2nd Year Graduate Studio

FALL 2020
Revelation Through Inquiry

Assistant Professor Nicholas Rock
Section A1 12:30–3:15 / 3:30–6:15, Tuesdays

Section B1 12:30–3:15 / 3:30–6:15, Thursdays

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Office Hours: By appointment— Mondays 10-2 (remote), Wednesday 10-2(remote / in person) Thursdays TBD

This semester will introduce opportunities to rigorously explore forms of inquiry and research, leading to broad experimentation with one's creative process while helping you get a hold of who you are, what you believe in, and what you care about in terms of content and formal issues.

You will build on previous experiences and delve into unfamiliar territories. Guided by me, your peers, and outside critics, you will develop the foundation and framework for your thesis work.

This thesis development will be woven together with several challenging form-making assignments, culminating in a presentation of your semester of inquiry and final reviews.

Our main objective is to develop who you are as a designer while using inquiry and research as a catalyst for your critical thinking and creative process. Additionally, this is a moment in time for you to reflect on and orient yourselves to the current realities we are confronting in the world, which is the measure of a successful designer.

Thesis Groups + Virtual Critics

I have organized you all into four groups of 4-5 students. You will meet with your group outside of class meetings, as well as coordinate and conduct four sessions throughout the semester with an outside critic assigned to your group.

All of the outside critics are BU Alumni: Nicholas Samendinger (NYC), Daria Nikolaeva (Moscow), Molly Haig (Vermont/Scotland) graduates of our MFA, Mohammed Nassem (LA) is a graduate of our undergrad, with his MFA from RISD.

These groups are the groups we will use for in-person/remote synchronous meetings on Tuesdays. Thursday, remote meetings mix up the groups to ensure you have structure time to see and hear from each other, taking advantage of the full group so that we don't become too small and siloed. Our goal is to exchange lots of ideas, thoughts, questions, and conversations.

Group 01 — Nicholas Samendinger

1. Michael
2. Faith
3. Byori
4. Arielle

Group 02 — Daria Nikolaeva

5. Kari
6. Yiwei
7. Reem
8. Jenna
9. Sloane

Group 03 — Molly Haig

10. Taiyo
11. Claire
12. Chrissy
13. Yike

Group 04 — Mohammed Nassem

14. Ellie
15. Sohini
16. Mahnoor
17. Kateri

The Work

01—Forms of Inquiry

We will work through four distinct but complementary forms of inquiry that intentionally overlap and build upon each other as we move through the semester.

Each requires a deliverable—a designed research document of sorts. You may choose what format this takes within some guidelines. You should see it as an asset for you to use and build upon, something you can refer back to as well as something that can inform someone who has no idea what you are doing.

HOW DO YOU BEGIN TO ALIGN AND ORGANIZE YOURSELVES IN RELATION TO THE THINGS THAT INTEREST AND INFLUENCE YOU? YOU WILL DEVELOP A MORE PROFOUND SENSE OF YOUR OWN IDENTITY AS A DESIGNER, AND WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO FRAME QUESTIONS AND LINES OF INQUIRY ON YOUR OWN.

INQUIRY A: 50 Questions — For this project, you will begin to develop a research methodology based on conceptual and formal questions as a design process. You will research existing texts by creatives, authors, thought leaders, and others within and outside of design to develop internal and external questions as practicing designers.

4 Weeks _ Week 02–05
9/10–10/08

NEXT, WE WILL ASK THAT YOU BEGIN TO FULLY DEVELOP A COHERENT PERSPECTIVE ON VISUAL AND VERBAL LANGUAGES YOU UTILIZE TO DISCOVER AND ARTICULATE YOUR THESIS WHILE CONTINUALLY QUESTIONING DESIGN AS IT RELATES TO YOUR VIEW AND VALUES.

