

Information Design

Instructor Info

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Office Hours:
Wednesdays 1:00-3:00
and by appointment

Course Documents

All documents used in the completion of assignments are available in dropbox, including readings, course worksheets, and example documents.

Syllabus

This website contains all information connected to the spring 2012 ENGL/JOUR 4850/8856 Information Design course. Course documents are also available in dropbox.

Course Description

Information design is concerned with the presentation of print or digital content. This course is designed to help you develop a professional sensibility for making stylistic choices appropriate for particular situations and audiences and the skills to implement those choices.

My perspective of information design is informed by Saul Carliner's *Information and Document Design* (2006), who says that he defines information design as:

preparing communication products so that they achieve the performance objectives established for them. . . . Information design differs from document design in that information design addresses the issue of whether readers can understand a text, not merely whether they can find information on it. (pp. 2-3)

This definition shows, I think, the complex, problem-solving process involved in the design process. In short, information design is the presentation of content for a specific purpose, situation, and audience.

This course will introduce you to a variety of strategies for designing and integrating visual and textual elements in ways that not only make a document more accessible to readers but also demonstrates the ability to address design problems. Course discussion and readings will focus on analysis of the design problem, principles of effective design, and visual conventions. We will use software from the Adobe Creative Suite 5 (Photoshop, Dreamweaver, InDesign, and Acrobat). See the important READ ME message in the next section about the versions of this software. I will demo some features of this software, but it is your responsibility to take some initiative for your own learning of this software (see "Learning Software" below).

Course Objectives

In this class, you will learn...

- to become familiar with and use design language.
- to understand design as a problem-solving process.
- to analyze audience, purpose, and situation as they pertain to the design situation.

- to apply principles of design effectively.
- to develop a design sensibility through standards, style sheets, and practice.
- to develop technical skills with design software

Required Books and Materials

REQUIRED

- *Document Design: A Guide for Technical Communicators*, Miles Kimball and Ann Hawkins

RECOMMENDED

- *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, 3rd Ed, Robin Williams
- *The Non-Designer's Web Book*, Robin Williams & John Tollett
- *The Non-Designer's Photoshop Book*, Robin Williams and John Tollett
- *The Non-Designer's InDesign Book*, Robin Williams
- *Dreamweaver CS5 for Windows and Macintosh: Visual Quick Start Guide*, Tom Negrino and Don Smith
- *The PC is Not Typewriter*, Robin Williams

[Partial List from this book](#)

Everyone learns software in a different and preferred way. Feel free to use whatever learning tools you'd like. If you prefer not to purchase the InDesign and Photoshop books, I have used and like lynda.com as an online source, which costs about \$25/month.

Course Particulars

DROPBOX.COM

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IN-CLASS ATMOSPHERE

I like to run my classes mostly as workshops, which means that there tends to be quite a bit of chaos. I prefer this method because I believe that we learn by doing and from each other. If I'm helping a student at one computer, other students will be able to hear and learn as well. I know that this can lend

itself to a chaotic atmosphere, but I hope that you all will be able to find a way to work in this environment.

When creating any kind of symbolic work (writing, editing, design), we tend to become very attached to the work we've done. I tend to critique right in class because it's likely that whatever difficulty you might be having, other students are also experiencing it.

CRITIQUING DESIGN

Like writing, design is subjective and seems to be based on personal preference. Although that perspective may work for works of art (paintings, sculptures, and so on), when creating technical documents, design is a question of usability and readability. If you are so married to your design that the critique hurts your feelings, generally that means that you are designing for yourself and not for what the audience needs.

Design decisions must be supported by a justification that supports the needs of the audience, purpose, and situation of the document.

LEARNING SOFTWARE

There is no one way to learn software applications. Everyone learns software differently and at different paces. Some people prefer to have a book to consult, some rely on help menus, and some search the web for tutorials. I do not require any one way to learn the software used in class. But whichever method you choose, working with the software takes a lot of practice. Working with the software only once a week during class is likely to leave you frustrated and feeling inadequate.

