

COM 240

Intro to Visual Communication

Spring 2024

Course Catalog Description

Introduction to the history, theory, and practice of visual communication including perception, visual literacy, and media design for multiple distribution channels.

Which means: No matter the communications-related profession, a solid understanding of visual communication will greatly benefit how you effectively communicate as well as engage within our very media saturated world.

As professional communicators, it is vital to develop not just the technical design and software skills, but also the theoretical and ethical dimensions about the power of visuals. This course is designed to foster critical awareness of visuals and the context in which these are presented, be it pictures, graphics, moving images, text, and in any combination. We'll focus on theoretical and hands-on techniques to produce visuals.

The course will prepare you to be visually literate as both creators of images and as individuals who are constantly consuming images.

Course Objectives



Georgia O'Keefe, *Sky Above Clouds, IV*
<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/100858/sky-above-clouds-iv>

- ⇒ enhance visual literacy; the ability to “read” or analyze visual media by recognizing contexts of production and interpretation as well as the ability to create visual media
- ⇒ recognize and apply principles of design and typography
- ⇒ evaluate ethical issues arising from the use of visuals
- ⇒ reflect about the power of visuals + your power as creators

Instructional Materials

» Required Textbook is **accessible as ebook through Milner Library:**

Hagen, R., & Golombisky, K. (2017). *White space is not your enemy: A beginner's guide to communicating visually through graphic, web & multimedia design* (Third edition.)

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ilstu/detail.action?docID=4807045> (or [link to Milner Library record](#))

» the other required textbook is at the bookstore and I'll offer PDFs of select excerpts:

Pater, R. (2016) *The Politics of Desig : A (Not so) Global Manual for Visual Communication*. BIS Publishers.

» Other required PDFs and videos are posted in Canvas.

Tues & Thurs
Sec 1: 9:35 – 10:50
Sec 2: 11:00 – 12:15
Fell 102

Instructor

Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky → *Dr. B for short*
lbratsl@ilstu.edu

Office / Zoom Hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:30

- Visit my office, Fell 451
- To zoom: request link via email w/ subject line: 240 zoom office hour

*** Other times are available!
I'll gladly schedule times
on M/W/F time to chat ***

Course Breakdown

Evaluation

Labs	20%	6 labs, 9 pts each
Midterm Exam	22%	60 pts
Projects	40%	
<i>Quote Layout</i>		35 pts
<i>Infographic</i>		75 pts
Final Portfolio	18%	50pts

General Rubric Expectations

I expect the following minimum for 'B' level work across all coursework:

- (1) Complete all the requirements, including proper file names
LASTNAME_[label]
- (2) Demonstrate awareness of specific course concepts
- (3) Use your own unique perspective to complete the assignment

Details about assignments will be explained in class and posted in Canvas.

About the Assignments

Labs: These are a mix of homework and in-class labs. Accounts for your learning process and engagement. Full points for full preparation and participation, which includes writing a brief reflection note when submitting creative work at the end of lab class.

Midterm Exam: In class exam covering the first 8 weeks of the course in order to evaluate what you've learned so far; a mix of multiple choice and essays.

Design Projects: These are design projects apply your visual literacy and design skills to practice. These involve planning and execution. There will be a written component to accompany your design work to explain your process and connect to course material.

Scale *SPECIFIC to this COURSE*

A: 90.50 – 100% B: 80.5 – 90.49% C: 70.50 – 80.49% D: 60.50 – 70.49% F: 60.49% and below

Schedule

Books:

WSINYE = White Space is Not Your Enemy 3rd

PD = Politics of Design

All additional reading and links to videos/websites posted in Canvas → Modules → Unit Lesson Pages

Subject to change. Changes will be announced through Canvas Announcements / Emails + in Unit lesson pages.

