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GRA 4955C   Spring 2013

Mon / Wed   3:00-5:45p [office hours by appointment]

202   Harbor Hall

description   Design can't save the world. Only designers can.

At this point in your design careers you are savvy enough
to understand your commitment to the communications
world. If that reason is based on money, love, or fame,
this course will not be helpful to you. To make this idea
indelibly clear, both proficiency and self aggrandizing
are not the point. The point is, to hijack an entire
semester for conducting your senior thesis investigation.

By definition, a thesis is an original proposition
that is either proven or disproven through intensive
experimentation, research, and evaluation. The point of
this course will be to chose something that addresses the
first line in this description. 20 schoolchildren died in
CN because of a whackjob with a gun. Is this relevant?
Design is a weapon too. What can you DO with it?

As visual thinkers that have been attending a four year
university in persuit of a BFA (Bachelor of FINE ARTS),
I would like to remind you on the first page of your
syllabus, you will be held to this standard. Displaying
technical and formal skills alone are not passable. It
is better to try and fail but have an interesting and
meaninful dedicated study than something polished and
vacant. In return, you will be granted ample thinkspace
with as much guidance as you need along the way.

deliverables   Output: 3 "considerably involved pieces" of your choice
Documentation: Publication
Written Component: Research Paper
Process: Blog
Presentation: Thesis Review

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policy   All assignments, critiques, and classes* are mandatory
          and participation is expected. Readings are required.
          All work is due pinned up for crit at the start of class,
          even if you're absent. Assignments will NOT be accepted
          by email. Late work is NOT accepted [F].

     *   1 free absence, no questions asked. 3 Unexcused Absences
          = drop 1 letter grade, 5 Unexcused absences = Fail.

          Notify me of any "Excused Absences" with "Official
          Documentation" and bring missed work to following class.
          Tardy = anytime past roll-call; 2 Tardies = 1 absence.
          Your faculty, as a general rule, will work with you if
          you communicate effectively in advance of absences and
          problems. We respond to emails. We do not respond to
          "Day Before" emails. No grace is extended for computer
          problems: DO NOT lose your work.

          No plagiarism. Stealing = failure. Appropriation is not
          theft. See also, RIP: A Remix Manifesto.

structure Given the open structure of the class, self-discipline
          is integral and considered in overall course evaluation.
          Critiques require mandatory participation and thesis
          development is expected. Class time is to be used for
          production : Anyone without something to work on will be
          asked to leave. Bring all ideas and materials to work in
          class, including readings. Revisions are always ongoing.

grading   3 pieces = 30%, Publication = 30%, Research Paper = 30%,
          Blog + Review = 10%; Basis: inventiveness, relevancy,
          coherence, experimentation, investigation, craft, finesse,
          time management, ideas, content, form, evolution,
          impressiveness, participation, attitude, attendance
     *   Grades received at culmination of course upon the final
          and complete thesis package.

documentation Final Class: At the end of the semester, students must
          hand in ALL relevant digital files [collected digitally].
          Photograph all physical work prior to final crit. Bring
          all physical work to final crit. Documentation required to
          receive a final grade.

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required text   Channel Zero, by Brian Wood
                 Hackers & Painters + Revenge of the Nerds, by Paul Graham

suggested text   Design Writing Research, by Ellen Lupton
                 The End of Print, by David Carson
                 Meggs' History of Graphic Design, by Phillip Meggs
                 The Design of Dissent, Mirko Ilic & Milton Glaser
                 Barnbrook Bible, by Jonathan Barnbrook
                 The Making of the Wall, by Gerald Scarfe
                 Things I Have Learned in my Life So Far, by Sagmeister

materials   Materials will vary on a student-to-student basis.

collaboration   Students are encouraged to collaborate in various ways as
                 a reflection of design reality. Please ask about how to
                 make a collaborative thesis function. Minimally, use your
                 peers to help critique and document work.

disability   From the Office of Student Disability Services:
                 Any student with a disability is encouraged to meet
                 with me privately during the first week of class to
                 discuss accommodations. Each student must bring a
                 current Memorandum of Accommodations from the Office of
                 Student Disability Services, which is a prerequisite
                 for receiving accommodations. Accommodated examinations
                 through the Office of Student Disability Services require
                 two weeks notice.

01   intro class : Welcome: Why Are You Here? : Idea is
     Everything lecture : assign Thesis : assign Exercise One
     : assign Paul Graham

02   Exercise One: Frame Due : read aloud to class : discuss
     Paul Graham : Style V Substance lecture : watch Exit
     Through the Gift Shop : assign Blog

03   Researchable Topic Due : discuss as class : assign
     Exercise Two : assign Written Component

04   Exercise Two: Creative Brief Due : group meetings :
     Worlds lecture : assign Exercise Three

05   Exercise Three: Scope Diagram Due : discuss as class :
     Manifester lecture

06   Research Due : group meetings : Kill Deus Ex Machina
     lecture : assign Dealer's Choice : assign Exercise Four

07   Exercise Four: Conceive Output Due : discuss as class :
     Art is Theft lecture : assign Publication : assign Review