It is up to individual students to find their own best method for learning and to seek out appropriate resources. One of the best ways I've found to learn a software application is to try to recreate a design I've seen.

Although I will provide some short demos during class time, I do expect students to seek out the resources they are most comfortable with and learn most of what they need to on their own. What I can offer are recommendations:

1. Adobe offers a help system in a special website called the Adobe Design Workshop, which provides mini-Flash movies of various techniques for learning most of its software.
2. The UNO library offers access to Safari Books Online, an online instructional resource favored by many designers today.
3. I have found the Peachpit Press' Visual Quick Start books (such as the Dreamweaver book I've ordered) to be well written and easy to follow. Generally, they cost anywhere from \$20-\$35, but I have seen quite a few used copies on amazon.com. Peachpit press offers PDF versions of their manual for a lower price. I've also used the Bible series.
4. The Non-Designer's software books that I ordered for class are newly published. So, I'm not sure how effective they are. I'll be interested in your opinion of them.
5. If you are unfamiliar with the programs in the Adobe Creative Suite, you need to think about how best to go about learning them.
6. We will be using the following Adobe Creative Suite 5 programs: Photoshop (image manipulation), Dreamweaver (website creation and editing), InDesign (layout and design), and

Acrobat (print). You are welcome to use other programs, but I may not be able to help you troubleshoot.

Some assumptions I'm making regarding technical skills

7. That you will take the initiative to learn and teach yourself the various software we'll be using in class without waiting for me to tell you when to start.
8. That you will read the introductory chapters of the books that describe the workspace for particular software on your own and without instruction.
9. That you will ask for help when you get stuck either from me or another student or search for answers on the web or in your books.

CREATIVE SUITE VERSIONS AT UNO

The Adobe Creative Suite is available in ASH 145 and 300 and at the Criss Library.

ASH 145

Our classroom computers have the Adobe Creative Suite 5.0 version, which includes Photoshop, InDesign, Dreamweaver, Acrobat, and other applications. Given that you will likely be working on documents you started elsewhere, be sure to read the "InDesign Workaround" section below.

ASH 300

The Arts & Sciences lab is located in ASH 300. It includes the same software as in ASH 145, but on limited machines.

CRISS LIBRARY

Despite being told that the library IT would be purchasing CS 5 (which is why A&S updated), they did not. Because Adobe does not provide for backwards versioning, any documents you create in a newer version you may not be able to open them in previous version.

For example, if you download the 30-day free trial from adobe.com, you will get the 5.5 version and will not be able to open any InDesign document in the library, ASH 145, or 300. Likewise, if you create an InDesign document at the library in CS 4, you will be able to open in in ASH 145 or 300, but will not be able to re-open it again at the library. However, there is a workaround for InDesign. See below.

PURCHASING THE CREATIVE SUITE

If you intend to take all the technical communication courses, you may want to consider purchasing the Creative Suite 6. As a student, you can purchase it for the education price somewhere between \$359.88-\$599 depending on the suite you purchase from the UN system (see sales.unl.edu). The \$399 version is the Creative Cloud version, which requires a yearly subscription.

Course Policies

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

As in the professional workplace, much of the work we will be doing in this class depends on your interaction with others; therefore attendance is an essential component of your grade. If you must miss a class, please let me know ahead of time and be prepared to offer a plausible excuse. Missed classes do have a bearing on your grade: if you miss more than one class, you can expect a deduction in your grade. Keep in mind that a miss is still a miss, whether you have a good excuse or not. Students are required to attend ALL workshops and presentations.

Additionally, if you must miss a class, please find out from someone else in class what happened that day and the details of any assignments. I simply and honestly do not have the time to re-present what we've done in class—but if you ever want to discuss something that came up in class or look at versions of the work you are doing for class, I'll be more than happy to meet with you.

I go out of my way to offer class time for working on projects. Therefore, anyone who misses a workshop or presentation day (unless previously excused) will not receive an A in this class.

