SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGN

Spring 2016

CFA AR 484

Thesis

LEVEL	BFA · Senior thesis studio
CREDITS	4
MEETS	Mondays and Wednesdays
DATES	Spring 2016
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	[confirm]
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu · Slack · Basecamp
OFFICE HOURS	Mondays and Wednesdays 12–2, by appointment; Thursdays 12–2 by appointment only

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Overview

The senior thesis is an independent, semester long project or series of projects. It is your final requirement for your BFA and consists of 3 parts: documented process and research, a designer's statement and the completed project itself. The project is open ended and contains only this limited set of requirements as everyone's projects will be different. You should choose content and subject matter that you are truly interested in. You will be spending the entire semester on this project, so it is important that you are fully invested. The project can take any form. You may choose to create a book or magazine, a series of videos or an iPhone application. The form is entirely up to you and it need not be just one thing. You may want to create a series of projects that communicate one idea, or solve a specific design problem. The concept, content and subject matter will be the thread that connects and holds the work together.

> “If you come to a project determined that the end product is going to appear this way or that (it’s called “conceptualism”), the publication will never be appropriate, as integrated, or as satisfying as it could have been if the designer had “listened” to the material in the first place. No, you have to immerse yourself in the text and the illustrations, and let the material tell you how it might best be treated and what, in the end, it wants to look like.” —Greer Allen

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. 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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Course Structure

Guest Critics and Meetings

We will have a series of guest critics this semester. They will likely overlap with our small group meetings later in the semester. Sign ups for individual meetings will be available a week in advance.

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, or through Slack or Basecamp.

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Projects

Thesis — Process & Research

Individual · beginning of semester

We will spend a large amount of time at the beginning of the semester researching and developing your concepts. During this phase you will be gathering, collecting and documenting visual inspiration and reference. You will also sketch, test and prototype ideas. The culmination of this phase will be your core concept and the foundation for the design work and written statement. We will review your research constantly so

always be prepared to show and discuss where you are in your process. You may use any tool or method you like to collect and document, however it needs to be something you can easily present to the group. In the past students have chosen to use Pinterest, Tumblr, Evernote, Dropbox, iPhoto, a folder on your desktop, an envelope, a shoebox … it's up to you. I will ask that you prepare a PDF of all of your research and sketching to submit with your project at the end of the semester.

Thesis — Designer's Statement

Individual

In your designer's statement you will define the nature of your project or series of projects. You will lay out what you intend for the outcome of your project. You will define the subject matter and state your opinions and ideas. It is important in this statement to refer to the research you have done to help state your position, or to justify your project. There is no requirement for length, however it needs to be more than a few sentences. The project is personal work, not client work. You should be able to articulate why you are drawn to the content or why you intend on creating this work.

Thesis — Project Work

Individual · thesis reviews April 6 · BFA exhibition

There are no parameters for the work you must complete for your individual project. We will define these together over the course of the semester. It is expected that your work be impeccably crafted and designed. You are expected to sweat even the tiniest details. This project will be a feature of your portfolio and should ultimately be able to represent you as a designer. If the project feels sloppy and unfinished, that will reflect upon you as a designer. Your project will live in the BFA exhibition at the end of the semester. Upon completion of the show you will be required to turn in a flash drive containing your process & research, statement and final project files.

Mini-Project 01 — Remix Publication

Individual · due Feb 3

Choose 2 different pieces of content that you are interested in, and present them together as a remix or mashup in a publication. Presenting things in new contexts often injects new life, new perspectives, new understandings into the content. It is up to you to decide the best way to do this. This is meant to be a very fast project so don't over think it.

Requirements: at least 16 pages · any size.

Mini-Project 02 — 2 Weeks Straight

Individual · process ends Feb 8 · film due Feb 22

Decide something to do every day for 2 weeks straight, create a process for documenting this and create a short film about the 2 weeks. You will need to plan what you will do by next Monday's class, which will be your start date.

Mini-Project 03 — Influences Reel

Individual · final due March 4, 2016 by 5pm, emailed

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.

05 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. Class discussion and critique are not things that are easily made up and happen regularly. Absences will be reviewed on a case by case basis and can affect your final grade. You should be scheduling appointments around your classes since you know your class schedule, and not the other way around.
- **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. The weekly homework assignments are also considered part of your class participation requirements.
- **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.

06 Calendar

DATE	EVENT
Feb 3	Remix Publication due

DATE	EVENT
Feb 8	2 Weeks Straight — documentation period ends
Feb 22	2 Weeks Straight film due
Mar 4	Influences Reel final due, 5pm
Apr 6	Thesis reviews
End of semester	BFA exhibition · flash drive of process, statement and final files

07

Materials & Tools

- **Slack** and **Basecamp** for class communication.