

1 Senior Thesis

E. Herrmann elizabethherrmann@gmail.com

GRA 4945 Graphic Design Pro Practicum
Sect 601 Spring 2015

Tues / Thurs 9:00-11:45a [office hours by appointment, HBR 210]

202 Harbor Hall

description Design can't save the world. Only designers can.

At this point in your design careers you are savvy enough to understand your commitment to the communications world. If that reason is based on money, love, or fame, this course will not be helpful to you. To make this idea indelibly clear, both proficiency and self aggrandizing are not the point. The point is, to hijack an entire semester for conducting your senior thesis investigation.

By definition, a thesis is an original proposition that is either proven or disproven through intensive experimentation, research, and evaluation. The point of this course will be to chose something that addresses the first line in this description. Schoolchildren are dying because of a whackjobs with guns. Is this relevant? Design is a weapon too. What can you DO with it?

As visual thinkers that have been attending a four year university in pursuit of a BFA (Bachelor of FINE ARTS), I would like to remind you on the first page of your syllabus, you will be held to this standard. Displaying technical and formal skills alone are NOT passable. It is better to try and fail but have an interesting and meaningful dedicated study than something polished and vacant. In return, you will be granted ample thinkspace with as much guidance as you need along the way.

deliverables

1. Output: 3 "considerably involved pieces" your choice
2. Documentation: Publication
3. Written Component: Research Paper
4. Process: Blog
5. Presentation: Thesis Review/Defense

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- policy All assignments, critiques, and classes* are mandatory and participation is expected. Readings are required. All work is due pinned up for crit at the start of class, even if you're absent. Assignments will NOT be accepted by email. Late work is NOT accepted [F].
- * You get 3 absences, no questions asked. Collect them, 4 absences = Drop 1 letter grade, 5 absences = Fail. Bring any missed work to following class. If work is not presented on the next attended class period, you will not receive credit for the work (meaning a 0). Tardy = anytime past roll-call; 2 Tardies = 1 Absence.
- Your faculty, as a general rule, will work with you if you communicate effectively in advance of absences and problems. We respond to emails. We do not respond to "Day Before" emails. No grace is extended for computer problems: DO NOT lose your work.
- No plagiarism. Stealing = failure. Appropriation is not theft. See also, RIP: A Remix Manifesto.
- structure Given the open structure of the class, self-discipline is integral and considered in overall course evaluation. Critiques require mandatory participation and thesis development is expected. Class time is to be used for production : Anyone without something to work on will be asked to leave. Bring all ideas and materials to work in class, including readings. Revisions are always ongoing.
- grading 3 pieces = 50%, Publication = 25%, Research Paper = 15%, Blog + Exercises + Review = 10%; Basis: inventiveness, relevancy, coherence, experimentation, investigation, craft, finesse, time management, ideas/content, form, evolution, impressiveness, participation, attitude, attendance. Grades received at culmination of course upon the final and complete thesis package.
- documentation Final Class: At the end of the semester, students must hand in ALL relevant digital files [collected digitally]. Photograph all physical work prior to final crit. Bring all physical work to final crit. Documentation required to receive a final grade.

required text IV, by Chuck Klosterman
Emigre No. 64: Rant, by Rudy VanderLans
Hackers & Painters + Revenge of the Nerds, by Paul Graham

suggested text Transmetropolitan Vol. 1, by Warren Ellis
Empire: Nozone IX, by Nicholas Blechman
Channel Zero, by Brian Wood
Design Writing Research, by Ellen Lupton
The End of Print, by David Carson
Meggs' History of Graphic Design, by Phillip Meggs
The Design of Dissent, Mirko Ilic & Milton Glaser
Barnbrook Bible, by Jonathan Barnbrook
The Making of the Wall, by Gerald Scarfe
Things I Have Learned in my Life So Far, by Sagmeister
79 Short Essays on Design, by Michael Bierut
The Medium is the Message, by Marshall McLuhan
Down & Out in the Magic Kingdom, by Cory Doctorow
Little Brother, by Cory Doctorow
Makers, by Cory Doctorow
Technopoly, by Neil Postman
Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley
Said the Shotgun to the Head, by Saul Williams
Company, by Max Barry
Zombie Spaceship Wasteland, by Patton Oswalt
Wall and Piece, by Banksy
Signal to Noise, by Neil Gaiman
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, by Philip K. Dick
Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury
Dollhouse Epitaphs, by Jed Whedon
All Art is Propaganda, by George Orwell
Sex, Drugs, & Cocoa Puffs, by Chuck Klosterman
Bound by Law, by Keith Aoki
100% by Paul Pope
The Idea Factory, by Jon Gertner
McSweeney's Quarterly 13, by Chris Ware
The Shock Doctrine, by Naomi Klein
Looking Closer Series, by Bierut, Helfand, and Heller
Design Culture Now, by Donald Albrecht
Design Life Now, by Barbara Bloemink
I Robot, by Isaac Asimov
Designing for Social Change, by Andrew Shea
The Pentagonam Papers, by Pentagonam