Wk	Date	Topic	Readings/Viewings	Homework to bring to class	DUE DATES For ASSIGNMENTS Check CANVAS for date + time
Unit 1 – Foundations: Learning to See + Process What We Perceive					
1	1/16	Intro	Syllabus		
	1/18	Visual Literacy	Crowe & Laseau PDF <i>PD</i> excerpts PDF	Notes about the readings	
2	1/23	Visual Elements	<i>WSINYE</i> pp. 46-52 Visual Elements PDF	Notes + Digital image of album cover or poster	

Wk	Date	Topic	Readings/Viewings	Homework to bring to class	DUE DATES For ASSIGNMENTS <i>Check CANVAS for date + time</i>
	1/25		Illustrator how-to videos/links	sketches/planning for in class lab	Due at end of class - Visual Elements Lab
3	1/30	Semiotics – Core Terms	Davis & Hunt, Ch 5 PDF Sean Hall Semiotics PDF, <i>PD</i> excerpts	Notes	
	2/01			Prep for Lab	Due at end of class - Photomontage Lab
4	2/06	Visual Ethics	Messaris and Moriarty PDF <i>PD</i> excerpts Bock – “Visual Media Literacy and Ethics”	Notes	
	2/08		Links to news org ethics policies Tuftte PDF	Prep for Lab	Due at end of class - Manipulation Lab
Unit 2 –The Mechanics of Design					
5	2/13	Design Principles	<i>WSINYE</i> Ch 4 + 5 Williams and Newton Ch 11 PDF	Notes	
	2/15	Color + Gestalt	<i>WSINYE</i> Ch 6 + 8 Links on Canvas Module	Physical piece of design	
6	2/20	Design Review	Catch up on readings Additional resources on canvas	Sketches (<i>homework assigned on 2/15</i>)	Due at end of class – Design Principles Lab
	2/22	Typography, Part 1 – Anatomy, Categories	<i>WSINYE</i> Ch 7, pp 88-91, 99-100, 111-114 <i>NDDDB</i> excerpt PDF GD Essentials Textbook PDF Lupton Links	Notes	
7	2/27	Typography, Part 2 – Hierarchy, Accessibility	<i>WSINYE</i> Ch 7, pp 92-98, 102-110 GD Essentials Textbook PDF Lupton Links Designing Accessible Content link	Notes Scavenger Hunt Items	
	2/29	Review Day	Catch up on readings Additional links on Canvas		
8	3/05	Midterm Exam			MIDTERM EXAM - IN CLASS
	3/07		<i>Catch up day for labs (see policy on late lab work)</i>		
3/12 – 3/14 SPRING BREAK					
9	3/19	Typography, Applied	Review typography notes Illustrator videos		Due at end of class – Typography Lab
	3/21		Read directions for Quote Layout Project	Bring physical sketches for Quote Layout Project	
10	3/26	workday	Tutorials / Feedback		
	3/28	Peer review		Quote Layout must be ready for peer critique by start of class	Quote Layout Project – Peer Critique Due in CLASS Directions on Canvas

Unit 3 – Integrating Meaning and Design					
11	4/02	Infographics	WSINYE Ch 10 Tufte – Visualizing Data PDF/links	Notes about the readings	
	4/04		Data Visualization 101 Directions for Infographic Project	Notes + sketches to prep for lab	Infographics Lab
12	4/09	IProject: Develop CONTENT	<i>Focus on CONTENT for Infographic Project</i>		
	4/11				Infographic Project Phase One Deadline: Content Due at start of class
13	4/16	Project: Design	<i>Class time devoted to layout and design. See Canvas for Tutorials / Resources. Attendance required</i>		
	4/18				
14	4/23	Project: Design	Continue working on Infographic Project	<i>Class optional</i>	
	4/25		Continue working on Infographic Project	<i>Attendance required</i>	
15	4/30	Project: Present		Infographic Project Phase Two Deadline: Polished Almost-Final Draft due TUES start of class. Presentations + Peer Critiques	
	5/02	Project: Refine	Use class time to refine project		
16			FINALS WEEK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed INFOGRAPHIC Project - Portfolio + Reflection due - deadline TBA based on university assigned time 		

About Submission Dates and Times:

- When I ask you to submit something BEFORE class time, it's so that we can use class time to comment on each others' work.
- You should always submit what you have – even if it's not done or perfect because that's the point of submitting these assignments before our official class time.
- Missing this deadline means that you miss the opportunity for feedback, which will benefit your final work. Peer review can only be made up with documented excused absence.

