SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGN

Spring 2012

CFA AR 484

Senior Degree Project

LEVEL	BFA · Senior degree project studio
CREDITS	4
MEETS	[confirm]
DATES	Spring 2012 · degree project due May 2, 2012
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Nick Rock
OFFICE	[confirm]
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu · AIM / iChat RockBostonU
OFFICE HOURS	[confirm]

01

Overview

Design is as much about process, critical thinking and social responsibility as it is about aesthetics and form. Projects, clients' needs, the field of graphic design are all constantly and rapidly changing. Changes can happen across disciplines or from one medium to another; how we as designers adapt to those changes, employing traditional design techniques and using the newest technology, is about more than aesthetics and form. It is about practicing a process of research and discovery that can solve design problems no matter how content, technology, and styles change over time.

All designers have a unique and powerful responsibility to affect how, when, why and where people receive information. The challenge we face is to reveal this information through the filter of our own perspective.

This course will begin to help you define what that perspective is. It will challenge and strengthen your views and opinions as designers. It will help to encourage the development of your voice as a designer as well as begin to establish your methodology, your way of thinking or your process. It is important that as designers we have our own voice as we often bring ourselves into every project. We are more than translators, we are interpreters. We are also authors and makers. We need to have the ability to adapt and change and continue to solve design problems along the way and

we do this by relying on our perspective, influences and ways of thinking. Take what you learn from and about the process of this class and carry it with you to your future design careers.

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Learning Outcomes

Senior Degree Project — Objectives

The Senior Degree Project involves extensive, student directed research investigations in graphic communications. One of the goals of this interdisciplinary course is to have each student address, through self-authored graphic design projects, social, environmental, political, linguistic, philosophical, and cultural issues across the academic spectrum. Traditionally, graphic design has been understood as an effective tool for managing content and form to communicate information clearly and creatively in a commercial sense. However, graphic design has been largely overlooked as a means of expression and inquiry through qualitative and quantitative research across other fields of study. The role of graphic designer has changed in recent years as a result of new media. In this new role, a new term has evolved: “authorship” or “designer as author.” This term is based on new approaches to the design process, the notion that designers can function as their own clients, developing their own content and means of communication, and marketing these independent, creative ideas to society. The Senior Degree Project addresses these and other issues through the broadening of interdisciplinary study and research.

03

Course Structure

Class Rules

- Work hard.
- Be respectful.
- Show up. And show up on time.
- Work harder.
- Show your work, process, everything you have or be prepared to, daily. The more you are getting feedback from the class the better. It makes your work better and it helps you evolve as a designer.
- Questions. Ask them. Often. Questions are ALWAYS beneficial to the entire class, not just the person asking.
- Experiment. Sketch. Test. Sample. Prototype.
- The project is never complete.
- The printer is always broken.
- Collaborate.
- Dish it out and take it.
- Laugh.
- Be opinionated. Debate. Ask more questions.

Communication

It is expected that you as a class will help and support each other throughout this course and others for that matter.

That said, I am of course fully accessible in class, at my office, via email: nickrock@bu.edu and Instant Messenger (AIM, iChat) RockBostonU. In addition to these avenues of communication we will also be using an online collaboration tool called Basecamp.

04

Projects

Senior Degree Project

Individual · semester long · due May 2, 2012

The Senior Degree Project is an independent assignment focusing on an analytical and conceptual position as well as the design of narratives. It is the final requirement for the BFA degree in Graphic Design and is the consummation of the methods and principles learned through the students' three years of study in Graphic Design at Boston University. Students synthesize their research, document and diagram the design process, and produce a final project based on their chosen subject matter. The thesis project involves a visual interpretation of the chosen subject matter and may culminate in a book, multi-media presentation, a series of posters, or other media. The Senior Degree Project is submitted as visual examples accompanied by a brief written statement that affirms your individual ideas and insights. One copy of the document remains with the department.

Introduction. As graphic designers we often have to deal with visual, written, or spoken narratives, so it is of interest to us to observe how different forms of narrative affect the reader's experience. How for example does a diagram, a comic book, a narrative painting, a novel, a travel description, a guide book, a how-to book, a timetable, or a dance notation system symbolize time and space? The study of such different forms of narrative might help you in your project.