08   Activist Art lecture : discuss Channel Zero

09   watch The Wall : open studio

10   1st Draft Research Paper Due : read aloud to class

11   Rockstar Democracy lecture : open studio

12   1st Piece Due : present to class

13   open studio

14   open studio

15   individual crits

16   implement Review Committee: Discuss Plan of Action :
     continue individual crits

5   Senior Project: Portfolio

17   1st Draft of Publication Due : group meetings

18   2nd Draft Research Paper Due : group meetings

19   Rockstar Democracy lecture : watch Good Night & Good Luck

20   Second Piece Due : present to class

21   open studio

22   2nd Draft of Publication Due : group meetings

23   open studio

24   open studio

25   Third Piece Due : present to class

26   Review Blogs : present finished blog to class

27   Revisions Ceremony : group meetings : open studio

28   Research Paper Due : Publication Due

29   open studio

30   Thesis Review: Bring in EVERYTHING for Graphic Design
     Program Gathering

thesis   student-driven work study: emphasis on discovering the
          researchable design topic, developing original ideation,
          implementing media, processes, and production in relation
          to content-first design, and commitment to a formally and
          conceptually meaningful body of work

deliverables

    01   3 Pieces: dealer's choice, vessel relates to content
    02   Publication: journal of thesis investigation
    03   Research paper: publishable essay, discourse on design
    04   Blog: periodic journal of ongoing investigation
    05   Thesis review: formal presentation to the program

exercises

    01   Frame: define a specific point of view
    02   Scope: graphically diagram thesis time
    03   Creative Brief: chart out course of action
    04   First Five: conceive and plan projects
    05   Vessel: folio + presentation plans

lectures

    01   Idea is Everything
    02   Style V Substance
    03   Worlds
    04   Manifester
    05   Kill Deus Ex Machina
    06   Art is Theft
    07   Activist Art
    08   Rockstar Democracy

vids

    01   Exit Through the Gift Shop
    02   The Wall
    03   Good Night & Good Luck

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Thesis

description   It's obvious that interaction has been broken for a
long time. If we observe a conversation from younger
generations, the point is to not ever say anything. If
we observe a group of students sitting in a computer lab,
chances are none of them will acknowledge one another.
Two people on a date will spend more time on Facebook
than being with one another. Communication entails the
exchange of information between two or more parties.
While systems like the English language, iPhones, and
mass transit allow us to quickly and easily communicate
messages like ideas and emotions, there has been an
increasingly inverse relationship between the rise in
technological and mechanical connectivity between any
two people groups and the depreciating merit behind the
those inertactions. Your reactions and alignment with
this observation are encouraged.

In this course, you will address some aspect of this
theme: Interactivity vs. Connectivity

Intentionally, I leave it big and broad.

Consider this from whatever angle you choose. For the
technologically savvy interested in designing for new
media to the romantic armed with stencils and manifestos,
consider how you, an Artist Prophet, use research and
design tools to DO something worthwhile.

components   A researchable topic
Research
Published results in the form of the 5 deliverables

specs   Thesis topic:
- Impresses us: your work will be evaluated on a high
level of intellectual and formal understanding
- Is logical, testable, and meaningful
- Is relevant to our time
- Has not already been done: must be done differently

due   Class 03 : Researchable Topic
Class 06 : Research

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Thesis Blog

description   You will be asked to keep a current blog documenting the progression of your thesis work. We will be using this as a critiquing platform in class to discuss assigned exercises, research, and experimentation. Post any and all written and visual work, even if it feels incomplete or irrelevant. Your blog is intended to function as a resource center as we chart through the semester. Often, you will revert back to previous ideas and tangents. Use this space to save anything and everything. In this instance, censoring and editing is bad.

components   May use Wordpress, or
May hijack a section of your personal site
Words and Images

specs   At least 30 posts that address 30 different thesis ideas
5 of those posts must be >100 words

due   Periodically used for Crit [to be mentioned in class]
Class 26 : Final

Research Paper

description   Your audience is Design Observer, The New York Times, or Princeton Architectural Press. From the go, understand the intent of this paper is for publishing. Yes, it may need edited down later on and depending on who takes it, but what you are writing is NOT an artist statement, manifesto, commentary, persuasive essay, or dissertation. It is an article addressing a researchable design topic.

This entails acuracy, profesionalism, and supporting evidence of your argument [fact checking]. This does NOT entail boring ideas, third-grader writing conventions, and soulless writing.

Be as viscerally direct as possible. Write 3000 words that require you to edit down. Action verbs over adjectives. Intrugue and decisiveness. Pace yourself, just like you would a title sequence. Map out main thesis ideas into logical sections in a rough abstract. Interview someone and structure it as a Q&A, lead us through your entire researchable thesis, or focus on one highly entertaining and inexhaustable aspect of it. Whatever you do, ask yourself 1) Is this interesting? 2) Who would publish this? 3) Why am I writing this piece?

components   1000 words
Evident reseach supporting your arguments

specs   Typography considered

due   Class 10 : First Draft
Class 18 : Second Draft
Class 28 : Final

Dealer's Choice

description   Publish your thesis investigation

This could mean visualizing collected data with a
custom built program, installing a series of graphics
around town, producing a set of posters, drawing a
usable typeface, scripting and performing a short play,
filming a short motion sequence, printing a body of
silver gelatins...Please note, each of these examples
constitutes 1 piece.

