SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGN

Fall 2018

CFA AR 483

LEVEL	BFA · Senior core studio
CREDITS	4
MEETS	Tuesdays and Thursdays
DATES	September 4 – December 2018
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave, 4th floor (connected to the graduate graphic design studios)
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	Tuesdays and Thursdays 11–12:30; Mondays 12:30–2:30, by appointment

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Overview

> “Nobody tells this to people who are beginners, I wish someone told me. All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But there is this gap. For the first couple years you make stuff, it’s just not that good. It’s trying to be good, it has potential, but it’s not. But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is still killer. And your taste is why your work disappoints you. A lot of people never get past this phase, they quit. Most people I know who do interesting, creative work went through years of this. We know our work doesn’t have this special thing that we want it to have. We all go through this. And if you are just starting out or you are still in this phase, you gotta know it’s normal and the most important thing you can do is do a lot of work. Put yourself on a deadline so that every week you will finish one story. It is only by going through a volume of work that you will close that gap, and your work will be as good as your ambitions. And I took longer to figure out how to do this than anyone I’ve ever met. It’s gonna take awhile. It’s normal to take awhile. You’ve just gotta fight your way through.” — Ira Glass

This semester is essentially preparation for you all to be able to move on to your thesis. It is senior design studio, which can also be called advanced graphic design, either of these titles are accurate and true. This studio will be challenging and demanding but also, I hope, rewarding. There will be a lot of work, sometimes at the same time, because this is how it is when you work as a professional designer. Projects don’t begin and end neatly on very specific deadlines. Deliverables and expectations are often not easily defined and open ended as it is the designer’s job to define these things in order to solve the problem.

When you work on your thesis it will be like an independent study. You will come up with a concept for a project, generate content, define deliverables etc. It is sometimes a hard jump to make, from doing more rigid and structured work, so your projects this semester are designed to bridge that divide. I will be helping you move into more open ended spaces, to continue to learn how to interpret and filter. We will be discussing inspiration, and how to find it, gather it and use it to fuel your process.

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Learning Outcomes

You will be evaluated over the course of the class and will be assessed according to the major learning objectives of a Graphic Design major: Process, Master Key Principles, Authorship, Design Agility, History and Context, and Professionalism. The full rubric is under Assessment.

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Course Structure

Project Structure

You will have a series of mini projects intertwined with 1 major multi-part project this semester. These projects will overlap and are intended to help you develop your own authorship of the work.

Process & Research

This semester marks the beginning of your thesis research which means, start gathering and collecting anything you think is moving or inspirational or that you just think is cool. Set up a method for doing this. 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.

Check-ins

We will be having individual check-in meetings tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 4 and Tuesday, November 6, in which we will discuss your status in the class, to ensure that you all know where you stand and that we are all on the same page. You are required to sign up for a time slot on both dates. 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 — on the 4th floor of 808, connected to the graduate graphic design studios — and via email: nickrock@bu.edu. Please do not use any other email address to contact me. All communication should go through my BU email address or via Basecamp.

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Projects

Periodic Readings

You will be receiving readings occasionally which we will reference and discuss during class.

Mini-Project 01 — Remix Publication

Individual · Sep 4 – Sep 25

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. No restrictions as long as you use two different pieces of content.

Mini-Project 02 — Influences Presentation + Reel

Individual · draft Nov 1 · presentation Nov 15 · final video at reviews

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 both a presentation, that you will deliver to the class and a “reel” that represents somewhat of a narrative arc, clearly presenting your influences as an individual and a designer.

Mini-Project 03 — TBA

With Yael

Project 04 — Design Voice in Three Acts

Major project · three interconnected projects · booklet Oct 16, final drafts Dec 4

A series of 3 interconnected projects designed to help you learn to turn inspiration and ideas into self-generated work.

Pick a show from *This American Life*, *99% Invisible*, *Serial* or *S-Town* (or another approved podcast / show). You will be making 3 projects as part of this assignment.

The first, very simply, is a representation of the chosen show: make a 16-page booklet representing the story from the show you listened to.