INQUIRY B: Cataloging Words That Matter — Develop content specific cultural landscape; Text-based (written or spoken) content, issues, points of view, values that are important to you, that you live by that define your identity. Include reference points such as links to articles or videos, for example. What is your reading list, your bookmarks, your playlists? Determine and design the best format for cataloging and presenting this cultural landscape.

4 Weeks _ Week 04–07
9/22–10/13

INQUIRY C: The filter of Perspective—Work, Influences, and Inspiration Begin by cataloging, analyzing what you have made to date, collected, saved, archived, or bookmarked. What formal strategies or ideas appear? Look for the threads or connections between everything. Try to extract five and define each of these in your

own words. Your output should be a designed digital collection organized in some way according to the emergent formal strategies.

4 Weeks_Week 07–10
10/15–11/05

FINALLY, SYNTHESIZE, CONNECT THE DOTS, DRAW CONNECTIONS, COMPILE INSIGHTS, AND BEGIN TO APPLY YOUR THINKING.

INQUIRY D: Thesis Taxonomy — How can you begin to define your thesis idea and frame its references in a language we understand? Using the first 3 phases as your guide, begin to develop a taxonomy of the language and terminology that have emerged from stages 1-3. You should additionally, define or describe this terminology. Support this taxonomy with references, such as links examples or case studies.

4 Weeks_Week 09–12
10/27–11/24

02—Forms of Making

This semester will include a number of projects running in parallel to the forms of inquiry project. These are designed to keep you making experimental form, and express ideas related to your thesis work (or not) that appear along the way.

Thesis Journal (weekly prompted through Basecamp)

What things you have found or looked at or thought of this week?— something you want to do next, what inspired you, what did you hate—
or maybe: my thesis is _____ fill in the blank (a series of projects exploring x; an exploration of space; rebranding gender, etc.

Remix

A project about recontextualizing content, ideas, and form.

3 Weeks _ Week 03–05
9/15–10/08

Extreme Scale

A project about shifting understanding and perspective.

3 Weeks _ Week 07–09
10/13–11/03

Design methods

Create a statement or series of statements as formal strategies that can begin to link,

connect, or unify your findings. What patterns appear? What connections do you see across each form of inquiry? Once you have drafted your statement, generate a project which serves to represent this formal strategy or strategies.

4 Weeks_Week 10–Week 13
11/05 – 12/03

03—Presenting Your Inquiry

Your semester will culminate across two evenings of presentations in which you will formally deliver a presentation of your semester of inquiry. You will write a scripted and design a set of visuals to accompany the script. You will present this in front of your peers and mentors (virtually).

3 Weeks (to build presentation)
11/10 – 12/01
Tentative presentation dates
Tuesday 12/1 530-8, Thursday 12/3 530-8

Schedule

Week 01	09/01/2020	Thursday Charrette
Week 02	09/08/2020	Charrette wrap-up Introductions Summer Letter Conversation [BEGIN]Thesis Journal (weekly) [BEGIN]Inquiry A—50 Questions
Week 03	09/15/2020	[BEGIN]Remix
Week 04	09/22/2020	[BEGIN]Inquiry B—Words That Matter
Week 05	09/29/2020	Inquiry A—50 Questions [DUE] Remix [DUE]
Week 06	10/06/2020	
Week 07	10/13/2020	[BEGIN]Extreme Scale Inquiry B—Words That Matter [DUE] [BEGIN]Inquiry C —Filter of Perspective
Week 08	10/20/2020	
Week 09	10/27/2020	[BEGIN]Inquiry D — Thesis Taxonomy Extreme Scale [DUE]
Week 10	11/03/2020	[BEGIN]Design Methods Inquiry C —Filter of Perspective [DUE]
Week 11	11/10/2020	[BEGIN]Presentation Building
Week 12	11/17/2020	Inquiry D — Thesis Taxonomy [DUE]
Week 13	11/24/2020	Thanksgiving Break
Week 14	12/01/2020	Inquiry Presentations Design Methods [DUE]