GRAPHIC DESIGN ELECTIVE

Summer 2022

CFA AR 389

Foundations of graphic design

LEVEL	Elective · condensed summer course
CREDITS	4
MEETS	Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9:30–12:30
DATES	July 5 – August 11, 2022 (six weeks)
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Assistant Professor Nicholas Rock
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment

01

Overview

> Not everything is design. But design is about everything. So do yourself a favor: be ready for anything. —Michael Bierut, *79 Short Essays on Design*

The goal of this studio is to give you a basic understanding of the foundational principles of graphic design. You will be introduced to different concepts and studio processes through a series of projects, working both on and off the computer, readings, and homework assignments.

02

Learning Outcomes

We will cover three major learning objectives:

Explore the relationship between object and image.

Basic principles of visual form making and image composition. Understanding of object and image through representation, visual metaphor, and context.

Investigate the use of language through typographic form.

Introduction to basic concepts of typography. Basic principles of typography as form, typography as content. The impact of the written word on visual form.

Develop communication through the use of narrative and visual storytelling.

Building on what we discussed in the first two topic areas, we will begin to experiment with combining concept, type, image, and language to create narratives and visual stories to more broadly understand graphic design principles.

03

Course Structure

Class as 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 an incredibly diverse community. Our cohort includes students from all over the world with all sorts of backgrounds and experiences.

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.

04

Projects

Over the next six weeks, you will be completing a series of micro-projects or investigations.

WEEKS	THEME	PROJECT	CLASS DATES
01	Process of Making	Rigorous Form	7/5, 7/6, 7/7
02	Interpreting Content	Place as Content	7/12, 7/13, 7/14
03 + 04	Visual Communication	Elements Poster	7/19 – 7/28
05 + 06	Narrative + Storytelling	Collections	8/2 – 8/11

Week 01 — Rigorous Form

Process of Making · July 5–7 · three rapid form-making challenges

A series of 3 rapid form-making challenges to help get you in the habit of making many things, the process of making, the process of iteration.

Part 01 — 10 Variations of a Calendar. Explore the idea of a calendar. Consider what the word means. What does calendar mean historically and across cultures? How do we interpret words, forms, and numbers relating to your interpretation of calendar? You will make ten different iterations of a calendar based on your exploration of the concept. *11 × 17 (portrait) · black + white only · five must be type-only.*

Part 02 — 10 Variations on a Verb. You are all assigned a verb. You must make ten different posters that are variations or interpretations of the verb. Think about content, context, and interpretations. What does the word mean? Can you change or alter its meaning in different contexts? How can you suggest the meaning of the verb in different ways? Don't be literal. Don't use the actual word in any of your posters. Otherwise make anything you want. *Verbs: Expose · Illuminate · Conceal · Elevate · Focus · Isolate · Echo · Enlarge · Accelerate · React · Synchronize · Flow · Remove · Permeate.*

Part 03 — Variations on a News Story. Choose a news story and create seven visual responses using each formal constraint below:

1. Use one font — type only.
2. Use only images.
3. Type and image, B+W, printed on colored paper.
4. Made by hand.
5. Collage.
6. Multipage (booklet).
7. Video.

Week 02 — Place as Content

Interpreting Content · July 12–14 · tour + map

We will embrace and explore this city and seek to create a series of projects that draw from your collective experiences of your time spent here thus far. This week, you will be doing two separate and distinct projects. Both relate to the idea of being in a new place (or a very familiar place). The content is Boston, and all your projects will represent this content through the filter of your perspective.

Part 1 — Tour Project. A tour is often an excellent way to acclimate yourself to a new place. It helps you orient yourself and allows for guided discovery. Spend some time thinking about a tour you would like to create in Boston. It could be something unconventional — a tour of wall paintings, bridges, security cameras, typography, etc. — not a tour for the typical tourist.

1. Photograph 10–20 locations or "stops" on your tour.
2. Name and develop a logo/mark for your tour. The name and mark should draw all of their inspiration from the content of your tour. The shapes you draw and the typeface you choose should all have direct reference to the tour itself. This can be done through visual metaphor, color, texture, pattern, etc.
3. Develop an icon or marking system to identify stops on your tour. This would typically be a sub-system of your logo. It need not be a direct visual reference but should fit well with the logo.
4. Create a tour booklet that includes a map of your tour. Combine your photos, logo, marking system, and a map together in one form. Think of the different approaches you may take to developing this form based on the content of the tour.

Part 2 — Map Project. Tours use maps. Maps are often conventional since people generally understand how to approach a map. However, for this project, I would like you to think about unconventional approaches to mapping. Constellations are an unconventional map of the sky. A table of contents or index, while common, can be an unconventional map of content. You get to consider how specific or general you'd like to be. Maps serve a purpose by illustrating all that is known about a place. We have become accustomed to the fact that most maps we encounter tend to identify everything. What happens when we create a map using only what we know? How might we interpret memories of place into a visual language?

1. Draw a map from memory. Draw one map of your path from your apartment to the 808 Studio. Include landmarks, location names, etc., that help you identify the path in your memory. How would you give directions to a friend using visual language?