The subsequent 2 projects are projects inspired by the show. This means they are derivative and inspired by the content of the show. You are not retelling the story of the show. You can make anything you want, but you must choose, from the following list, a constraint of sorts:

a brand identity · a video series · an installation · a functioning website · a book of 50 pages or more · a strategic plan · an online store · an exhibition · an intervention · something that can be sold · a methodology · a lecture · a documentary · something interactive · something coded · a movement, cause or campaign · a podcast · a tool · a service

Milestones: booklet due October 16 · presentation crits, for you all to provide the class an update on your project status, October 30 and November 13 · final drafts of the remaining work due December 4.

The milestones are here to help give everyone a general structure. It is entirely up to you how to manage these 3 projects in terms of when you start, finish, and produce them as each of you will have a very different combination of things.

This series of projects is ultimately about how things we are inspired by lead to new work, projects, ideas, creativity and how we manage and develop those ideas.

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Assessment

You will be evaluated over the course of the class and will be assessed according to the major learning objectives of a Graphic Design major. In addition, the following specific points will be factored into your final grade for the course:

- **Attendance.** Attendance at each class is mandatory. As the core studio course for your major it will make up some of the most important work you are doing here. Class discussion and critique are not things that are easily made up and happen regularly. You must contact me in advance if you need to miss a class. At my discretion, if you have more than one unexcused absence your mark will be lowered by as much as one full grade. If you are late, or absent you must follow up with me, as you will still be responsible for the work. I will not chase you down to catch you up. You should be scheduling appointments around your classes since you know your class schedule, and not the other way around.
- **Class Participation.** Part of a designer's job 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. Discussion is an important part of the design process. If you are not participating regularly in the discussion you will be asked for your opinion. Lack of participation will negatively impact your final grade.
- **Group Work.** Designers rarely work independently. Completed work is almost always the result of a team effort of some sort, whether it be just designers, designer and client, designer, developer, writer etc. In this class there will be times when you will be asked to work as part of a team.
- **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. All parts of your projects in this class will be evaluated including process and research documents. You will be given an opportunity to improve upon each project following that project's final critique.
- **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. Your documents will be given the same attention to detail as your design work. The process for each project will make up a portion of your grade.
- **Being Professional.** As you are learning to be designers, one of the most important aspects of working professionally is the way you conduct and carry yourself in interactions with clients, employers, peers etc. Pay attention to emails you send, things you say in class. Give respect. Earn respect.

How Projects Are Evaluated

Often times design and other creative work is subjective and therefore difficult to have a precise grading system. As a result I have developed a rigorous way of

focusing on a specific criteria for determining the success of a particular project. Every project is evaluated against the following on a scale of 1–5, 5 being the best:

CRITERION	QUESTION
Idea	Is this smart, clearly articulated and thoughtful. Is it original? Does it show a unique perspective, etc.
Concept Development	How well did you move from your initial idea into something real. What was your iterative process like. Did you support your development with research.
Design Execution	Once your concept of exactly what you wanted to make became clear, how well was this translated to a piece of design, did the use of form make sense, did it work etc?
Craft	Was it well made, did you consider the details, printing, rendering, materials, final experience etc. Did you cut and glue things properly, does your video have quality sound, etc.
Presentation	How does a viewer experience the work. How well do you speak about the project and what you attempted.

Student Learning Objectives for Evaluation

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL 1 — UNSATISFACTORY	LEVEL 2 — COMPETENT	LEVEL 3 — ACCOMPLISHED
Process	Student struggles with defining problems, researching, generating ideas and / or developing concepts. Student fails to participate in critiques. Student doesn't employ any method of documentation of work. Student fails to demonstrate research as part of the design process. Student rarely uses research to develop content and ideas. Student struggles to meet deadlines. Student does not set goals or is unable to achieve stated goals. Student struggles to balance workload.	Student is able to define a problem, employ methods, develop concepts, research and develop concepts. Student participates in critiques and is able to document work. Student understands the value of thorough research in a graphic design process and is able to employ research into their design process. Student understands value of goal setting Student is able to meet deadlines. Student satisfactorily balances workload	Student shows thorough understanding of a graphic design studio process; is able to define a problem, employ methods of research and idea generation, develop concepts, critiques and documents work as a way of developing smart, informed and carefully considered solutions to design problems. Student understands the value of thorough research in a graphic design process and consistently explores a variety of methods of gathering, collecting and documenting as a way of developing content and ideas. Student manages time efficiently, sets and achieves goals and deadlines and is able to confidently balance a full studio workload.
Master Key Principles	Student is unable to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals and principles of typography and layout as a way of communicating visual and written messages.	Student has a basic understanding of the fundamentals and principles of typography and layout as a way of communicating visual and written messages and demonstrates these skills regularly in assigned projects.	Student has an advanced understanding of the fundamentals and principles of typography and layout as a way of communicating visual and written messages and is able to employ these skills in inventive ways.

