JUNIOR GRAPHIC DESIGN

Spring 2021

CFA AR 382

LEVEL	BFA · Junior core studio
CREDITS	4
MEETS	Section A1 3:30–6:15 · Section B1 12:30–3:15 · Tuesdays and Thursdays · hybrid
DATES	January 26 – May 3, 2021
LOCATION	Hybrid — in person and remote synchronous
INSTRUCTOR	Assistant Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment — Mondays 10–2 (remote), Wednesdays 10–2 (remote), Thursdays TBD

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Overview

Designers are more than just makers of beautiful things—we are communicators and thinkers with the ability to inspire and motivate—constantly interacting with all fields and professions, exposing ourselves to countless new things. It is essential to express our opinions and that we, as designers, create relevant work while challenging the concept of what graphic design is and why it is necessary. There doesn't have to be two worlds of design, one that clings to smart, well-articulated thought out projects and another of so-called surface design that focuses on making things that just look pretty. All choices should relate to the message. Everything has meaning and should be treated as such. All designers have a unique and powerful responsibility to affect how, when, why, and where people receive information. The challenge we face is to reveal this information through the filter of our perspective. Design is ultimately about both discovering and revealing new ideas, opinions, and information.

The goal of this studio is to help you continue to develop and more deeply consider your voice as a designer. You will complete a series of projects designed to help you form opinions and points of view and ways of thinking and working, your creative process. Our goal as designers is to be in a place where we have a method or process or way of thinking which we can apply to any design problem that comes our way. Our goal is to

become design thinkers. At the end of this course, you should be on your way towards this goal. However, there is no expectation that you will have this philosophy defined.

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Course Structure

Principles

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 all are from different places, perspectives, 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. The diversity that you bring to this studio is a resource, strength, and benefit to us all.

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 is respectful of and represents a vast range of perspectives, ideas, topics, people, and cultures. I will additionally work to 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. That said, I will shift and adjust the work and the due dates to adapt to our class. While we have learned much over these last nine months, there continues to be understandable uncertainty coming into this semester. Let’s commit to the experience and see where it takes us.

Additionally, your suggestions about improving the value of diversity and community in this course are encouraged and appreciated. Please let us know ways to improve this course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Class Structure

Classes will be a mixture of mini-lectures, discussions, individual and small group and full class meetings, critiques, and presentations. This semester we will alternate weekly between full-group remote conversations and small group meetings both remote and in-person. We will be splitting the class into workgroups to more easily activate small group sessions. 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. In order to make the most effective use of time, when we meet as a full group, it will likely

be only on Zoom. Days when I hold in-person sessions, will have alternate Zoom sessions. Synchronous studio sessions tend to pose more challenges than benefits.

The Family Meal

Last spring I started the Family Meal session as a way of bringing the group together when we all shifted to remote learning. It became an interesting way of bridging both sections of studio as one community. The idea of the family meal comes in part from quite literally what it says — bringing a family or community of people together with food — breaking bread together. It is something universally understood and a form of experience in which there are opportunities to share something, and sometimes, make deeper connections with each other. Further inspiration for this comes from the restaurant world. In many restaurants, a “family meal” exists — all of the staff convene for a meal before their shift. It is not a moment to sample the menu, and often they are cooking for each other, sharing. In this case, the community is also family. I have a favorite example of this, which I find inspiring to design studio culture in general. It is an event called Saturday Night Projects — every Saturday night at Restaurant Noma, René Redzepi hosts the Saturday Night Projects. Held after service, it’s a forum for the younger members of Redzepi’s team to share recipes they’ve been developing.

Working Groups

This semester you will be organized into groups of 4–5 students. The groups will be used to structure class meetings in a way that makes best use of in-studio time as well as creating a design team structure reminiscent of how you may actually work in a real world environment. The additional objective here is for you to practice balancing your voice as a designer with that of others on the team as design is nearly always about working with someone else. Group assignments will be posted on Thursday.

