SECOND YEAR GRADUATE STUDIO

Fall 2019

CFA AR 883

Revelation Through Inquiry

LEVEL	MFA 2 · Graduate studio
CREDITS	8
MEETS	Section A1 Tuesdays · Section B1 Thursdays · 12:30–3:15 / 3:30–6:15
DATES	September 3 – December 6, 2019
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Assistant Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment — Mondays 11:30–2:30, Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30–12:30

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Overview

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, what you care about both in terms of content and formal issues. You are expected to build on former 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 a number of 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 catalysts for your critical thinking and creative process as a designer.

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Course Structure

Thesis Groups

For the purposes of this sequential project you will be organized into 4 groups of 4–6 students. The groups will intentionally bridge the two sections and you will be expected

to meet with your group outside of class, as well as coordinating and conducting 4 meetings throughout the semester with an outside critic assigned to your group.

The Work

The semester runs in three strands: Forms of Inquiry, Forms of Making, and Presenting Your Inquiry.

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Projects

01 — Forms of Inquiry

We will work through five distinct but complementary forms of inquiry which intentionally overlap and build upon each other as we move through the semester. Each phase 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.

Phase 1 + 2. How do you begin to align and organize yourselves in relation to the things that interest and influence you? You will develop a deeper sense of your own identity as a designer, and will be better able to frame questions and lines of inquiry on your own.

Part 1 — All That Matters

Individual · 2 weeks · weeks 2–4 · 9/10–9/24

Develop a content specific cultural landscape; this is 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 cataloguing and presenting this cultural landscape.

Part 2 — 50 Questions

Individual · 3 weeks · weeks 3–6 · 9/17–10/8

For this project you will begin to develop a research methodology based in conceptual and formal questions as a design process. Research existing texts by creatives within and outside of design in order to develop internal and external questions as practicing designers.

Phase 3 + 4. Here we will ask that you begin to fully develop a coherent perspective on visual and verbal languages you utilize as you work to discover and articulate your thesis, while constantly questioning design as it relates to your own personal perspective and values.

Part 3 — Filter of Perspective

Individual · 4 weeks · 10/1–10/29

Work, influences and inspiration. Start by cataloguing and analysing what you have made to date, collected, saved, archived. What formal strategies appear, what formal strategies start to connect everything? Try to extract 5 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.

Part 4 — Thesis Taxonomy

Individual · 3 weeks · 10/15–11/5

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 your first 3 phases (including your own annotation, description or definition of this terminology) as well as language that may have surprised you that you plan to go into further. This taxonomy should be supported with references, such as links, examples or case studies.

Phase 5. Synthesize, connect the dots, draw connections, compile insights and begin to apply your thinking.

Part 5 — Design Methods

Individual · 5 weeks · 10/29–12/05

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 or series of projects which serve to represent this formal strategy or strategies.

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** (all semester). As a sort of extension of the summer letter project, post as a Google Doc into the weekly folder: things you have found or looked at or thought of, things you want to do next, what inspired you, what did you hate. My thesis is _ _ fill in the blank (a series of projects exploring x; an exploration of space; rebranding gender ... etc etc).
- **Remix.** TBA.
- **Extreme Scale.** TBA.

03 — Presenting Your Inquiry

Individual · tentatively Tuesday 12/3 and Thursday 12/5, 5:30–8

Your semester will culminate in an evening of presentations in which you will formally deliver a presentation of your semester of inquiry. You will write a script and design a set of visuals to accompany the script. You will present this in front of your peers and mentors.

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Calendar

WEEK	DATES	CLASS CONTENT AND DELIVERABLES
W1	Sep 02–06	All Graduate Studio Charette, Tuesday + Thursday
W2	Sep 09–13	Introductions · begin Forms of Inquiry Part 1 — All That Matters (weeks 2–4) · begin Thesis Journal (all semester)
W3	Sep 16–20	Continue Part 1 · share draft research / content · begin Part 2 — 50 Questions (weeks 3–6)
W4	Sep 23–27	Finish Part 1 · **Part 1 research document due** · continue Part 2 · draft questions due for review in class · Virtual Critic Session 01
W5	Sep 30–Oct 04	Continue Part 2 · begin Part 3 — Filter of Perspective (weeks 5–9)
W6	Oct 07–11	Finish Part 2 — 50 Questions · continue Part 3 · Virtual Critic Session 02
W7	Oct 14–18	Continue Part 3 · begin Part 4 — Design Taxonomy
W8	Oct 21–25	Continue Part 3 · continue Part 4
W9	Oct 28–Nov 01	Finish Part 3 · continue Part 4 · begin Part 5 — Design Methods · Virtual Critic Session 03
W10	Nov 04–08	Finish Part 4 · continue Part 5 · individual meetings with Nick, Mon–Wed
W11	Nov 11–15	Continue Part 5 · begin preparing Inquiry presentation
W12	Nov 18–22	Continue Part 5 · Virtual Critic Session 04
W13	Nov 25–29	Continue Part 5 · Thanksgiving week — individual meeting signups Mon, Tue
W14	Dec 02–06	Finish Part 5 — Design Methods · **Inquiry Presentations** · prep for final reviews

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Materials & Tools

- **Google Docs** — the weekly Thesis Journal folder.