EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Fall 2021

CFA AR 597

LEVEL	Elective · sophomores through MFA 2
CREDITS	2
MEETS	Once a week · in person or remote synchronous
DATES	Fall 2021
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu · Zoom bostonu.zoom.us/my/nickrock
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment — Tuesdays and Thursdays 11–12:30, Wednesdays 11–2

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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 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 will test this theory of experience at scale through projects, case studies, readings, and lectures to frame a range of scales. 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 emphasize design concepts and how a process of research and discovery supports and provides the basis for our ideas.

This studio's goal is to help you begin to develop a process of approaching, defining, and framing opportunities, considering 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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Learning Outcomes

Audience + Authorship

- Develop a basic understanding of persona and audience development.
- Develop a basic understanding of audience experience journey.
- Explore and understand the intersection of creative ideas and audience interpretation.

Design Research + Inquiry

- Develop the ability to identify, evaluate, assess, and codify examples and reference materials for experience design projects.
- Build and leverage case studies as valuable resource tools for project development.

Professionalism + Process

- Develop the ability to propose large-scale or speculative design projects.
- Develop the ability to engage in a professional dialog and debate around empathy and inclusivity in experience design.
- Successfully create, present and implement conceptual design projects collaboratively.
- Develop a process for reflecting on and assessing insights from project successes and failures.

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Course Structure

Our Class Is a Community

I come into this class from a place of respect and trust, and I hope that you all do too.

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. We embrace the unique identities of each member of this community and commit to learning, growing, and understanding each other through historical contexts of race, gender, religion, sexuality, and other expressions of self.

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 cultures through what I will provide and what I hope you all will bring to the conversation. I will also strive to elevate your voices in this class 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

This class is part studio and part seminar and will be a mixture of mini-lectures, discussions, individual and small group meetings, critiques, and presentations.

Homework

There will be 2 types of homework in class which we will use to shape our weekly class discussions. They require active participation but not an excessive amount of work.

- **Read, watch, listen.** Each week you will have some type of content to consume across 3 types of media — a reading, a video, a podcast — sometimes only one, sometimes all three. We will discuss these in the following class.
- **Research case studies.** We will have 9–10 weeks of case study development where I will ask you to research and compile a short case study of an example of experience design.

Availability Outside Class

- **Zoom:** bostonu.zoom.us/my/nickrock, by appointment.
- **Office:** 4th floor of 808, connected to the graduate graphic design studios, Room 406A. General office hours are by appointment only — Tuesday, Thursday 11–12:30, Wednesday 11–2.
- **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

3 Core 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. Some projects will be individual, and others will be collaborative.

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 cannot 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 the 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 class member, 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, whether designers, clients, developers, writers, etc. There will be times when you will need to work as part of a team in this class.
- **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 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. After which you will receive a letter grade based upon the following criteria:

- **A** — You demonstrate an advanced understanding of concepts presented and can 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 beyond suggested parameters.
- **D** — You exhibit a 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 by appointment.