Course syllabus

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Course description

Message design is concerned with the design and creation of instructional messages – or artifacts – that are used to support learning. An effective instructional message will draw on principles of learning, cognition, perception, and aesthetics to deliver content that will motivate, engage, and support the learner in creating new knowledge or developing new skills. And like other areas of design, message design must be driven by the needs of the learner and the constraints of the context in order to achieve successful outcomes.

Because almost all instructional artifacts include a visual component, this class will primarily focus on helping students gain an appreciation for how graphic design can be used to support learning. We will work with a rich variety of instructional content – including presentations, videos, readings, and real-world examples – to explore concepts, construct knowledge, and apply this knowledge to authentic learning problems. You will be working individually and in collaboration with your peers to challenge yourself and grow as a learning designer as you enrich your capabilities for integrating good graphic design into learning content. I am looking forward to sharing my passion for graphic design and learning with the class, and likewise look forward to the knowledge I will gain from working with you as well!

Learning expectations and outcomes

As a result of your efforts in this class, you can expect to:

1. Gain a basic foundational knowledge of graphic design and how it relates to cognition and learning.
2. Develop the skills necessary to make good visual decisions that support learning and performance.
3. Build your ability to create simple but effective instructional artifacts that are visually appealing and
4. Build the conceptual knowledge and vocabulary needed to collaborate with graphic designers, illustrators, producers, or other visual professionals in the future.

Specific learning outcomes include:

1. Define and discuss messages and message design within the context of learning.
2. Define and discuss basic principles of graphic design as they relate to learning artifacts.
3. Define and discuss basic principles of learning and cognition that influence the way people perceive and interact with learning artifacts.
4. Evaluate instructional artifacts based on principles of cognition, learning, and visual design within an authentic context.
5. Design or revise authentic instructional artifacts that demonstrate an understanding of specific learning and visual principles.
6. Synthesize knowledge and design skills to create an integrated instructional artifact for either print or screen within an authentic instructional context.
7. Explain design decisions using the appropriate terminology and referencing principles of learning and graphic design.

Course structure

This course is held entirely online and is organized into six units (each lasting two weeks). Every unit starts on a Monday at 12:00 midnight, and ends approximately two weeks later, Sunday at 11:59 pm. For any assigned due date, your work is due by 11:59 that day. Our final unit is slightly shorter, ending on Friday, July 28 – which is also the last day of class for Spring/Summer Term 2017. The Blackboard site will be our home base so please be sure to get comfortable with the structure of the site and where announcements, unit content, discussion forums, etc. are located.

For each unit, you will have readings, videos, and other content to work with as well as assignments that ask you to describe, reflect, critique, synthesize, and/or apply the material to solve instructional problems. We will explore the concepts of messages and message design, principles of graphic design and learning, learner analysis, content, structure, layout, color, typography, graphics, universal design, and usability as we work our way through the semester. The culminating learning experience will be a final instructional design project that you will begin brainstorming for in Unit 2, develop a design brief in Unit 3, and complete in Unit 6. Other assignments along the way will give you the opportunity to practice skills and develop artifacts that will assist you in achieving a strong final project that shows off the knowledge and skills you’ve worked hard to develop during the semester. Most assignments you will complete on your own, with the exception of the peer group instructional artifact critique and the Powerpoint redesign assignment, which you will complete with your peer group. For the final assignment, you have the choice of completing it on your own or working in a group of two or three total to design the project. You will be posting some of your assignments to your peer group discussion forums once they have been completed to share and get feedback. I also encourage you to submit drafts of your final project to your peer group for feedback. I will post details and reminders on Blackboard to share with your peers when appropriate.

Textbooks

The course readings are meant to provide you with important conceptual and practical knowledge that will serve as the foundation for reflections and assignments. You are expected to complete all readings to ensure you will be able to contribute meaningfully to class discussions and complete your assignments successfully. The required and optional books are listed below. I chose the two required books because I found them both inspiring and informative – as a matter of fact, I have been using the Lupton book as a reference in my own work since the
original edition was published in 2004! There will also be additional readings posted to Blackboard for most units, but these will not require any additional purchases.

**Required to purchase**


**Recommended/optional to purchase**


**Please note that the book above is available as an ebook through WSU’s library. Due to the expense of the book and the relatively amount of text we will be reading from it, it is optional to purchase but you will have a few required readings based on it. The book can be accessed online by clicking here or by looking up the book at library.wayne.edu (please select the ProQuest ebrary version, not the Business Pro version). You may need to download and install Adobe Digital Editions if you want to download the book vs. reading it online. If you have questions about how to do this, the library should be able to help you out.

**Course policies**

1. **Attendance:** Participation via the web is required and is crucial for a passing grade.

   Reflection Journals: Reflective journals are a significant requirement of each student in the course. The guidelines for each journal assignment are the same. You will be required to thoughtfully answer guiding questions based on readings and assignments during Units 1-5. You will create a Google document and name it with your last name, then share it with the instructor ONLY. Your journal must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm the day it is due. Please make sure you are thoughtful in your journal postings. Meaningful breadth and depth of your response is expected. You will be graded on your comprehension and depth of response, NOT by the length. Each journal entry is worth 5 points for a total of 25 points.

   Peer Review Group: Every student will be assigned a peer review group in Blackboard for the semester. Each group will interact via the Blackboard discussion forums and provide peer feedback throughout the semester on assignments when prompted to do so. Once again, meaningful breadth and depth in feedback is expected.

2. **Final Grades:** Grades will be based on work completed and turned in by July 28, 2017 by 11:59pm. No work will be accepted after this date.