Soon: Tomorrow's Visions Today, by Lewis Blackwell
Hybrid Imagery, by April Greiman
Emigre #65, by Rudy VanderLans
Emigre #68, by David Barringer
Obsessive Consumption, by Kate Bingaman-Burt
Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America, by Kalle Lasn
Fingerprint, by Chen Design Associates
Y: The Last Man, by Brian K. Vaughan
Process: A "Tomato" Project, by Steve Baker
Mmm...Skyscraper I Love You, by Tomato
Meme Wars, by Kalle Lasn
V for Vendetta, by Alan Moore
Slaughterhouse Five, by Kurt Vonnegut
No Logo, by Naomi Klein
The Bubble Project, by Ji Lee
Before I Die, by Candy Chang
PostSecret, by Frank Warren
Dot Dot Dot, by Stuart Bailey
Star Strangled Banger, by Ralph Steadman
A People's History of the United States, by Howard Zinn

materials Materials will vary on a student-to-student basis.

collaboration Students are encouraged to collaborate in various ways as a reflection of design reality. Please ask about how to make a collaborative thesis function. Minimally, use your peers to help critique and document work.

disability From the Office of Student Disability Services:
Any student with a disability is encouraged to meet with me privately during the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Each student must bring a current Memorandum of Accommodations from the Office of Student Disability Services, which is a prerequisite for receiving accommodations. Accommodated examinations through the Office of Student Disability Services require two weeks notice.

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- 01 [JAN 06] T intro class : Welcome: Why Are You Here? : Idea is Everything lecture : assign Thesis : assign Exercise One : assign Paul Graham : sign up Groups
- 02 [JAN 08] R **Exercise One: Frame Due** : read aloud to class : discuss Paul Graham : Style V Substance lecture : watch Exit Through the Gift Shop : assign Blog : assign Exercise Two
- 03 [JAN 13] T **Researchable Topic Due** : discuss as class : assign Written Component
- ** [JAN 15] R NO CLASS : SPEND NEEDED TIME RESEARCHING THESIS TOPIC
- ** [JAN 19] M NO SCHOOL : MLK
- 05 [JAN 20] T **Exercise Two: Creative Brief Due** : group meetings : Worlds lecture : assign Exercise Three : assign Manifester readings (Canvas)
- 06 [JAN 22] R **Research Due** : discuss as class : Manifester lecture : discuss Emigre No. 64 (Rant)
- 07 [JAN 27] T **Exercise Three: Scope Diagram Due** : pinup + discuss as class : Kill Deus Ex Machina lecture : assign Dealer's Choice : assign Exercise Four
- 08 [JAN 29] R Art is Theft lecture : assign Publication : assign Review
- 09 [FEB 03] T **Exercise Four: Conceive Output Due** : group meetings : Activist Art lecture : discuss Transmetropolitan + Empire
- 10 [FEB 05] R watch Brazil : discuss Klosterman : open studio
- 11 [FEB 10] T **1st Draft Research Paper Due** : read aloud to class
- 12 [FEB 12] R Rockstar Democracy lecture : open studio
- 13 [FEB 17] T **1st Piece Due** : Half-Time Review: Visiting Critics David Meek + John Stanko
- 14 [FEB 19] R open studio : assign Exercise Five
- 15 [FEB 24] T open studio : individual crits

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- 16 [FEB 26] R open studio : continue individual crits
- ** [MAR 03] T NO SCHOOL : SPRING BREAK
- ** [MAR 05] R NO SCHOOL : SPRING BREAK
- 17 [MAR 10] T **1st Draft of Publication Due** : group meetings
- 18 [MAR 12] R Rockstar Democracy lecture : watch Good Night & Good Luck
- 21 [MAR 17] T **2nd Draft Research Paper Due** : group meetings
- 22 [MAR 19] R **Exercise Five: Exhibit** : group meetings to discuss show thesis presentation plans
- 23 [MAR 24] T **Second Piece Due** : Third-Period Review: Visiting Critic Erika Schneider
- 24 [MAR 26] R open studio : Thesis Show invitations start going out
- 25 [MAR 31] T **2nd Draft of Publication Due** : group meetings
- 26 [APR 02] R open studio
- 27 [APR 07] T **Third Piece Due** : present to groups or class, your choice
- 28 [APR 09] R **Review Blogs for Grade** : present finished blog to class
- 29 [APR 14] T All Skate (bring in everything) : group meetings
- 30 [APR 16] R **Research Paper + Publication Due for Grade** : so that I can read before your thesis reviews
- 31 [APR 21] T **9:00-11:30AM: 3 Pieces Due for Grade** + Deliver **DIGITAL-FILES** and **PHOTOGRAPHY** of all physical work:
1. Thumb Drive, or 2. Portable External Hard Drive :
I will also be photographing all of your work :
12:00-12:45PM Juniors Present Handbook seniors required to attend
- 32 [APR 23] R **Senior Thesis Review: 9AM-1PM**, juniors required to attend : Present ALL OF YOUR WORK for GD Program Gathering
- ** [APR 24] F **Senior Thesis "Open House" in Harbor Hall** TBA

