Introduction to Graphic Design
ART S131: Typography for Print and Video

Session B
July 3 — August 2
RM 210

Mondays and Wednesdays
1–4:15 pm EST

Daniel Pizarro
dnpizarro@gmail.com
danielpizarro.studio

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This studio course will introduce you to graphic design as a discipline and a practice. The class will focus on the various ways design functions—how visual communication takes form and is recognized by an audience. We will learn and use design principles and processes, and begin to understand the context and impact of graphic design.

This class is taught through a series of weekly studio assignments. Each week, we will discuss your work in group feedback sessions and analyze assigned readings and video content. There will also be occasional workshops, lectures, and presentations.

We will focus on developing the ability to skillfully create and manipulate core graphic elements, such as type and image. We'll practice how to translate ideas, information, and emotions into meaningful and evocative visual expressions. We'll investigate the nature and use of key visual tools such as composition, color, contrast, hierarchy, scale, rhythm, and visual metaphor.

To help foster an appreciation for typography and layout, in the first half of the class we’ll work primarily with letters and words. We’ll gradually transition to using color, shapes and photography, exploring visual hierarchies and expressive typography. Through a series of interrelated, progressively complex assignments, you’ll develop a process intended to help you create a body of accomplished visual work, a vocabulary for critically engaging that work, and a better understanding of the discipline as a whole, providing a strong foundation for more advanced study and skill development.

Goals

– Obtain an understanding of the relationship between form and content.
– Ability to describe the rationale and logic behind design decisions.
– Understand how to identify and communicate to a specific audience.
– Apply a reflective and iterative process.
– Develop an ability for self and group feedback.
– Situate your work within the context of a problem you are trying to solve through communication design.

Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

– Demonstrate a foundational understanding of graphic principles and techniques (composition, hierarchy, structure).
– Demonstrate a design process that incorporates research methods, iteration, and feedback.
– Articulate the role of design or the designer while gaining exposure to a variety of historical and contemporary working designers, their philosophies, and working methodologies.
– Develop an individual design process.
COURSE FORMAT

Class sessions will be structured around group discussions, weekly assignment sharing & feedback sessions, and informal presentations.

Feedback Sessions

Each student should be prepared to present visual progress on their assignments to the class every meeting. You should also be ready to offer constructive feedback to peers, on both concept and form.

Reading, Video Content and Class Discussion

Readings and video content will be required each week. Students are expected to come to class having read or watched the required material prior to class and be prepared to participate when we have class discussions.

Design Club

Each week, post a piece of graphic design that you appreciate on our shared class website or chat. There will be different prompts each week (specific formats like logos, websites, video or specific subjects, like branding or political advocacy). While part of your appreciation can be about the content, you should be prepared to dissect your design selection — design details like typography, layout, production techniques, audience, etc.

Final Presentation

The class will culminate with a final presentation, in which you will also be evaluated for your presentation format. Prioritize presenting visual content (instead of textual descriptions). How you document, compile, and share your work with the class should be just as considered as the final design. What is the best format or tool? What is shown on screen and how do you verbally describe your work?

Grading

Sketches and Assignments (50%)
Relevant research and thoughtful development of project.

Critical Understanding (25%)
Engaging with ideas, images and artefacts and identifying how values and meanings are conveyed. Developing their own views and expressing reasoned judgements. Evidence of analyzing and reflecting on work from diverse contexts.

Personal Qualities (15%)
Inventive and original response to prompt.

Craftsmanship (10%)
Demonstrating mastery of chosen technique.

Projects and participation are evaluated according to the following criteria:

Projects

– Ability to translate conceptual ideas into visual forms or outputs.
– Commitment to in-depth research and an iterative process.
– Receptiveness to feedback.
– Prolific output and inquisitiveness that expands beyond the assignment.
– Designing communications that consider and engage a specific audience.
– Ability to contextualize your work against historical and contemporary design.
– Quality of craft and production, across media.

Participation (Speaking & Presenting)

– Showing studio progress every week.
– Willingness to engage with new techniques and technologies.
– Speak critically and knowledgeably about design, visual culture, and technology.
– Ability to analyze questions from multiple perspectives.
– Thoughtfully present your work.
Responsibility

Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent or sick, unless you have an excused absence (see Attendance and Punctuality). Late assignments or failure to complete assignments before the beginning of class will jeopardize your evaluation in this course. Being unprepared for presentations or failure to do assigned readings, will also affect your final grade.

Assignments not completed by due date are automatically downgraded—this can include assignments turned in severely late.

Attendance and Punctuality

There are no unexcused absences or cuts. Students are expected to attend all classes. Each unexcused absence thereafter results in a partial letter grade reduction of your final grade (e.g. A- becomes B+). Three unexcused absences results in a failing grade.

In addition to regular attendance, punctuality to all classes is expected. Three late arrivals equals one unexcused absence.

An excused absence means that I have received notification of a legitimate excuse (such as illness or a personal or medical emergency) before class starts—preferably by the night before. To nullify an absence, you will need a Dean’s note. If you miss a class you are responsible for catching up.

Software

This class is not software-oriented and you will be partly responsible for teaching yourselves. Some light skill-oriented instruction—such as software training (Adobe InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, and Figma) — will be worked into the curriculum, depending on the needs of the class members. If you have not had Mac experience, and/or you are not familiar with page layout software, it is recommended that you obtain experience/instruction outside of class early in the semester through the Digital Media Center online tutorials like lynda.com.

All graphic design courses have a lab fee of $150.

General Supplies

Notebook/sketchbook
X-acto knife and blades
Self-healing cutting mat
18" Steel ruler
Pencils and pens
Bone folder or scorer
Letter-size paper

Helpful supplies (but not required):
Basic printer
Scanner

If any specific materials are required, I will try to give you enough advance notice to track them down. Otherwise, use your best judgment in determining what you’ll need to complete the assigned exercises and projects.

All readings will be provided as PDFs on the class website.