3. **ATTENTION STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.
Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

4. **Plagiarism**: includes copying material (any more then 5 consecutive words) from outside texts or presenting outside information as if it were your own by not crediting authors through citations. It can be deliberate or unintended. If you’re in doubt about the use of a source, cite it. Students caught plagiarizing information from other sources will receive a failing grade in the course. University policy states that students can be subject to multiple sanctions, from reprimand to expulsion as a consequence of academic dishonesty. To enforce this policy, all outside references must be submitted with assignments.

5. **Withdrawal Policy: Enrollment/ Withdrawal Policy**
Students must add classes no later than the end of the first week of classes. This includes online classes. Students may continue to drop classes (with full tuition cancellation) through the first two weeks of the term.

Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN.

- WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade

Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The faculty member must approve the withdrawal request before it becomes final, and students should continue to attend class until they receive notification via email that the withdrawal has been approved. The last day to withdraw will be at the end of the 10th full week of classes. The withdrawal date for courses longer or shorter than the full 15-week terms will be adjusted proportionately. The last day to withdraw from this course is Friday, November 11th, 2016.

6. **Religious Observance Policy**: Because of the extraordinary variety of religious affiliations represented in the University student body and staff, the Wayne State University calendar makes no provision for religious holidays. It is University policy, however, to respect the faith and religious obligations of the individual. Students who find that their classes or examinations involve conflicts with their religious observances are expected to notify their instructors well in advance so that alternative arrangements as suitable as possible may be worked out.

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**Course assignments, due dates and point values**
Specific details about each assignment will be posted on Blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date(s)</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory post to the Meet &amp; Greet forum</td>
<td>5/14</td>
<td>None (required to verify course participation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection journals</td>
<td>5/21, 6/4, 6/11, 6/25, 7/9</td>
<td>25 total (5 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Due Date</td>
<td>Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional website critique (solo)</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional artifact critique (peer group)</td>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideation assignment</td>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project design brief*</td>
<td>6/18</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Typography assignment</td>
<td>7/2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation redesign assignment (peer group)</td>
<td>7/2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Job aid assignment</td>
<td>7/16</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Infographic assignment</td>
<td>7/16</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project &amp; design justification statement*</td>
<td>7/28</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course participation self-assessment</td>
<td>7/28</td>
<td>5</td>
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**TOTAL POINTS** 100

*The final project can be completed either individually or in small groups of 2-3 people maximum. You must decide by the time the design brief is due whether you want to work alone or in a small group. More info will be posted on Blackboard!

**Policy on late work:** Late work will be penalized by 20% of the point value for each day it is late. If you anticipate a conflict with a due date or an emergency arises that prevents you from turning your work in on time, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss.

**Course is based on 100 points:**
A = 95-100
A- = 91-94
B+ = 88-90
B = 84-87
B- = 81-83
C+ = 78-80
C = 74-77
F = Below 74

**Tentative schedule**
This is a tentative schedule for the semester and subject to change based on the needs of students as the class progresses. Please check this course syllabus weekly and pay close attention to changes to this schedule and course announcements on the course web site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Course Contents</td>
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</table>
| 1    | 5/8 to 5/21 | • Overview of the course  
• Messages and message design  
• Basic Gestalt principles of design  
• Course presentations (posted on Blackboard)  
• Duarte, Chapters 1 & 2  
• Clarke & Lyons, Chapters 1 & 2  
• Additional content posted on Blackboard  
• Introductory post to the Meet & Greet forum (I will use this post to verify your participation in the course as required by WSU) DUE BY 5/14  
• Reflection journal post (shared only with the instructor) DUE BY 5/21  
• Instructional website critique (completed on your own) DUE BY 5/21 |
| 2    | 5/22 to 6/4 | • Cognition, learning, and message design  
• Learner analysis for message design  
• Course presentations (posted on Blackboard)  
• Duarte, Chapters 3 & 4  
• Additional content may be posted on Blackboard  
• Reflection journal post (shared only with the instructor) DUE BY 6/4  
• Instructional product critique (completed with your peer group) DUE BY 6/4  
• Ideation assignment DUE BY 6/4 |
| 3    | 6/5 to 6/18 | • Content and structure in message design  
• Layout and color for learning  
• Course presentations (posted on Blackboard)  
• Duarte, Chapters 5 & 6  
• Lupton, *Grid* chapter  
• Additional content may be posted on Blackboard  
• Reflection journal post (shared only with the instructor) DUE BY 6/11  
• Final project design brief DUE BY 6/18 |
| 4    | 6/19 to 7/2 | • Typography: Letter and text  
• Course presentations (posted on Blackboard)  
• Duarte, pgs. 228-231  
• Lupton, *Letter and Text* chapters  
• Additional content may be posted on Blackboard  
• Reflection journal post (shared only with the instructor) DUE BY 6/25  
• Typography assignment DUE BY 7/2  
• Presentation redesign assignment DUE BY 7/2 |
| 5    | 7/3 to 7/16 | • Graphics for learning  
• Course presentations (posted on Blackboard)  
• Ballot redesign case study (posted on Blackboard)  
• Clark & Lyons, Chapter 4 AND choose ONE from Chapters 12-16 (more information will be posted on Blackboard)  
• Additional content may be posted on Blackboard  
• Reflection journal post (shared only with the instructor) DUE BY 7/9  
• Job aid assignment DUE BY 7/16  
• Infographic assignment DUE BY 7/16 |
| 6    | 7/17 to 7/28 | • Universal design and accessibility  
• Usability and design across devices  
• Course wrap-up  
• Readings will be light so you can focus on completing your project!!!  
• Additional content will be posted on Blackboard  
• Class participation summary statement DUE BY 7/28  
• Final project DUE BY 7/28 |