thesis student-driven work study: emphasis on discovering the researchable design topic, developing original ideation, implementing media, processes, and production in relation to content-first design, and commitment to a formally and conceptually meaningful body of work

deliverables

- 01 3 Pieces: dealer's choice, vessel relates to content
- 02 Publication: journal of thesis investigation
- 03 Research paper: publishable essay, discourse on design
- 04 Blog: periodic journal of ongoing investigation
- 05 Thesis review: formal presentation to the program

exercises

- 01 Frame: define a specific point of view
- 02 Creative Brief: chart out course of action
- 03 Scope: graphically diagram thesis time
- 04 Conceive Output: make plans for 5, choose 3 best
- 05 Exhibit Plans: discuss presentation plans

lectures

- 01 Idea is Everything
- 02 Style V Substance
- 03 Worlds
- 04 Manifester
- 05 Kill Deus Ex Machina
- 06 Art is Theft
- 07 Activist Art
- 08 Rockstar Democracy

vids

- 01 Exit Through the Gift Shop
- 02 Brazil
- 03 Good Night & Good Luck

Academic Learning Compacts : Departmental Scripture

CONTENT/DISCIPLINE SKILLS

- 01 Demonstrate the ability to create and develop visual form in response to communication problems, including an understanding of principles of visual organization/ composition, information hierarchy, symbolic representation, typography, aesthetics, and the construction of meaningful messages.
- 02 Possess an understanding of tools and technology. Relevant tools and technologies include, but are not limited to, drawing, offset printing, photography, and time-based and interactive media (film, video, computer multimedia).
- 03 Demonstrate a basic understanding of design business practices, including ability to organize projects and work as a productive creative team member.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- 04 Write clearly and effectively: well-organized, well-developed papers.
- 05 Exhibit functional oral communication

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- 06 Solve visual communication problems, including skills of problem identification, research and information gathering, analysis, generation of alternative solutions, prototyping and user testing, and evaluation of outcomes.
- 07 Demonstrate ability in conceptual, logical, and intuitive thinking as applied to graphical analysis.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- 08 Show respect for persons of different cultures, genders, and ethnicities
- 09 Gain experience beyond the classroom working with area cultural or non-profit institutions.
- 10 Recognize the social and ethical responsibility of creating visual design.

Assignment 1 Senior Thesis

Thesis

description It's obvious that interaction has been broken for a long time. If we observe a conversation from younger generations, the point is to not ever say anything. If we observe a group of students sitting in a computer lab, chances are none of them will acknowledge one another. Two people on a date will spend more time on Facebook than being with one another. Communication entails the exchange of information between two or more parties. While systems like the English language, iPhones, and mass transit allow us to quickly and easily communicate messages like ideas and emotions, there has been an increasingly inverse relationship between the rise in technological and mechanical connectivity between any two people groups and the depreciating merit behind the those interactions. Your reactions and alignment with this observation are encouraged.

In this course, you will address some aspect of this theme: Interactivity vs. Connectivity

Intentionally, I leave it big and broad.

Consider this from whatever angle you choose. For the technologically savvy interested in designing for new media to the romantic armed with stencils and manifestos, consider how you, an Artist Prophet, use research and design tools to DO something worthwhile.

components A researchable design topic
Research
Published results in the form of the 5 deliverables

specs Thesis topic:
- Impresses us: your work will be evaluated on a high level of intellectual and formal understanding
- Is logical, testable, and meaningful
- Is relevant to our time and relevant to graphic design
- Has not already been done: must be done differently
- Experimental investigations are highly encouraged

due Class 03 [JAN 13] : Researchable Topic
Class 06 [JAN 22] : Research

Assignment 2 Senior Thesis

Thesis Blog

description	You will be asked to keep a current blog documenting the progression of your thesis work. We will be using this as a critiquing platform in class to discuss assigned exercises, research, and experimentation. Post any and all written and visual work, even if it feels incomplete or irrelevant. Your blog is intended to function as a resource center as we chart through the semester. Often, you will revert back to previous ideas and tangents. Use this space to save anything and everything. Use it to share ideas with your peers and professor. In this instance, censoring and editing is bad.
components	May use Wordpress, or May hijack a section of your personal site Words and Images
specs	At least 30 posts that address 30 different thesis ideas 5 of those posts must be >100 words May not all be posted at once: Spread across 60 day range
due	Periodically used for Process Crits [TBA] Class 28 [APR 09] : Final Blog Review for Grade