Narrative Subjects. Select a text from any realm of narrative and in any area of interest — art, design, history, science, cultural studies, environmental studies, sports, music — and reinterpret it using visual, verbal, typography, and/or sonic means. Your reinterpretation might strengthen and clarify an existing point of view or it might add a new perspective to the story. You might annotate your text with another narrative, with visual elements, or your narrative might be mainly visual, annotated by typography. Your choice of media or venue might also enable you to address motion, sound, and physical dimension.

The form you choose to present the narrative text will influence the interpretation of the text: the interactive qualities of a book, the directed motion of digital video, or an interactive program with a digital interface will have profound effects on the reader. Choose your format and media carefully.

Thesis. A thesis is an analytical, conceptual position. It is important that you establish a viewpoint or a perspective on the text or subject matter that you intend to reinterpret. Without a thesis, you are merely rearranging your material to make a better visual presentation. That is not the object of this course. Your thesis is the criteria by which your overall success will be measured. It will direct your visual choices. In this way, your project is like an argument. Your thesis is your assertion and your design and presentation become part of the evidence that supports your thesis. To test your thesis, imagine saying, "This is so," and then state your assertion. Does it make sense?

Working Title. It is important to develop a working title. A working title is an important test to find out if you have a thesis. A working title does not simply announce your subject matter. It reflects that point of view and often the scope of your project.

Project Guidelines. The text selection need not be lengthy but should provide a rich opportunity for interpretation. The complexity of the topic should be appropriate to the time available and your demonstrated ability of skills related to different media. Since most of you will be working with an appropriated text, the source must be properly cited as part of your final presentation. In addition, the final presentation should include a traditional colophon, which should also credit any other consultants to your project as well as any outside critics.

Project Format and Scope. The format for the project must be appropriate to the subject matter chosen, the intended audience, and your expertise within that format or medium. A suggested maximum guideline for the project length, if in book form, is thirty-two pages plus cover, front matter, and back matter. The scope for media outside of traditionally printed matter will be determined by the faculty and the student.

Autobiographical Publication

Individual · due February 29, 2012

Choose a story in your life, not your life's story. Certain moments and events in our lives are what helps to define us as individuals and as designers. It may stretch a long period of time or be very brief, the point is that it articulates something about you. Create a 16–24 page publication that communicates this autobiographical narrative in some way. Draw from your experiences, skills and influences as a designer to date in order to help craft this publication.

Influences Reel

Individual · due March 5, 2012

In the process of researching your degree project you will be gathering and collecting your own set of influences. You should be gathering influences from anything in life that inspires you, not just graphic design. This means being inspired by film, poetry, theatre, design, sculpture, painting, photography, architecture etc. You will then gather and

collect your influences into a “reel” that represents somewhat of a narrative arc, clearly presenting your influences as an individual and a designer.

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Assessment

Your grade in this class will be based on a number of factors:

- **Attendance.** Attendance at each class is mandatory, you must contact me in advance if you need to miss a class. If you have more than one un-excused absence your mark will be lowered by one full grade. If you are late, or absent you must follow up with me, as you will still be responsible for the work.
- **Class Participation.** Part of the job as a designer is communicating effectively, on a design team, in a studio environment or with clients. You will be expected to be an active member of the class, particularly during critiques as all feedback is important.
- **Project Execution.** All projects should be given your full attention and effort. Each component of your projects will be reviewed, projects need to be submitted on deadline and should be complete according to project brief. Projects must be completed by the due date. Late work will be penalized.
- **Project Process.** You are expected to document the process of each of your projects throughout the semester. This means, saving all sketches, writings mock ups etc. You are not required to formally document your process, however it may be helpful as we may ask to refer to your process documentation in order to understand how you arrived at a solution. It will be particularly important to have this with you during final critiques for each project.

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Calendar

DATE	EVENT
Feb 29, 2012	Autobiographical Publication due
Mar 5, 2012	Influences Reel due
May 2, 2012	Senior Degree Project due

07

Materials & Tools

Required Reading

- Baker, Nicholson. *The Mezzanine.*

Courseware

- **Basecamp** — a central portal for class discussion outside of class and a digital library of class resources, such as this syllabus, project briefs, certain readings and the class calendar.