Assignments/Deliverables

ASSIGNMENTS/DELIVERABLES

Every class meeting will involve some type of assignment. Out-of-class assignments are due to dropbox BEFORE class begins and in-class assignments are due at the end of class. All assignment descriptions are available under the Deliverables tab.

At the end of the semester, students will submit a semester portfolio (i.e., contents of their dropbox folder) that represents all work completed for this course with an end-of-the-semester self-assessment memo that will act as a cover memo for the portfolio, individual activity logs, and performance evaluations.

- Students should submit all assignment to dropbox.com. Do not email assignments to the instructor.
- Assignments and readings are due on the day they appear on the weekly schedule.
- I reserve the right to make changes to the weekly schedule when necessary.
- Late assignments risk losing points.
- Students deliberately missing a workshop or presentation day will not receive an A.

Assignments should be submitted in both the native format version (e.g., InDesign, Photoshop) and a PDF version.

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are provided for students with registered disabilities.

For more information contact

Services for Students with Disabilities

Kate Clark, Disability Services Coordinator

UNO Disability Services

6001 Dodge Street, EAB 117

Omaha, NE 68182

Phone (402) 554-2872, TTY (402) 554-3799, Fax (402) 554-6015

E-mail mkclark@mail.unomaha.edu

About Grading

What I hear at the end of the term from almost everyone is "I put more time into this class than I have into any other class"—with the implication that time alone should earn you an A. I do believe students work hard, but working hard does not equal excellence.

Although this class (or any Technical Communication class) does require a lot of time, time alone does not make for excellent work; time alone does not make for work that gives you shivers of pride when you see it and gives others the sense that attentive thought went into the work.

As you work in this class, you need to be attentive to what you are doing. You need to be focused on this work and nothing else—for the time that you are working on it. You need to look at your work continually and ask yourself if it gives you pleasure and pride, if it is an expression of all you are capable.

The list that follows includes observations of the kinds of activities and attentions I have seen in others who have performed A-level work in this class:

Developing and sustaining lively intellectual engagement with the ideas and concepts of class

- You come to class prepared to discuss the readings, with questions and opinions and considerations of consequences.
- You actively seek feedback on your own work from others, before it is due.
- Your work is on time and complete.
- Your work shows that you think about and respond to the feedback you receive from me and from others.
- You discover new resources for helping you do the work of class and share them with your instructor and classmates

Making steady and questioning application of the concepts and discussions in class

- You continually look around to see how people interact with the world (both natural and virtual) and other people, and ask yourself which interactions seem to support the kind of world in which you want to live—and then you work consciously at making your work encourage those kinds of interactions.
- You are continually attentive to how you and others learn and work to have the software you develop encourage others in their learning.

Taking personal responsibility for developing the technical skills you need in this field.

- You recognize that the technologies of our time are changing rapidly (with consequences for the pocketbooks and attentiveness of all of us), and that there is therefore no way this class can be your only source for learning all the technical skills or critical abilities or all the computer applications you need or want.
- You therefore work consciously to develop a questioning and personal relation with the technologies you use in your work, being carefully attentive to what *you* need to learn and the approaches by which you learn best.
- You are continually on the lookout for designs that use the technology (including non-computer technologies) differently from how you do, so that you learn not only that your way is not the only way but you also learn to turn to others for support and assistance.
- You make use of the considerable technical resources of the class and the lab. You ask others for assistance, you look through the materials provided, and you come to office hours with questions about how to do something.

- You share that knowledge with others in your community of practice, whether it is the class itself as a community, or the various collaborative groups you may work with while taking Technical Communication courses.

Contribute to a final project that shows all of us—including yourself—that you are engaged, learning, and applying what we discuss in class.

