GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDIO PRACTICE

Spring 2025

CFA AR 523

LEVEL	Studio · professional practice
CREDITS	2
MEETS	Wednesdays, 2:30–5:15
DATES	Spring 2025
LOCATION	[confirm]
INSTRUCTOR	Associate Professor Nicholas Rock
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

> To experience, to engage, to endeavor, rather than to watch and to wonder—that's where the real meat of life is to be found. Inspiration and growth only come from adversity and from challenge—from stepping away from what's comfortable and familiar and stepping out into the unknown. —Ben Saunders

This course bridges the gap between academia and the professional design world. It focuses on professional practice and development, preparing students to navigate their careers confidently and competently. Through workshops, lectures, real-world projects, studio visits, and guest speakers, students will refine their professional profiles, learn to manage client relationships, and explore practical skills like pricing, billing, proposal writing, and portfolio development.

The course functions as both a teaching and learning environment, offering a studio-like atmosphere where students work collaboratively and engage with real clients. Ultimately, this class emphasizes learning through experience, fostering adaptability,

critical thinking, and the ability to approach design challenges with creativity and professionalism.

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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.

Teaching + Learning Sessions

The course includes workshops, lectures, and discussions around the following topics:

1. **Professionalism** — communicating with clients and peers, presenting oneself as a designer.
2. **Proposals and Briefs** — crafting scope of work, deliverables, and budgets for real-world projects.
3. **Presenting Creative Work** — structuring and delivering impactful presentations.
4. **Client Feedback** — managing and translating client feedback effectively.
5. **Tools and Spaces** — exploring tools, studio environments, and digital workspaces.

Professional Engagements

- **Guest speakers.** Industry professionals will share their experiences and insights.
- **Studio visits.** Visits to local design studios to observe professional workflows.
- **Printing facility tour.** An opportunity to learn about commercial printing processes firsthand.

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Projects

Resume and Portfolio

Individual · ongoing · first review Week 2, presentations Week 11

Bring your current resume and portfolio for review in Week 2. We refine resumes and PDF portfolios in workshop, develop a cohesive narrative in Week 9, and present updated portfolios and resumes in Week 11.

Personal Presentation and Bio

Individual · Pecha Kucha · Week 3

Draft a 2–3 minute personal presentation and write your bio. Presented as Pecha Kucha with peer feedback.

Proposal

Individual · Week 5

Draft a proposal for a sample project, following case studies of successful proposals.

Invoice and Print Request

Workshop · Week 6

Draft an invoice and a print request.

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Calendar

WEEK	TOPIC	ACTIVITIES
1	Introduction	Overview of course · Discussion: what are the first steps in presenting yourself to prospective employers and clients? What do alums have to say? · **Assignment:** bring your current resume and portfolio for review (due Week 2)
2	Resume and Portfolio Workshop	Peer review and critique · What makes a standout resume and portfolio? · Workshop: refining resumes + PDF portfolios

WEEK	TOPIC	ACTIVITIES
3	Personal Storytelling and Presentation Skills	Workshop: telling your personal story authentically · **Assignment:** draft a 2–3 minute personal presentation and write your bio · Pecha Kucha presentations with peer feedback
4	Presenting Creative Work	Guest speaker · Workshop: structuring client presentations
5	Presenting Creative Work + Writing Proposals	Case studies of successful proposals · Share-out presentations from Week 4 · **Assignment:** draft a proposal for a sample project
6	Pricing, Billing, Invoicing	Setting rates and creating invoices, tools · Workshop: drafting an invoice, drafting a print request
7	Commercial Printing Facility Tour	Learn about print production processes · Workshop: preparing files for print
8	Guest Speaker Series + Beyond Design Tools	Guest speaker
9	Advanced Portfolio Development	Lecture: crafting a cohesive narrative · Peer review: feedback on updated portfolios
10	Studio Visit #1	Visit to a local design studio · Discuss studio culture and career paths with professionals
11	Portfolio Review + Networking (TBD)	Class presentations of updated portfolios + resumes · Feedback session
12	Studio Visit #2	Visit to a second design studio · Comparative analysis of the two visits
13	Final Class Meeting	Guest speaker · Potential creative headshots session (TBD)
14	Monday schedule on Wednesday	Optional individual meetings
15	Final Review Week	No class

Studio Visits and Tours

- **Upstatement** (3/26) — studio tour and conversation.
- **Pinkergreen** (4/9) — studio tour and conversation.
- **Meridian Printing** — print facility tour.

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Materials & Tools

Required Reading

- The Graphic Artists Guild. *Graphic Artists Guild Handbook: Pricing & Ethical Guidelines*, 16th edition.
- Monteiro, Mike. *Design Is a Job.* A Book Apart.