What formal decisions make sense with YOUR content?

components   3 "considerably involved pieces" of your choice

specs   A "piece" is a conceptually and formally coherent finished
physical entity. Each piece:
          - Investigates your defined conceptual purpose
          - Is formally relevant to your thesis content
          - Displays varying components/aspects of the thesis
          - Implements linking ideas on a theme
          - Uses a different medium
          - Is a commentary (comments upon your topic)
          - Combines original content with original form

due   Class 12 : 1st Piece
          Class 20 : 2nd Piece
          Class 25 : 3rd Piece

Publication

description   This can be interpreted however you like:

Scientific Journal
Point of Interest Magazine
Handbook
Diary
Artist Book
Newspaper
Zine
Playbill
etc.

Keep in mind that this entity lends itself as a perfect
piece for summarizing your entire written and visual
thesis work. However, whatever format of publication you
choose to model after, it must be apparent.

components   Front / Back Cover
30-40 internal pages
Only ORIGINAL written and visual content

specs   Acknowledges the work of your thesis somehow

due   Class 17 : First Draft
Class 22 : Second Draft
Class 28 : Final

Thesis Review

description   As a test of your curatorial and presentation skills, you
               are asked to present your body of work to the entire USF
               Graphic Design Program student body, all faculty, and two
               additional visiting guest critics. The nature of this
               event will entail an evening scheduled in Harbor Hall's
               conference room (suggested) at the close of Spring 2013
               semester. The nature of the Thesis Review will require
               you to condense a semester's worth of reseach into a
               sizable and timed presentation that consicely reports
               your findings in an interesting and considered manner.

components   - Use whatever means you want. Don't use a projector just
               because that's default.
               - Entertain us
               - Teach us
               - 7 minute presentation (no more no less)
               - 3 minute Q&A
               - Showcases at least one physical piece you've made
               - Please, no shlocky third grader cue cards: ie. Rehersed
               - Considers the space you're presenting in

specs   1 voted person is in charge of setting up date/time/venue
               1 voted person is in charge of notification
               (Note: This class doesn't emphasize event collateral)

due   Class 30

Exercise One: Frame

description   To frame a subject is to define a specific point of view,
               often in relation to a much broader range of concerns.
               Define the subject area of your thesis by explaining
               what you are NOT doing. Reference standard or generic
               approaches to the subject in order to define your own
               position, or indicate the vastness of your topic in order
               to locate your own point of focus.

components   ± 250 words

specs   Introspective
               Interogates thesis interests and insecurities
               Use Text Edit: .txt Plain Text document

due   Class 02

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Exercise Two: Creative Brief

description   Verbalize a course of action.

components   01. Name of Thesis :

02. Purpose :

03. Strategy [how do you achieve the purpose?] :

04. Target Audience :

05. Call to Action :

06. Describe the Composition :

07. Mediums :

08. Content :

09. Tone :

10. Theme [a theme is the central topic, or subject, ie. "Love"] :

11. One Sentence Thesis Statement [a thesis statement clarifies the "so what about the theme?", ie. "Love bites"] :

specs   Post on blog

due   Class 04

Exercise Three: Scope

description   In the year 2050, roughly 30 class periods later,
a tally of 8 dead soul-sucking squirrels, or 147 Ramen
lunches: And so it goes. Graphically diagram your
thesis trajectory in keeping with the content of your
thesis itself. In other words, the manner in which you
construct your scope diagram should be in keeping with
the nature of your thesis topic itself.

Information design or data visualization is the field of
design that compares sets of information in an effective
graphic form. Your task is to chart out your thesis time.
This is not busy work; please use this to help yourself.

Work quickly and decisively. Approach this exercise with
a definitive course of action even if you plan on changing
things later on.

components   Time and goals

specs   Delineates progress over time
Precise and definitive benchmarks
Visualize and predict a course of action
Form and content relate
Medium is up to you: physically produced

due   Class 05

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Exercise Four: Conceive Output

description   The beast is getting warmer. Don't worry, every new idea
               follows the same initial progression: (1) I don't know
               what to do, (2) I don't have any way out, (3) I have to
               do it, (4) Hey, that wasn't so hard!

               Now that you've defined your sandbox, let's take those
               shovels and dig around in it. Conceive and plan your first
               five endeavors. How do you visualize your message[s]?
               If Michel Gondry can produce a film with cardboard [The
               Science of Sleep], and Alan Moore can force comics to
               be everything that they're not supposed to be [V for
               Vendetta], I'm here to inspire you: Go make design DO
               something.

components   Ideas put into action
               Answers: What are you doing? How are you doing it?

specs   Post on blog

due   Class 07