Policies

Emails

Please include the following in the subject line: 240 + Brief Descriptor

Please be respectful/professional in your communication. This means beginning your email with “Hi Dr. B” or “Hello Professor” or some sort of similar professional salutation.

Deadlines and Late Work

Labs: If you are absent during class time, it is your responsibility to learn the software and make up the work. If you miss a deadline, you may turn in

a lab late for **up to 2/3** credit. Deadline for any make up lab work is **March 7, by end of day.** On this day, I will offer any 1:1 catch-up software support.

Midterm: Can not be made up

Projects: The Quote and the Infographic projects also first involve **peer review during class.** Must be present to participate and earn credit.

Late Project Work Policy: if you email me /

turn in a draft of what you have at the time of the assignment deadline (aka incomplete project), along with a plan of action of when / how you will complete the project, I will allow revision of the incomplete project *for up to 2/3 credit*.

Absences and Your Responsibilities:

I do not need to be notified about an absence, except

(a) when you know ahead of time you have a **university-sanctioned absence for an upcoming event**

(b) you are too ill to attend class AND ALSO you provide an action plan for **how you intend to make up course work and proceed**

If you are experiencing any sort of health-related issues that you know will impact your engagement in this course, please use formal channels established by the Dean of Students office <https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/contact/absence/>

In the event of student bereavement, please see the ISU policy, <https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-27.shtml>

Plagiarism: . . . don't do it.

Not only is it against the ISU's code of conduct, it is unethical and unprofessional. Plagiarism means anything from presenting someone else's work as your own to failing/forgetting to cite other people's work. **THIS INCLUDES THE USE OF AI.**

Any evidence of plagiarism will result in an automatic 0 for the assignment and possibly an automatic F for the class as well as a mark on your permanent record. I will report cases for Academic Dishonesty to the Dean of Students Office. <https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/academic/>

Accommodation and Access Needs: Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented accessibility need should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 309-438-5853, <https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/>

Please notify me in the first 2 weeks about any accommodation needs.

Mental Health and Other Resources

Note that confidential mental health resources are available. If you're feeling stressed / anxious about classes, work, and life in general, do not hesitate to contact the professionals at Student Counseling Services, (309)438-3655. More information about this free and confidential resource is available here: <http://www.counseling.illinoisstate.edu/>.

Notice of Recording: The following policy comes from:

<https://prodev.illinoisstate.edu/online/privacy/>

“The University wants to make students aware that a course may be recorded by the faculty member for later use. Please understand that each faculty member makes an individual decision on whether recording and/or sharing their class materials is warranted. **Any recordings that a faculty member makes available are for use by students enrolled in the class and are for the purpose of individual or group study only.** The recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments. Please do not independently record the course without prior authorization from the faculty member or an approved accommodation from [Student Access and Accommodations Services](#) office.”

Tech Help If at any time you have any technical problems, first contact ISU's tech services: 309-438-4357 or website, <https://ithelp.illinoisstate.edu/>.

Adobe Creative Cloud: Our campus has a campus-wide subscription to all Adobe software. **You need to request access to the subscription.** Please do so in the first few weeks of the semester. Here's the link: <https://about.illinoisstate.edu/adobe/>

Extra Credit: You have a maximum of 2 chances to do a combo of the following, for up to 15 pts total:

1. Participate in the School's Research Pool: <https://sites.google.com/sit/> .5 research credit = 2.5 points, can be done twice for points; counts as 1 chance)
2. Create a flyer / social media graphic about (a) wearing a mask or (b) for any campus group or community organization + write a 1 page rationale about how you developed the concept using course concepts. The one requirement: you may not use a template for the design, so, no using an online service (*like canva*) please. Submit to Canvas → Modules → Course Resources and Extras → Extra Credit. Up to 10 pts.
3. Want to learn more about the wide world of design? I'll recommend some docs throughout the semester. And also - find a documentary or a lecture on youtube (> 45 minutes). First, clear the choice with me (**email subject line: 240 Extra Credit Doc**). Then, watch the doc/lecture *and take hand-written notes while watching*. Submit photos of your notes + reflection statement about how this doc/lecture connects and what brought you to this particular video. Submit to Canvas → Modules → Course Resources and Extras → Extra Credit. Up to 10 pts