Visual Communication Modules and Assignments

CTEC 3320-001, Visual Communication and the Internet

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Class Time and Location: Monday - Thursday, 8:00AM -10:00AM. Fine Arts Building 412.

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 12:30 PM - 2PM or by appointment.

About this Course

This course focuses on finding visual solutions to communication problems. In order to help you craft effective solutions, you will learn about design principles and elements, including Gestalt, figure-ground relationships, space, framing, grids and hierarchy, balance, rhythm, scale and proportion, dots, lines, planes, texture, pattern, value, color, layers, and transparency. Assignments have been created to help you focus on a particular set of problems that will help you solve visual problems, including but not limited to web design, print design, interactive technologies, information graphics, photography, and interface design. By the end of the class, you should have developed a portfolio of your design work, showcasing your design solutions. Some class time will be spent on developing software skills. However, you should expect to spend time outside of class learning software on your own.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of Visual Communication principles through in-class activities, structured projects, and exams. The course is organized around a set of projects meant to provide students experience in preparing and composing digital content for a variety of mediums, including print, web, mobile, and video. A successful student will be able to craft effective, visually pleasing design solutions, articulately describe and defend a design, work well in teams, manage time effectively, demonstrate strategies self-learning, keep an open mind, and exhibit curiousity about learning.

Requirements

CTEC 2350 or meet the UTA computer competency requirement.

Textbook and Other Course Materials

Zakia, Richard. (2007). **Perception and Imaging.** Focal Press.

Tondreau, B. (2009). **The Principles of Beautiful Web Design.** Sitepoint.

Grading Criteria and Due Dates For Assignments

*Module Activities: 40%

Exam 1: 10%

Exam 2: 10%

Exam 3: 10%

Final Project: 20%

*Participation: 10%

*SEE THE PAGES FOR HOW POINTS ARE EARNED

ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC

Criterion	4	3	2	1
Demonstration of learning (40%)	Takes concepts from readings or lecture materials and extends them in new ways.	Applies concepts from readings or lecture materials but doesn't go beyond the examples presented in class or the readings.	Makes an attempt to apply concepts from readings or lecture materials in assigment, but does so incorrectly.	Does not make an attempt to apply concepts from readings or lecture materials in assignment.
Conceptual Development (30%)	Strong "resonance" between visual and conceptual theme. Organization and presentation of visual elements support theme.	Some degree of "resonance" between visual and conceptual theme. Organization and presentation of visual elements loosely support theme.	Only a small degree of "resonance" between visual and conceptual theme. Organization and presentation of visual elements barely support theme, if at all.	No resonance. No organizational or presentational strategy present.
Craftsmanship (25%)	Design is polished. There are no blemishes or errors. The design is ready to be included in a portfolio. Demonstrates mastery of software in crafting the design.	Design is basically polished with only a few blemishes or errors. The design needs minor revisions before including it in a portfolio. Demonstrates proficiency in software with some areas of improvement.	Design needs a lot of work. There are major blemishes and errors. Design is far from being included in a portfolio. Shows difficulty in using the software in solving the design problem.	Design is unpolished. Shows no facility in using software to solve the design problem.
Technical Requirements (5%)	Meets all of the technical requirements of the assignment.	Meets most of the technical requirements of the assignment.v	Only meets a few of the technical requirements of the assignment.	Does not meet any of the technical requirements of the assignment.

PARTICIPATION RUBRIC

Criterion	4	3	2	1
Degree to which student integrates reaadings and lecture material into classroom participation **(30pts)**	Often cites from readings and lectures; uses readings and lecture materials to support points; often articulates "fit" of readings or lecture materials with topic at hand	Occasionally cites from readings and lectures; sometimes uses readings and lecture materials to support points; occasionally articulates "fit" of readings or lecture materials with topic at hand	Rarely cites from readings and lectures; rarely uses readings and lecture materials to support points; rarely articulates "fit" of readings or lecture materials with topic at hand	Unable to cite from readings or lecture materials; cannot use readings or lecture materials to support points; cannot articulate "fit" of readings with topic at hand
	30/30	22.5/30	15/30	0/30
Interaction/participation in classroom discussions **(25pts)**	Always a willing participant; responds frequently to questions; routinely volunteers point of view	Often a willing participant; responds occasionally to questions; occasionally volunteers point of view	Rarely a willing participant; responds able to respond to questions; rarely volunteers point of view	Never a willing participant; never able to respond to questions; never volunteers point of view
	25/25	17.5/25	10/25	0/25
Interaction/participation in classroom learning activities **(30pts)**	Always a willing participant; acts appropriately during classroom activities; responds frequently to questions; routinely volunteers point of view; routinely extends the comments of classmates	Often a willing participant; acts appropriately during classroom activities; responds occasionally to questions; occasionally volunteers point of view; occasionally extends the comments of classmates	Rarely a willing participant; acts inappropriately during classroom activities; rarely able to respond to direct questions; rarely volunteers point of view; rarely extends the comments of classmates	Never a willing participant; often acts inappropriately during classroom activities; never able to respend to direct questions; never volunteers point of view
	30/30	22.5/30	15/30	0/30
Demonstration of professional attitude and demeanor **(15pts)**	Always demonstrates commitment through thorough preparation; always arrives on time; often solitics my perspective outside of class.	Rarely unprepared; rarely arrives late; occasionally solitics my perspective outside of class.	Often unprepared; rarely arrives late; occasionally solitics my perspective outside of class.	Rarely prepared; often arrives late; never solitics my perspective outside of class.
	15/15	11.25/15	7.5/15	0/15