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL 1 — UNSATISFACTORY	LEVEL 2 — COMPETENT	LEVEL 3 — ACCOMPLISHED
Authorship	Student struggles to generate, curate or develop their own content for assigned projects	Student is able to author and curate their own content for assigned projects Student is able to use and understand many tools, media and forms of communication	Student understands the role of the graphic designer in professional practice and the ability of the designer to help define, shape and also author the content of the work they create.
Design Agility	Student has limited grasp of tools and media. Student is unable or has difficulty choosing appropriate technology, media or tool to successfully complete a design project.	Student is able to use and understand many tools, media and forms of communication. Students is explores problems through more than one form of media. Student is frequently able to choose appropriate mode of technology and media to successfully complete their design solution.	Student exhibits a broad understanding of a tools, services and a full range of media and forms of communication by exploring problems using print, interactive, spatial and experiential, web, interactive, static and dynamic. Student is able to choose appropriate mode of technology and media to successfully complete their design solution.
History and Context	Student struggles to recall or identify major moments, works, and figures in design history.	Student is aware of major moments in design history and is able to recognize some major works and figures as well as some currently practicing designers.	Student is able to identify and reference major moments in design history, major and important figures in design history, and currently practicing designers. Student is able to cross reference and make connections across history

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL 1 — UNSATISFACTORY	LEVEL 2 — COMPETENT	LEVEL 3 — ACCOMPLISHED
Professionalism	Student has limited understanding of the vocabulary of the graphic design field and little to no understanding of related fields. Student unable to, or has difficulty presenting ideas in front of a group. Student is unable to, or has difficulty expressing ideas in writing.	Student has a basic understanding of vocabulary of the graphic design field and its related fields such as print production, web development and video production. Student competently expresses ideas visually and verbally when presenting in front of a group and writing ideas and statements.	Student has mastered and is fluent in the vocabulary of the graphic design field and its related fields such as print production, web development and video production. Student has strong visual and verbal communication skills speaking in front of a group, critiquing work, writing project statements and descriptions. Student leverages design skills to enhance writing and presentation skills.

Basic Principles for Grading

We will not have a final review of work for the class. You will have your normal semester end reviews. After which you will receive a letter grade based upon the following criteria:

- **A** — You demonstrate an advanced understanding of concepts presented and are able to complete work above and beyond suggested parameters.
- **B** — You exhibit a more than competent understanding of concepts presented and utilize these concepts in an articulate and noteworthy manner.
- **C** — You demonstrate a basic understanding of the information studied and apply this information to assigned problems meeting basic expectations but not going beyond suggested parameters.
- **D** — You exhibit limited understanding of the concepts and complete work below the level required for satisfactory performance.
- **F** — You demonstrate little or no understanding of course material, show little desire or motivation to complete the work or turn in incomplete projects.

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Calendar

DATE	EVENT
Sep 4	Remix Publication begins
Sep 25	**Remix Publication due**
Oct 4	Check-in

DATE	EVENT
Oct 16	**Project 04 booklet due**
Oct 30	Project 04 presentation crit
Nov 1	Influences Reel draft due
Nov 6	Check-in
Nov 13	Project 04 presentation crit
Nov 15	**Influences presentation day**
Dec 4	**Project 04 final drafts due**
Semester-end reviews	**Influences final video due**

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Materials & Tools

- **Basecamp** — to consolidate class communications: a central portal for class discussion outside of class and a digital library of class resources.