- Your final project may not be as complete as you would like, but what it does have is the result of much experimentation on your part: you have tested out different possible interactions and approaches, and have found one (or more...) that seems to you to encourage people to learn what you intended and to learn it richly.
- Your final project is engaging: you have used experimentation and testing to redesign your project so that people **want** to use it and **do** learn from it.
- Your final project is designed fully to achieve your goals: its buttons and interactions and screens have the appropriate level of polish, cohesion, and color for your audience and intention; its structure and interactions support the overall intentions of the piece.

Weekly Schedule

dropbox.com

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Some assumptions I'm making regarding technical skills

- That you will take the initiative to learn and teach yourself the various software we'll be using in class without waiting for me to tell you when to start.
- That you will read the introductory chapters of the books that describe the workspace for particular software on your own and without instruction.
- That you will ask for help when you get stuck either from me or another student or search for answers on the web or in your books.

Legend

- W&T: *The Non-Designer's Web Book*
- NDD: *The Non-Designer's Design Book*
- PS: *The Non-Designer's Photoshop Book*
- ID: *The Non-Designer's InDesign Book*
- DW: *Dreamweaver CS 5 for Windows and Macintosh*
- TB: Tracy Bridgeford materials

January

15

IN CLASS

- Introduction to the Course
- dropbox.com
- Semester Deliverables
- What is Information Design?
- Observation Project Assigned

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- Course syllabus website Sturken & Cartwright (available in dropbox --> Course Readings)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Response to Sturken and Cartwright (see assignment description for Reading Responses under deliverables)
- Response to the Syllabus

22

IN CLASS

- Principles of Design
- Quick InDesign Demo

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins (Chapter 2)
- Bernhardt (available in dropbox)

RECOMMENDED

- ID: Chapters 1 & 2 (Introduction and Text Frames & Formatting)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins: Exercises #1 and #3 (p. 37) (bring to class)
- Response to Bernhardt (see assignment for writing reading responses under individual deliverables)

29

IN CLASS

- Theories of Design
- InDesign Demo Continued

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins: Chapter 3

RECOMMENDED

- ID: Chapters 3 & 4 (Spacing Features and Tabs and Indents)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Write a two-sentence summary paragraph about each theory discussed in Kimball & Hawkins (perception, visual culture, and visual rhetoric) for an in-class exercise
- Kimball & Hawkins: Exercise #2 (p. 69) (bring to class)
- Observation Journal (hard copy)

February

5

IN CLASS

- Page Design, Style Sheets
- Article/Webtext Assigned

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins (Chapter 5)
- Schriver (What Technical Communicators Need to Know about Information Design, available in dropbox)

RECOMMENDED

- ID: Review Chapters 1-4 & Chapter 6 (Style Sheets)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins: Exercise #1 (p. 150) (bring to class)
- Response to Schriver (see assignment for writing reading responses under individual deliverables)

12

IN CLASS

- Type
- Type Quiz
- Photoshop Demo

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins: Chapter 6

RECOMMENDED

- PS: Chapters 1, 5, & 6 (Introduction, Layers, & Type)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins Exercises #1 & #2 (p. 198)

19

In Class

- Graphics
- Visual Technology Autobiography Assigned

Reading due before class

- Kimball & Hawkins: Chapter 7

Recommended

- PS: Chapters 3, 8, & 9 (Basic, Layers, and Working with Transparency)

Deliverables due to dropbox BEFORE class

- Kimball & Hawkins: Exercise #4 (p. 245)
- Article Due (submit both InDesign and PDF versions to your dropbox folder in the appropriate subfolder)

26

IN CLASS

- Website Structure & Cascading Style Sheets
- Dreamweaver Demo
- Webtext Assigned (review Article/Webtext assignment under Individual Deliverables)

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

RECOMMENDED

- DW: Chapters 1-4 (Introducing Dreamweaver, Starting Your First Site, Building Your First Page, and Adding Text to Your Pages)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Visual Technology Autobiography

March

5

IN CLASS

- Group Project (Journal) Assigned
- Cascading Style Sheets Review

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

RECOMMENDED

- DW: Chapters 7-9 (Styling Page Content, Using Styles for Layout, & Managing Styles)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Continue working on webtext

