EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Fall 2020

CFA AR 597

LEVEL	Elective · sophomores through MFA 2
CREDITS	2
MEETS	Wednesdays · alternating full-group remote sessions and small-group hybrid sessions (2:00–5:30)
DATES	Fall 2020
LOCATION	Hybrid — in person and remote synchronous
INSTRUCTOR	Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment — Mondays 10–2 (remote), Wednesdays 10–2 (remote / in person), Thursdays TBD

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Overview

Experience design may not be what you think, as the term is slightly misleading. We do not design an experience. We design or develop a plan to create opportunities for experiences and interactions. We do this, as designers, by drawing from all of our own life experiences, influences, and exposures to different things to develop opportunities for new experiences. We also need to understand that when we design, we design for real people who will bring their own experiences and influences to the project. So it is crucial to be exposed to and have perspective on a broad range of knowledge, culture, views, etc.

We will begin to shift our perspective on Experience Design by defining it in terms of scale, for example, something that's personal, something intimate that you experience with others, something that you experience on your own or with others in the environment. It may even be much larger, which may transcend focused objects and locations, such as a brand experience.

In this class, we're going to test out this theory of experience at scale through projects, case studies, readings, and lectures to frame a range of scale. We will attempt to cover a lot in a short amount of time and will move pretty quickly. Since this class is a design studio, we will be emphasizing design concepts and how a process of research and discovery support and provide the basis for our ideas.

This studio's goal is to help you begin to develop a process of approaching, defining, and framing opportunities, taking into consideration both your voice as a designer and the needs of your audience. You will complete a series of projects which confront this idea at different levels of scale. The intent is not to focus on a specific aspect of experience design but to set you up to become a better design thinker.

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Course Structure

Our Class Is a Community

We are a microcosm of the department, the school, the university, and while small, we are still a community. Even just academically, our cohort includes students from the Sophomore level through Second Year Graduate students, and we represent the Graphic Design department, SVA CFA, and outward into the university.

Our class is inclusive and accessible. We come from different places, backgrounds, and walks of life. I come into this class from a place of respect and trust, and I hope that you all do too.

I understand that your trust is earned. I am committed to helping you grow and learn and change or solidify your perspective and knowledge in design, and I am committed to learning from you. I will ensure that our class is a safe space to teach and learn, as I see all of us working in both capacities.

We will explore diverse content. I am working to ensure that this course represents a vast range of perspectives, ideas, topics, people, and culture. I will additionally elevate your voices in this class, both through the project work and the conversation.

We will be flexible, patient, and understanding. I made a syllabus and a schedule of projects. I will shift and adjust the work and the due dates to adapt to our class. There is understandable uncertainty coming into this semester. Let's commit to the experience and see where it takes us.

Class Structure

Classes will be a mixture of mini-lectures, discussions, individual and small group meetings, critiques, and presentations. This semester we will alternate weekly between full-group remote conversations and small group meetings. We will be splitting the class into 3 workgroups that will meet in-person for those on campus and remote synchronous for those who choose to participate remotely. Every small group work session will be open to anyone in the class who would like to participate regardless of your group assignment. That means you may join your assigned group in person and one or both of the others remotely if you choose.

Working Groups

I have organized you all into three groups of 6 students. You should meet with your group outside of class meetings. These groups are the groups we will use for in-

person / remote synchronous meetings on alternating Wednesdays. In order to work in this way, we will need to start our times a bit earlier than the normal class time and end a bit later. On the days that we meet in groups instead of the full class, you will only be required to meet at your scheduled group time for about 1 hour. You will be allowed to attend the other groups remotely if you'd like.

GROUP	TIME
Group 01	2:00–3:10
Group 02	3:10–4:20
Group 03	4:20–5:30

Availability Outside Class

I am available at my office — on the 4th floor of 808, connected to the graduate graphic design studios, Room 406A — or on Zoom, 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

The projects in this class will be sequential. However, they may overlap because subject matter overlaps. Projects in the real world are rarely complete before the next project begins. We will also remain flexible on project due dates. In addition to your project work, you may be given short readings that relate in some way to the project or topic of discussion that week. These readings are for your benefit, and I may refer to them in class.

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Assessment

Following are the main areas of evaluation for this course:

- **Attendance.** You are required to attend class meetings, either in-person or remote synchronous. If you are not able to participate in a class in either capacity for some reason, you will need to discuss it with me. You will need to let me know before the start of class or risk an unexcused absence. My goal is to be flexible and accommodating. As we only meet once a week, time in class is crucial. Class discussion and critique are things not 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 an active member of the class, particularly during critiques, as all feedback is valuable and essential. Discussion is a significant part of the design process. If you are not participating regularly in the dialogue, I will directly ask 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 designers, client, developer, writer, etc. In this class, there will be times when you will need to work as part of a team.
- **Project Execution.** All of the projects in this course require your full attention and effort. Each component of your projects will be reviewed. Projects need to be submitted on time and should be complete according to the project brief. Projects must be completed by the due date. That said, you will have an opportunity to improve upon each project following that project's final critique.
- **Project Process.** You should document the process of each of your projects throughout the semester. Save all sketches, writings, mockups, 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 developing into design professionals, you must practice how 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.

Basic Principles for Grading

We have critiques at the end of each project, but you will not receive a grade for each project. You will submit final versions of all of the work digitally at the end of the semester. We will not have a final review of the work for the class. You will have your standard 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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Materials & Tools

- **Basecamp** — to consolidate class communications: 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 our class calendar, messaging and chat.
- **Zoom** — remote office hours and remote synchronous sessions.