Homework

In addition to major projects, each week you will receive a miniature homework assignment. These are quick things to do, things to read, things to watch etc. and will change up weekly.

Individual Check-ins

We will also be having 2 individual check-in meetings 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. Dates: TBD.

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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.

PROJECT	BEGINS	DUE
01 — The Hill We Climb	Week 01 · 01/26	Week 03 · 02/09
02 — Borders (brief: Design as Verb)	Week 02 · 02/02	Week 05 · 02/23 (brief: 2/25)
03 — Noticing: Catalog of Influences	Week 03 · 02/09 (brief: 2/23)	Week 14 · 04/27
Noticing Journal (homework)	Week 04 · 02/16	—
04 — Spark Joy	Week 07 · 03/09	Week 10 · 03/30
05 — I Love / I Hate	Week 10 · 03/30	Week 13 · 04/20

Project 02 — Design as Verb

Individual · 24-page publication · due 2/25

Richard Serra's Verb List. Serra famously said, "Drawing is a verb." In *Verblist*, he compiled a series of what he called "actions to relate to oneself, material, place, and process." Serra has talked at length about the central place this language-based drawing occupies in the development of his early sculptural practice. This work on paper suggests a common ground underlying Serra's practices in all mediums — from early sculptures to later monumental works, which not only twist and curve but also enclose, surround, and encircle. It shows Serra's debt to action painting and his proximity to Conceptual and performance practices; the list was published in the journal *Avalanche* in 1971 and testifies to the artist's close relationship to dancers like Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti, with whom he shared not only a milieu but a commitment to carrying out verbs.

If we can assume (for the sake of this moment) that graphic design is action-oriented … always involving some sort of audience on the other side of the work, and then if we also propose that graphic design is a verb —

For this project, choose a verb that best aligns with how you think about creating, making, designing, etc. Then, using your chosen verb as a constraint, apply that constraint to a thematic area of content. Choose one of the following:

- Something that inspires you
- Something you think everyone should know
- Current event
- Social media

- Something local

Create a 24-page publication (you may interpret what this means).

Project 03 — Noticing: Catalog of Influences

Individual · minimum 100-page printed catalog · Feb 23 – Apr 13

> You're always repeating your same things all the time anyway, whether or not somebody asks you or it's your job. You're usually making the same mistakes. You apply your usual mistakes to every new category or field you go into. —Andy Warhol

The purpose of this project is to begin defining a design identity by developing an awareness of past and present practice, influences, and inspiration. You will present complex information clearly and legibly, practice developing type and image systems, create a visual and editorial narrative over a sequence of pages, and practice and refine type and image layout skills.

You will begin by describing, defining, and curating the objects, events, perspectives, and ideas that inspire you as a graphic designer. You will then catalog and analyze your collection, develop a curatorial point of view based on your collection, and design a minimum 100-page catalog presenting your design influences. Your curatorial perspective will define your publication's form and format. Develop an editorial system based on this curatorial concept; your plan should include strategies for working with text and image.

Goals of the project. Test and employ a combination of strategies and skills that you have been developing during your time here:

- **Authorship** — define and curate your content based on a concept or theme; this is an opportunity to express who you are as a designer; develop specific and unique form–content relationships; present personal information, ideas, and inspiration to a broad audience.
- **Typographic systems** — negotiate large amounts of text and text-and-image relationships; control multiple hierarchies; use typographic attributes to create visual interest within bodies of information; develop a cohesive typographic language based on your concept; exercise typographic craft (letter, word and line spacing, grid and margin compositions, hyphenation and justification); use connotative and denotative type appropriately.
- **Editorial design** — establish a clearly defined navigational system; create a systematic visual narrative through variation in rate and pace; use the grid to develop continuity and structure over sequential pages; strike a balance between form and content.