12

IN CLASS

- Interface and Navigation

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Continuing working on webtext

19

IN CLASS

- Collaboration
- PITCH Night

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- TB: Collaboration (available in dropbox)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- 60-second Pitch for Online Journal (submit proposal form available in dropbox)
- Journal Website Proposal Worksheet (available in dropbox; use to prepare for Pitch Night)
- Draft of webtext (make an appointment with the instructor for an individual conference)

23-30

Spring Break: No Class

April

2

IN CLASS

- Color
- Webtext Workshop

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- Kimball & Hawkins: Chapter 8

RECOMMENDED

- ID: Chapters 8 (Create & Apply Color)
- PS: Chapter 11 (Color Tools)

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Audience Analysis Worksheet (available in dropbox)
- Continue working on Journal Website

9

IN CLASS

- Journal Workshop

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Continue working on journal website

16

IN CLASS

- Webtext Presentations
- Journal Workshop

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Final Webtext
- Presentation of Webtext

23

IN CLASS

- In-class Peer Evaluations of Journal Website

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Website Evaluation Form (available in dropbox; complete in class)

30

Last Day of Information Design

IN CLASS

- Group Presentations of Journal Website

READING DUE BEFORE CLASS

- None

DELIVERABLES DUE TO DROPBOX BEFORE CLASS

- Attendance
- Presentation

May 7

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Deliverables

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Explanation of Grading Process

Grades are given on a 5-point scale. Scores indicate the level of competency your work shows. Each assignment described on this page (both individual and collaborative) are worth five points each. I do not necessarily just add up the points and determine a final score (grade). In determining a final grade, I like to notice factors such as improvement in thinking process, design, and articulation of design choices as affecting the final grade. I make each assignment worth 5 points (as opposed to weighted averages, for example) because I want you to consider a one-page memo or a one-sheet design as equally important as a ten-page website. I believe that design always matters no matter how big or little a document is.

Individual Deliverables

1. VARIOUS IN-CLASS EXERCISES + PARTICIPATION OR GRADUATE PAPER

One aspect of participation will be a weekly Show & Tell. For the first few minutes of class, you will have the opportunity to bring in/show something you saw/noticed and present it to the class. I expect everyone to participate in this process at some point in the semester.

2. RESPONSE TO THE SYLLABUS

I want to be sure each of you are clear about what is expected from you in this class and to give you opportunities for raising questions about what I have planned. I also want to challenge you now to start being creative (but coherent) with a document that might otherwise seem to you to have great potential for being flat.

All students must read/comment on the About Grading item under Course Policies. Read all the materials on this course website and look through the Weekly Schedule. Write 400-500 words in response, using the following questions to guide you. (Please do not write your response as a

sentence-by-sentence response to these questions; instead, please work & play to come up with a creative but coherent way to respond.) Feel free to be as creative as you want to be.

Note: This is not a critique of the syllabus design. I'm looking for a response to the content of the syllabus.

- What are the main skills I am hoping you will gain by the end of the quarter?
- What do you think you need to learn or do to achieve those skills?
- Why am I asking you to keep a design journal?
- What strategies can you think of now for making the observation journal be something meaningful?
- How will we arrive at your grade for this class? Are you comfortable with how you imagine this process to work?
- What makes you most nervous about what I've written in the syllabus?
- What do you think will give you the most pleasure in this class?
- What are the skills you bring to class that you think will help you the most?
- Can you envision the shape of the semester from the Syllabus & Weekly Schedule?
- What remains vague to you? Is there anything you can suggest now for improving what you see ahead?

3. RESPONSES TO READINGS

Throughout the semester, we will be reading a variety of articles/chapters that focus on some aspect of document/information design. For this assignment, I will ask you to write a one-page response to the reading. This response should be process oriented, which means that you should focus on your interpretation of the reading, that is, how you understand what the author(s) is arguing. Interpretation goes beyond simply summarizing an argument. You need to paraphrase the argument (using some language from the reading) and offer your own explanation through paraphrase. Do not simply repeat what the author says. Once you have interpreted the reading, imagine the interpretation in your real life by offering examples, application, or further explanations of the reading.