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken each class. You are granted two freebies. Documentation for absences must be on an official letterhead and contain contact information in case I need to verify the absence. If you have a pre-existing health condition, please alert me at the beginning of the semester so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Class Decorum

Come to class on-time
No outside guests
Be considerate to others while discussing topics:
        Conversation management strategies (be willing to distribute turns-at-talk)
        Offer constructive comments when discussing other's contributions
        Make your comments relevant to the discussion at hand

Drop Policy

If for any reason you need to drop this course, you will need to initiate the drop and follow the proper procedures as outlines in the UTA Undergraduate Catalog and Schedule of Courses before the "last day to drop a course".

CENSUS Date: September 10

LAST DAY TO DROP: October 31

Americans With Disabilities Act

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability.   Also, you may visit the Office for Students with Disabilities in room 102 of University Hall or call them at (817) 272-3364.

Acadmic Integrity

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

"Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit suctions, Series 50101, Section 2.2)

Student Support Services

The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success. These programs include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

E-Mail Policy

I am happy to respond to your e-mails. When sending e-mails, be sure to include the following in the subject line:

course ID (CTEC 3320) followed by the actual subject of your e-mail (e.g., research topic).

=> CTEC 3320 research topic

I use a filtering algorithm on my e-mail client to sort my e-mails into appropriate folders. I try to check my e-mail once a day during the school semester. I have experience of UTA e-mails landing in my "spam" folder. I also try to check that as much as possible. However, if you do not receive a reply from me in an expedient manner, **please try resending the e-mail**. I do not want to miss the opportunity to respond to you.

Frequently Asked Questions

I am not good at drawing or art. Can I still take this class?

You do not need to have a background in art or design, although it certainly wouldn't hurt. Design principles and elements will be covered in this class. From time-to-time, you will be asked to sketch out a design. However, you will not be evaluated on how your design looks. Rather, the sketches should serve as a communication tool such that you can externalize your thoughts in a visual manner.

Do I need to have previous experience in Photoshop and Illustrator?

According to the course prerequisites, you only need to meet the University's Computer Competency requirements. However, basic knowledge of Photoshop, Illustrator, and/or InDesign would be helpful. My advice is that you should take Communication Graphics (COMM 3303) **before** taking this class, not concurrently.

Isn't this basically a class where we just learn Photoshop and Illustrator?

No. Although we do use software, this is just a tool. The major foci of this class are developing critical thinking skills as it applies to visual communication, identifying problems related to communication, and creating visual solutions for these problems. Sometimes this requires the use of Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign. Sometimes it does not. However, you should constantly be working on developing your knowledge of software. There are plenty of resources online. I have listed some valuable resources in this next section.

Why is this class at 8AM? Why can't it be offered earlier?

I have no control over scheduling. At some point in your tenure as a student, you will have to take an 8AM class. You are welcome to bring coffee or tea to class.

Why is this class called Visual Communication and the Internet? Why do we have to learn about art theory and photography? What does this have to with the Internet?

First, I did not name the class. The communication technology major at UTA dates back to the 1990's when use of the Internet was becoming wide spread. First, you should think about that to which the Internet refers. Internet does not equal WEB PAGE. It is a collection of technologies that allows for the transmission of information over several channels. The manner people access information is quite varied. No longer are we primarily sitting in front of a computer monitor viewing web content. The internet includes smart phones, kiosks, game consoles, DVD players, and TV's. This means that you should be prepared to be flexible. It is hard to predict that what technology will become prevalent. For example, tablets are becoming quite popular. Should there be a class just on Visual Communication and the Tablet? That would be a great seminar or workshop, but it is too narrow

in focus. However, you should still be able to apply what we learn in class to whatever new technology emerges in the future. One thing will not change: design principles and elements. Few if any of the students who take this class have a background in design, apart from the occasional art or photography student. I am not a professional designer or artist, although I utilize design principles and elements in my work. You should be able to do the same. Once you learn the foundations, you can apply it to anything.