- **Hierarchy / composition** — use design principles like weight, direction, scale, space, form and texture to create dynamic compositions and typographic hierarchy; use visual contrast to create order and meaning; create a complex hierarchy with clear hierarchical steps; explore the relationship between color and hierarchy.

Requirements. Minimum 100-page printed publication · minimum 50 visual sources · minimum 50 written / text sources.

Tentative schedule

DATE	MILESTONE
2/23	Begin project
2/25	Past catalog reference presentation
3/2	Share influences research
3/9	Continue influence research / share-out; begin visual system sketching
3/16	Share influences in the context of system sketches
3/23	Print tests, near-final collections for review
3/30	Full draft layouts for review
4/6	Final draft layouts for review
4/13	Begin production, or send to production

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Assessment

Objectives + Evaluation

- **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 2 or more unexcused absences, your mark may 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.
- **Professionalism.** 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.

Grade Breakdown

CATEGORY	WEIGHT
Course assignments, from craft to final product	80%
Conceptual and visual skills, risk taking, and personal development	10%
Motivation and participation	10%

- **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

WEEK	DATE	CLASS CONTENT
01	01/26/2021	Class introduction · begin Project 01 — The Hill We Climb
02	02/02/2021	Design iterations for Project 01 · begin Project 02 — Borders
03	02/09/2021	**Project 01 due** — crit / conversation · concept development for Project 02 · begin Project 03 — Noticing
04	02/16/2021	Family Meal 01 · design iterations + production, Project 02 · begin Noticing Journal (homework)
05	02/23/2021	**Project 02 due** — crit / conversation
06	03/02/2021	Project 03 concept development
07	03/09/2021	Begin Project 04 — Spark Joy
08	03/16/2021	Family Meal 02 · Project 04 concept development
09	03/23/2021	Project 04 design — production
10	03/30/2021	**Project 04 due** — crit / conversation · begin Project 05 — I Love / I Hate
11	04/06/2021	Project 03 — production
12	04/13/2021	Family Meal 03
13	04/20/2021	**Project 05 due** — crit / conversation
14	04/27/2021	**Project 03 due** — crit / conversation
—	05/03/2021	Final reviews

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Materials & Tools

Basic design kit for you to function in the class. This is my basic list. If you are a nerd about what tech and supplies people use, check out usesthis.com.

The Essentials

- Laptop

- Flash drive
- Camera
- Sketchbook
- X-Acto knife + extra blades
- Bone folder
- A flatfile drawer (if you are using the studio)
- A sense of humor

Recommended

- Music
- Coffee
- A projector adapter
- A tripod
- Gaffer tape
- Bookbinding materials

Reading

- Required: Tejada, Ramon. *Decolonizing Reader (resources)*, collaborative open edition.
- Suggested: Monteiro, Mike. *Ruined by Design: How Designers Destroyed the World, and What We Can Do to Fix It.*

Software + Services

It goes without saying that you will need to have access to Adobe Creative Cloud if you don't already. I don't expect this to be an issue, but wanted to be sure. I encourage you to explore alternatives to the Adobe software. Experiment with something new. Here are some good tools: Keynote, Pixelmator, Sketch, Procreate, Cinema4d.

We will be using a project management tool used by professionals in the design industry called Basecamp, to consolidate class communications. You all will have access to our Basecamp site after the first class; this will act as a central portal for class discussion outside of class as well as a digital library of class resources, such as this syllabus, project briefs, certain readings as well as our class calendar.

You MUST have a backup solution in place after the first week. I recommend Backblaze.

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Policies

Assignment Completion & Late Work

You are responsible for completing course assignments handed out in class by the due date. Late work will be penalized however it is expected that work will be submitted as soon as possible even if it is late. Incomplete work, or missing work requires an individual meeting during office hours.

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Resources

Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 or access@bu.edu to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. ODS is located at 19 Deerfield Street on the second floor (19 Buick Street as of September 1, 2018).