EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Fall 2023

CFA AR 597

LEVEL	Studio elective
CREDITS	2
MEETS	Wednesdays, 2:30–5:15
DATES	Fall 2023
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Assistant Professor Nicholas Rock (he/him) · with a teaching assistant
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	By appointment — Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30–12:30, Wednesdays 11:30–2:30 · fantastical.app/nick-kSSb/office-hours

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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. As designers, we draw from our life experiences, influences, and exposure to different things to build these opportunities. It is, therefore, crucial to be exposed to and have perspective on a broad range of knowledge, culture, views, etc. 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. Our decisions as designers can lead directly to emotional responses of the people who engage with our work.

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 an audience. The intent is not to focus on a specific aspect of experience design but to set you up to become a better design thinker. You will complete a series of projects collaboratively confronting this idea and opportunities for experience at different scales to evoke specific emotional responses.

02

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

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.

Structure + Logistics

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

A Few Rules

1. Maintain a wildly open mind.
2. Ask tons of questions. To everyone.
3. Share — thoughts, ideas, life stories, jokes, playlists.

Workgroups

Students work in four assigned workgroups of four.

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. Case studies begin in Week 02.

04 Projects

There will be three projects this semester. Each project will be structured roughly the same way — an open-ended response to a prompt, allowing for a choice of constraints and opportunities to customize the project based on your team's decisions. Each team's response to the project prompts will yield distinctly different work in content and form. I believe this will keep each project discussion diverse, interesting, and surprising. Projects begin in Week 02.

Each project will be a collaborative project for two reasons:

1. Experience design is distinctly human-centered design. Most of this work is designed and built by teams of people for people, the process of dialogue and critique being essential to the success of the work.

2. This course is a studio elective, and I would like to cover a lot of ground, therefore working as a team can help you achieve more significant design experiments in less time (plus I know you all have a lot going on).

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Assessment

Evaluation Criteria

- **Attendance.** You are required to attend class meetings, and 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. That said, 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. Please get in touch with 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 schedule appointments around your classes since you know your schedule and not the other way around.
- **Class Participation + Engagement.** A designer's job is to communicate effectively on a design team, in a studio environment, or with clients. You will be an active class member, particularly during conversation and critique, as all feedback and questions are valuable and essential. Discussion is a significant part of the design process. If you do not regularly participate in the dialogue, I will ask for your opinion. Lack of participation will negatively impact your final grade. Designers rarely work independently. Completed work is almost always the result of a team effort, whether designers, clients, developers, writers, etc. This course requires that you work as part of a design team.
- **Project Process + Execution.** 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. All of the projects in this course require your full attention and effort. Projects must be submitted on time and completed according to the project brief. Projects must be completed by the due date.
- **Being Professional.** As you develop into design professionals, you must practice how you conduct yourself in interactions with clients, employers, peers, etc. How you engage in critique and how you present concepts, ideas, and questions. Pay attention to emails you send and things you say in class.

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 the final versions of all 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 the concepts presented and can complete work above and beyond suggested parameters.
- **B** — You exhibit a more than competent understanding of the 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.

07

Materials & Tools

Things You Need

Basic design kit for you to function in the class. This is my basic list.

- Laptop
- Loose sketch paper, index cards or post-its
- Sketchbook
- Sharpies
- Tape or pins

Required Reading

- Tejada, Ramon. *The decolonizing, [or puncturing, or de–Westernizing, and SHIFTING], Design Reader*, 2021–23 edition. An in-progress, collaborative project since 2018.
- Monteiro, Mike. *Design Is a Job.* A Book Apart.
- Goldenberg, Seth. *Radical Curiosity: Questioning Commonly Held Beliefs to Imagine Flourishing Futures.*

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. That said, I think it is obnoxious that our industry is so reliant on prohibitively expensive design software from one giant corporation so 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.