Additionally, do not submit your responses as dictated by a documentation style (e.g., MLA). Your responses should be designed in ways that demonstrate your growing understanding of the principles of design.

Finally, you do not have to write responses for readings from the textbook. Submit only the responses indicated on the syllabus.

4. OBSERVATION JOURNAL + COVER MEMO

The design process starts with observation. Whether they are print, digital, or visual, many of the texts you encounter every day contain both verbal (textual) and visual (images, icons, symbols) components that strive to capture your attention. For the next two weeks, I'd like you to practice looking. Use the questions below to help you get started.

- What do you see and why do you notice it?
- How does the layout shape the message?

- How does the medium affect your attention? Is it effective or ineffective? Why?
- What colors stand out and why? What effect is this design intended to have?
- What audience do you think the design addresses?
- What elements & arrangements in the design led you to conclude something?
- What you have about the design's purpose and audience?

Between January 16-28, 2014, I will ask you to make daily observations about the designs you find in the environments you encounter while shopping, while studying, while partying, while driving, while doing anything you normally do. Record these observations in a journal daily. Entries should be descriptive and detailed. Connect your observations to the Practices of Looking reading.

5. ARTICLE/WEBTEXT + COVER MEMO + PRESENTATION

This assignment is in two parts:

First, I will ask you to take a paper you've written for another class that is at least 10 pages and design and lay it out as if for a print journal using InDesign. If you do not have a paper of your own, I have two essays that you could use.

Second, remediate (refashion a text from one type of medium to another) that article into a webtext using Dreamweaver. A webtext is a document designed in a native format for the web. The webtext should include appropriate images, whether textual and/or visual. Both the print and webtexts will be used as content for the collaborative journal project.

Third, I will ask you to present your webtext to the class.

Some examples:

- *Kairos*
- "kairotically speaking: Kairos and the Power of Identity"
- Monitoring Order
- *Escapist Magazine*
- *Programmatic Perspectives*
- *The Jump: The Journal for Undergraduate Multimedia Projects*
- *Orange: A Student Journal of Technical Communication*

6. VISUAL TECHNOLOGY AUTOBIOGRAPHY + COVER MEMO

Even if it doesn't seem like it, we have always represented our "selves" visually to other people every day. The most obvious visual we use to communicate who we are to other people is, of course, the photograph. The photograph is used in a variety of situations: mug shots, IDs such as drivers' licenses or passports, family albums, and class pictures.

But a photograph is only one way we visually present our "selves." We also present visual images of our identities in print and online with resumes, letters, forms, homepages, credit cards, movie choices, cooking, fashion, makeup, jewelry, and computer desktops. Each of these artifacts represents some kind of technology that we use to present an image of our "selves."

How we arrange our computer desktops speaks volumes about our identities whether we intend for them to or not. Wallpaper and color choices, folder placement, program alias on the desktop, and

the programs that remain open all present a picture of our “working” selves, whether that “work” is for fun or for a job. One perspective of this desktop screenshot provides a picture of your technological self that is embedded with meaning about your identity.

The Visual Technology Autobiography (VTA) can be constructed with a possible combination of photography, narrative, screen shots, scanned images, audio, video, and media representations. For this assignment, I will ask you to create a VTA using screen shots of your desktop computer. These screen shots should come from the computer you normally work on whether it is at home or at work or the library and should narrate and explain the aspects of your “self” that appear in the screenshot. The first shot should be the desktop without any open windows (although the status bar might very well show open programs). The second and third shots should represent two different work sessions that provide two different, albeit related, images of your technological self. You may need to resize windows to show what you need for the narration to make sense.

