JUNIOR GRAPHIC DESIGN

Spring 2024

CFA AR 382

Audience, Authorship

LEVEL	BFA · Junior studio
CREDITS	4
MEETS	Four sections, Tuesdays + Thursdays — A1 and C1 3:30–6:15 · B1 and D1 12:30–3:15
DATES	Spring 2024
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Nicholas Rock · co-taught with Claire Bula (cbula@bu.edu)
OFFICE	808 Commonwealth Ave — 406A
CONTACT	nickrock@bu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	Nick: by appointment — Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30–12:30, Wednesdays 11:30–2:30 · Claire: by appointment, in person or on Zoom

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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, process, or way of thinking that 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.

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.

Working Groups

This semester you will be organized into groups of 3 or 4 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.

Class Structure

Classes will be a mixture of mini-lectures, discussions, individual and small groups, 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 activate small-group sessions.

Weekly Homework — Noticing Journal

Weekly · prompted through Basecamp

> People talk in a precious way about genius, creativity, and curiosity as superpowers that people are born with but noticing is a more humble pursuit. Noticing is something we can all do. —Jason Kottke

What things have you found or looked at or thought of this week? Something you want to do next, what inspired you, what did you hate.

Playlists

Each group is responsible for making a playlist for the week — make a shared playlist and create the cover art.

04 Projects

1. I Love / I Hate
2. Makers' Lab
3. Catalog of Influences

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 your faculty or TA — 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.

- **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.** As you develop 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, and things you say in class. Practice humility, honesty, transparency, and respect.
- **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.

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 + something to write with
- 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

- *Extra Bold: A Feminist, Inclusive, Antiracist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers.*
- Monteiro, Mike. *Ruined by Design: How Designers Destroyed the World, and What We Can Do to Fix It.*
- Pater, Ruben. *CAPS LOCK: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from 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. 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.