2. Create an unconventional map of your favorite places or your favorite thing about Boston. Maybe you love the outdoors, so make a map of all the green space in the city, for example. Think about this as an information graphic, propaganda, or a way-finding system for children. You decide on the form, but push yourselves to rethink what a map is and what it can be. Maybe the form is created by only using color or only using type. This is an interpretation of a place as content into a visual language.

Weeks 03 + 04 — Elements Poster

Visual Communication · July 19–28 · type only, black and white · 24 × 36 in

Project borrowed with permission from Alice Chung. Imagine a poster series in an 8th-grade classroom designed to ignite a young student's curiosity about the natural world, chemistry, physics, and the sciences in general. When seen as a series, the posters should reflect the awe-inspiring diversity of the world around us and suggest, in abstract ways, the hidden forces that shape our environment.

Your objective in this assignment is to design a poster for one of the elements on the periodic table. For this assignment, your double objective should be to:

1. attract the attention of a hypothetical student;
2. evoke, with letterforms and composition only, an appropriate sense of the characteristics (e.g. gaseous, solid, crystalline, radioactive, unstable, etc.) of the element itself.

Think about ways to vividly evoke the quality of your element without resorting to clichés or expected solutions — these 8th graders are smart and very sophisticated.

Requirements. You should limit yourself to the use of type only in black and white. The final poster must be 24 in (w) × 36 in (h). It must include the element's name, symbol, atomic number, and atomic weight, as well as a 200-word description which you will provide based on your research. *Elements: Hydrogen · Helium · Carbon · Nitrogen · Oxygen · Neon · Iron · Gold · Lead · Mercury · Sodium · Aluminum · Silicon · Iridium.*

Weeks 05 + 06 — Collections

Narrative + Storytelling · August 2–11 · card set + 30–60 second video

Curate a collection of your own artifacts or things. This type of collection could take many forms, for example, everything you are carrying in your bag.

Collections often help us understand or make sense of things in the world, so for this project, tell a story about yourself, your interests, or your experiences through this collection of items. The items in your collection may act as literal representations or

as metaphors or both, and your collection need not be everything you own; however that is one possible solution.

With your collection you will make:

- A set of cards using both type and image.
- A 30–60 second video about your collection. You must include sound, and the video should be high-resolution 1080 × 1080 square or 1920 × 1080 landscape format.

Requirements. The things in your collection must be actual objects, so a collection of quotes for example will not work for this assignment. You may only choose one type family, so choose carefully, and choose something that relates to your content. The cards must include text; the text can be found or written by you. The video must be between 30–60 seconds, include audio, and be exported as a QuickTime H.264 video file (.mp4).

05

Assessment

Evaluation Criteria

- **Engagement.** A class as a community depends on the engagement of the class members. Part of a designer's job is communicating effectively, on a design team, in a studio environment, or with clients. We ask that you attempt to be an active class member, particularly during critiques, as all feedback is valuable and essential. Discussion is a significant part of the design process. We want to ensure everyone has the opportunity to have their voices heard. My goal is to be flexible and accommodating, but you are required to attend class meetings. If you cannot participate in a class for some reason, please get in touch with me — in advance if possible — to ensure you stay connected with the community discussion. Time in the studio environment is crucial. Class discussion and critique are things not easily made up and happen regularly, and we will regularly try to offer you multiple perspectives to help guide your work.
- **Group Work.** Designers rarely work independently. Completed work is almost always the result of a team or collaborative effort of some sort, whether it be with other designers, clients, developers, writers, etc. There will be times when you will need to work as part of a collaborative group in this class.
- **Project Execution.** All of the projects in this course require your full attention and effort. Projects need to be submitted on time and completed according to the project brief. We will have a review at the completion of each project, though you will not receive an individual grade for each project. 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.** Professionalism means constantly practicing how you conduct and carry yourself in interactions with clients, employers, peers, etc. Practice humility, honesty, transparency, and respect. Pay attention to emails you send and things you say in class.

Grading Structure

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

- **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.

Individual Check-In

We will also be having 1 individual, scheduled check-in meeting 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. Dates: TBD.

06 Calendar

Six weeks, July 5 – August 11, 2022, meeting Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. See Projects for the weekly sequence.

07 Materials & Tools

Things You Need

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 (may need to share drawers)
- A sense of humor

Recommended

- Music
- Coffee, tea, water, or other sustenance is welcome here
- A projector adapter
- A tripod
- Gaffer tape
- Bookbinding materials

Required Reading

- Tejada, Ramon, et al. *The Decolonizing Reader (resources)*, collaborative (open) edition.

Suggested Reading

- Monteiro, Mike. *Ruined by Design: How Designers Destroyed the World, and What We Can Do to Fix It.*

Software + Services

You will need access to Adobe Creative Cloud if you don't already. I don't expect this to be an issue, but I wanted to be sure. That said, I encourage you to explore alternatives to the Adobe software. Experiment with something new. Here are some good tools: Keynote, Pixelmator, Sketch, Procreate, Cinema4d, Figma, Miro.

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.

08

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 or missing work requires an individual meeting during office hours.

09

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).