Your Visual Technology Autobiography should be presented in a format that is not a double-spaced, MLA-formatted paper. You are encouraged to be as creative as you can with this assignment. I will demonstrate some methods in class for how to take screenshots and modify their size and add text to the image.

7. INDIVIDUAL DELIVERABLES CONNECTED TO THE COLLABORTIVE PROJECT

- Pitch Proposal (with website analysis of other journal websites; use worksheet in dropbox in preparation for Pitch Night)
- Individual Activity Narrative (accounting of your time and activities on the collaborative project)
- Performance Evaluations for each group member and self (critical evaluation of your own and your group members' performance on the collaborative project; use worksheet in dropbox)

8. END-OF-SEMESTER REFLECTION MEMO

As a cover memo for your semester work addressed to me, reflect on what you have learned about observation, design, the design problem, and the design process. Consider the technical skills you’ve learned and still need to learn. How does this course connect to other courses in technical communication? What is its relevance? How do you think this knowledge can fit into your future plans, whether you intend to go on for additional schooling or to transition into the workplace?

What suggestions do you have about the course? What worked or didn’t work and why? What would you change and why? Addressing these questions is not an invitation to complain about the course in nonconstructive ways such as unhappiness with an assignment or lack of time to put into an assignment or to meet with a group. From a university perspective, work outside class time amounts to three hours per credit hour. I’m interested in substantive comments about course content and instruction. Simply responding to the questions above will not be considered competent-level writing. Find a way to focus the content. Please treat this memo as a significant piece of writing, paying attention to your prose and style. You might point to specific artifacts during the semester as support.

Collaborative Deliverables

ONLINE JOURNAL WEBSITE

For this assignment, I will ask you to work collaboratively with 2 or 3 other students creating an online journal of your choice (see examples under Resources). These websites will involve invention, planning, and production of an interface design, navigation, and indication of content.

What you will create here is the shell, or a design template, with indication of the content areas for the journal, using the article webtexts and visual technology autobiographies as content. You may also need to use placeholder text for some content.

This assignment will begin with Pitch Day. Each student will make a 60-second pitch for a journal name, purpose, and content. It's likely that this original idea will become modified as groups work on their projects. After all pitches have been made, the class as a whole will choose the five projects we will work on throughout the semester and then choose the group with which they'd like to work. Students will then indicate the projects on which they want to work. This process involves significant negotiation.

Each group will turn in for a grade the following deliverables:

- Design justification (cover memo) (addressed to me justifying your design choices; see example in dropbox --> Course Documents)
- Audience Analysis Report
This report should be a one page memo with rich descriptions that characterize the audience's sense of identity, its demographics, culture, reading habits, expectations for reading/viewing the journal, understanding of the subject matter, and how it finds meaning in the content.
- Logo & Journal Cover (This will also serve as a flyer advertising the inaugural issue of journal (use Photoshop and InDesign and save as PDF)
- Website
- Peer Group Website Evaluation (use worksheet in dropbox)
- Collaborative Narrative Report
This report should be a one-page memo with rich descriptions that characterize how your group worked together to complete the project. This report should not simply state who did what. It should provide vivid descriptions of how the collaboration worked, how it created a sense of identity, and how the completion of the work resulted in the final product.
- Presentation

Individual Deliverables connected to this project:

- Pitch Proposal (use worksheet in dropbox in preparation for Pitch Night)
- Individual Activity Narrative (two paragraph, thick description of how your group worked collaboratively)
- Performance Evaluation for each group member (one paragraph, thick description for each group member)

Graduate Synthesis Paper

For the graduate portion of your grade, graduate students will write a 10-page synthesis paper. A synthesis paper is an argument-structured discussion focused on a specific area of interest, in this case, information design. Essentially, your argument is an argument for a particular reading/interpretation of the sources provided.

Students should begin by reading all articles/chapters provided in Dropbox → Graduate Readings folder. There are nine articles/chapters that include strictly theoretical to applied theory readings. These articles/chapters provide you with a snapshot of research questions and discussions in the field.

