the anatomy of typography, you will explore the nuance, complexity, and diversity of the letterform structure. Using images of letters—digital and/or those documented on our visit to Special Collections—explore the interaction of these shapes. Letters can be cropped, rotated, overlapped etc. to create compositions that explore both the detail of the letterform and the negative spaces they carve.

**Project 2**

**Make**

Explore the materiality, symbolism, and ubiquity of the circle. Using a variety of methods and materials, create, document, build, uncover, and collect 30 circles. Push the bounds of the shape and our expectations, and explore as many image-making techniques—both digital and analog—as you can. Work intuitively, freely, and broadly—experiment as much as you can!

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**In Class Exercise**

**The Space Between**

A one-day in-class exercise closely explores kerning—the spacing between letters, which produces balanced, legible typesetting. First, typeset your full name (first, last) in both title and upper case. Then explore kerning with the book title of your choice (title must be at least three words long).
Project 3  
Expressive Typography  
The typesetting and composition of letterforms is an opportunity to convey an added layer of meaning. For this exercise, letterforms—both by typeface selection and in their composition—will be used to create visual onomatopoeia, expressing the meaning of a selected word.

Project 4  
Rhythm, Pattern, Contrast  
Rhythm is an important factor in all aspects of design—from the composition of an image to the pacing of a book. Working with line and shape, develop a pattern unit that purposefully conveys a certain rhythm or movement. The final form of this project will incorporate both the pattern, and one demonstrated application of your design to an object, place, or surface.

Project 5  
Narrative and Sequence  
How might you express the narrative of a place? What does it feel like to be there? What is it that makes this place unique? Use any documentary means of your choosing (photography, rubbings, collected objects, scanned paraphernalia) to convey a physical site—a corner, a building, a corridor, a field. Bring these collections of images into the grid, employing sequence, composition, and pacing to further express your narrative. The final form can be a poster or a booklet.

Project 6  
Profile  
Building on Project 5, join imagery and typography through designing a profile of one of your classmates. After interviewing your subject, consider the narrative of their responses. What typeface most suits the content, their personality? What kinds of images, in content and in form, will best convey the tone of your profile? How can you go about collecting and documenting these artifacts, portraits? What scale and density on the page? The final form, a booklet or folded publication, should correspond with your concept for the piece.
Project 7  Typographic Poster

Bringing together rigorous use of the grid, typesetting, hierarchy, and expressive type to a larger format, your own interests and research will be incorporated into the design of a typographically-driven poster. Select an event—past, present, future, or invented—to share on this poster. The purpose of the poster can be to advertise a current event, explain a historical event, or be a call to action. Consider how form responds to content—what typefaces are relevant to the content and its historical context? What language and messaging will suit your content, and catch the eye of passersby?

Project 8  Final Project —Book Design

The final project will be a typographically driven chapbook with the text of your choosing. The concept of your design approach should reflect a certain position, commentary, interruption of, or interaction with the text. How can experimentation with typography incorporate an overlaid narrative into the text?
Presentation Subjects

Ruth Ansel
Saul Bass
Michael Beirut
Irma Boom
Joseph Muller-Brockmann
Muriel Cooper
Keetra Dean Dixon
Charles And Ray Eames
Chermayeff & Geismar
Milton Glaser
Natasha Jen
Tobias Frere Jones
Tibor Kalman
Zuzana Licko
Herb Lubalin
Alvin Lustig
Bruno Munari
Paul Rand
Emil Ruder
Ikko Tanaka
Edward Tufte
Paula Scher
Massimo Vignelli

* If there is a designer whom you would like to research and is not on this list, you can submit an alternate designer for instructor approval.

Recommended Preliminary Typefaces

Avenir
Baskerville
Bell MT
Bembo
Bodoni
Clarendon
Didot
Din
Futura
Garamond
Helvetica
Jenson
Minion
Neue Haas Grotesk
News Gothic
Sabon
Scala
Trade Gothic
Univers
REFERENCES—PUBLICATIONS

Books
The Elements of Typographic Style, Robert Bringhurst
Thinking with Type, Ellen Lupton
Design as Art, Bruno Munari
Making and Breaking the Grid, Timothy Samara
Design with Type, Carl Dair
Inside Paragraphs: Typographic Fundamentals, Cyrus Highsmith
A Type Primer, John Kane
Grid Systems, Josef Muller Brockmann
Meggs’ History of Graphic Design, Philip B. Meggs, Alston W. Purvis
The New Typography, Jan Tschichold
Wolfgang Weingart: My Way to Typography

ONLINE RESOURCES

Typography—Purchasing
Font Shop
Font Font
My Fonts
Commercial Type

Graphic Design
AIGA
Design Observer
It’s Nice That
Lubalin Center (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lubalincenter/)
Metropolis
Under Consideration — Brand New
Under Consideration — For Print Only

Software Tutorials
All Wesleyan students have free access to Lynda tutorials. These will be helpful for technical questions related to the Adobe Creative Suite.

Typography—Educational
Fonts in Use
Friends of Type
Identifont (for identifying typefaces)
Method Kerning Practice (http://type.method.ac/)
Thinking With Type
Typedia
Type Foundries Archive (http://type-foundries-archive.com/)
Typographica
What the Font (for identifying typefaces)
# Schedule

Dates for project deadlines may shift as the semester progresses.

More detailed dates will be outlined on project assignment sheets.