The primary reason that I cover photography is because I would like you to be able to create communication products that use original materials. A primary means of achieving this is through photography. Moreover, we are now living in a visual age where meaning is primarily derived from the image and supplemented by text. The more control you have over your designs, the better off you will be in the future.

What do I need to do in order to get a good grade in this class?

Come to class on time, do the assignments on time, do a good job on the assignments, cooperate with your classmates, actively participate in class, come to class prepared, don't make excuses, visit me during my office hours or outside of class to clarify what you do not understand, and take responsibility for your own learning. Really, this is no different than any other class. Imagine that you want me to write a letter of recommendation for a job and that you want me to be favorable. What is it that you should do to earn such a favorable recommendation? Consider the following, which comes from an actual letter (I have changed the name and made the gender ambiguous:

> "Pat was enrolled in two of my classes. S/he was a positive influence in class, making learning fun for me as well as for his/her classmates. S/he was punctual and always turned his/her assignments in on time, often earlier than the due date. S/he would also solicit advice about how to improve and would seek enrichment materials. This is quite impressive considering that works full-time and takes care of his/her mother, who has Alzheimer's. Another great aspect of Pat's character is that s/he is involved in helping other students with their learning. Whenever another student has a problem, s/he works with them to find a solution. In essence, I felt like I had another teacher in the class. Truth be told, Pat got learned the material so well that s/he taught me new things. I love when a student does that because I want to return the favor. I felt like Pat pushed me to be the best teacher I could be. Based on these outstanding qualities, I whole-heartedly endorse Pat. If you would live additional information about Pat and his/her qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact me."

What are your exams like? How can I prepare?

I base my exams off of lecture material and readings. Anything that I cover in class is fair game, whether it be something I say, write down, convey through a PowerPoint slide, or relate to your readings. One week before your exam, I will distribute a study guide. Many of the exam questions come straight off of the study guide. I am not here to trick you. I am here to evaluate different aspects of your learning.

The exam questions are varied and include multiple choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blanks, short answer, essay, and design. Multiple-choice questions assess your knowledge of a conceptual domain. True-false questions assess how well you are able to grasp the meaning of material. It requires you to interpret a problem and come up with a criteria for assenting or rejecting a proposition. For the true-false questions, you will be asked to justify your

answer. Fill-in-the-blank questions assess the degree to which concepts are accessible in your long-term memory. There may be more than one correct answer. For example, when we discuss visual hierarchy, you will hear the phrase, "When everything is emphasized than nothing is emphasized." A fill-in-the-blank question for this might look like "In creating a visual hierarchy, it is important to remember that when _____ is emphasized than _____ is emphasized." Short answer questions assess how well you can apply learned materials in new and concrete situations. For example, I may show you a navigational system for a web design and ask you to explain how you would modify it to enhance its usability emplying principles discussed in class or in the readings. Essay questions assess your ability to analyze a problem. It requires higher-level thinking skills such as comparing and contrasting, distinguishing X from Y, recognizing unstated assumptions, analyzing relationships, inter alia.

I am unable to come to class. What should I do?

If you know that you are going to miss class, I appreciate that you tell me in advance. If it is an **officially documented absence**, you have 1 week to make up the assignment. Also, you should make plans to get the notes from a classmate. I am happy to meet with you over office hours to clarify material that you do not understand.

Can I take the final early? I need to go out of town.

No. You should take the final on the day it is assigned.

Resources for Self-Learning

- ADOBE TV: http://tv.adobe.com
- PHOTOSHOP USER TV: http://kelbytv.com/photoshopusertv
- LAYERS MAGAZINE: http://layersmagazine.com
- BURT MONROY: http://revision3.com/pixelperfect
- DEKE McCLELLAND: http://www.deke.com
- COMPUTER ARTS: http://www.computerarts.co.uk
- PHOTOSHOP TUTORIALS: http://psd.tutsplus.com
- ILLUSTRATOR TUTORIALS: http://vector.tutsplus.com
- VECTOR DIARY: http://www.vectordiary.com
- VEERLE's BLOG: http://veerle.duoh.com
- SPOON GRAPHICS: http://blog.spoongraphics.co.uk
- SMASHING MAGAZINE: http://www.smashingmagazine.com
- ABDUZEEDO: http://abduzeedo.com
- PRINT MAGAZINE: http://www.printmag.com
- AIGA: http://www.aiga.org