I have provided two examples of what I consider to be well-written synthesis papers from previous classes in Dropbox. Note that the authors synthesized information within their own arguments/voice, as opposed to simply providing a literature review with summaries. Although they include a focus on specific literature, synthesis papers are not literature reviews nor are they summaries. Your synthesis should be a focused, meaningful discussion that brings together the information within the articles/chapters in a new way within your own voice/argument.

Remember that this paper, although shorter, is equivalent to a seminar paper and should be written in the academic prose expected at the graduate level. I'd be willing to read a draft of the paper with a two-week notice.

I'd recommend that graduate students get together and discuss the readings throughout the semester in preparation for writing this paper. I am willing to participate in these meetings.

Some sources I found on the Web about writing synthesis papers:

- Synthesis Writing: (<http://www.users.drew.edu/sjamieso/Synthesis.pdf>)
- What is a synthesis paper? (<http://archives.evergreen.edu/webpages/curricular/2001-2002/poliecon2001/synthesis.htm>)

Your task is to organize some of the information around a theme or a question, make generalizations, and then present information (statistics, quotes, examples) in a logical way to support your argument. Remind yourself that a synthesis is NOT a summary, a comparison or a review. Rather a synthesis is a result of an *integration* of what you heard/read and your ability to use this learning to develop and support a key thesis or argument.

Learning to write a synthesis paper is a critical skill, crucial to organizing and presenting information in academic and non-academic settings.

- Introduction to Syntheses (<https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html>)

Assessment

Courses assignments will be evaluated in two ways. 1) the quality of the design as a document (print or digital artifact) and the ability of the designer to justify design decisions. Each method is described below.

These guidelines outline what constitutes competence. Competence is coming to class and doing the work. Competence is what everyone else can do. Competence is what is done when one doesn't want to work very hard. Competence is C work. Competence is merely completing the assignment with no effort

to go beyond competent expectations. Exceptional or superior work (As and Bs) involves work that extends beyond what is merely required to complete the assignment.

Documents (print or digital) will be given a score based on the document design guidelines below. One or more guideline can affect a grade higher or lower overall.

Design Principles

SCORE 3: COMPETENT LEVEL

- Design demonstrates competent attention to the design problem, which includes purpose, audience, and situation
- Design demonstrates competent application of the principles of design, including alignment, contrast, repetition, and proximity
- Design demonstrates competent understanding of the genre conventions
- Design demonstrates competent technical skills with the appropriate software
- Design demonstrates competent attention to readability and legibility issues

Justifications

SCORE 3: COMPETENT LEVEL

- Designer(s) competently justifies design decisions, using appropriate design language
- Designer(s) competently demonstrates knowledge of the design situation through interpretation of context by paying close attention to the purpose, audience, and situation
- Designer(s) competently challenges herself
- Designer(s) competently focuses discussion of design
- Designer(s) writes competently, editing and proofreading as expected for a 4000-8000 level course.

Resources

Design

- Lorem Ipsum text
- <http://www.lipsum.com/>
- AdobeVideo Workshop
- Designing for the Web
- The Information Architecture Institute
- Web Style Guide

Fonts

- www.dafont.com
- www.microsoft.com/typography/default.mspx
- fontsite.com

Stock Images

- www.istockphoto.com
- www.dreamstime.com

- www.gettyimages.com/Home.aspx
- www.fotosearch.com/photos-images/profile-woman.html
- www.freeimages.co.uk/galleries.htm
- pro.corbis.com/default.aspx
- www.123rf.com/photos-images/12/1/illustrations.html
- www.sxc.hu

Color

eserver.org/courses/w01/tc510/hades/dowd1.htm

Online Journals

e-journals.org

[International Journal of Design](#)

[Communications of the ACM](#)

[AIGA](#)

[Designer Today](#)

[webdesigner depot](#)

[Journal of Design Communication](#)

[A List Apart](#)

[boxesandarrows](#)

[Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication](#)

[Photoshop User](#)