Assignment 3 Senior Thesis

Research Paper

description Your audience is Design Observer, The New York Times, Princeton Architectural Press, et al. From the go, understand the intent of this paper is for publishing. Yes, it may need edited down later on and depending on who takes it, but what you are writing is NOT an artist statement, manifesto, commentary, persuasive essay, or dissertation. It is an article addressing a researchable design topic.

This entails accuracy, professionalism, and supporting evidence of your argument [fact checking]. This does NOT entail boring ideas, third-grader writing conventions, and soulless writing.

Be as viscerally direct as possible. Write 3000 words that require you to edit down. Action verbs over adjectives. Intrigue and decisiveness. Pace yourself, just like you would a title sequence. Map out main thesis ideas into logical sections in a rough abstract. Interview someone and structure it as a Q&A, lead us through your entire researchable thesis, or focus on one highly entertaining and inexhaustible aspect of it. Whatever you do, ask yourself 1) Is this interesting? 2) Who would publish this? 3) Why am I writing this piece? Keep in mind, even though it's only 500 words, it's challenging to condense lots of research into one concise article.

components 500 words
Evident research supporting your arguments

specs Typography is considered and in keeping with visual treatment of thesis work

due Class 11 [FEB 10] : First Draft
Class 21 [MAR 17] : Second Draft
Class 30 [APR 16] : Final Paper Due for Grade

Assignment 4 Senior Thesis

Dealer's Choice

description Publish your thesis investigation

This could mean visualizing collected data with a custom built program, installing a series of graphics around town, producing a set of posters, drawing a usable typeface, scripting and performing a short play, animating a short motion sequence, printing a body of silver gelatins...Please note, each of these examples constitutes 1 piece.

What formal decisions make sense with YOUR content?
We are promoting IDEA-FIRST DESIGN here
(1. idea/content -> 2. medium best actuating idea)

components 3 "considerably involved pieces" of your choice

specs A "piece" is a conceptually and formally coherent finished physical entity. Each piece:

- Investigates your defined conceptual purpose
- Is formally relevant to your thesis content
- Displays different components/aspects of the thesis
- Implements linking ideas on a theme
- Uses a different medium
- Is a commentary (comments upon your topic)
- Combines original content with original form
- Experimentation is highly encouraged

due Class 13 [FEB 17] : 1st Piece : David Meek + John Stanko
Class 23 [MAR 24] : 2nd Piece : Erika Schneider
Class 27 [APR 07] : 3rd Piece : Peers
Class 31 [APR 21] : Final 3 Pieces Due for Grade

Assignment 5 Senior Thesis

Publication

description This can be interpreted however you like:

Scientific Journal
Point of Interest Magazine
Handbook
Diary
Artist Book
Newspaper
Zine
Playbill
Website/Interactive Kiosk app
Documentary
etc.

Keep in mind that this entity lends itself as a perfect piece for summarizing your entire written and visual thesis work. However, whatever format of publication you choose to model after, it must be apparent and it must "Publish" your unique findings.

components Front/Back, Beginning/End: whatever makes sense: it must be self-contained experience
30-40 internal pages (print), 5-7 minutes (vid), multiple levels of interactive hierarchy (case by case basis: ask)
Only ORIGINAL written and visual content

specs Coherently publishes the work of your thesis research and formal output (deliverables and process work)
Experimentation is highly encouraged

due Class 17 [MAR 10] : First Draft
Class 25 [MAR 31] : Second Draft
Class 30 [APR 16] : Final Publication Due for Grade

Assignment 6 Senior Thesis

Thesis Review

- description As a test of your curatorial and presentation skills, you are asked to present your body of work to the entire USF Graphic Design Program student body, all faculty, and two additional visiting guest critics. The nature of this event will entail a morning and afternoon scheduled in your exhibition space at the close of Spring 2013 semester. The nature of the Thesis Review will require you to condense a semester's worth of research into a sizable and timed presentation that concisely reports your findings in an interesting and considered manner.
- components
- Use whatever means you want. Do not use a projector just because that's default.
 - Entertain us
 - Teach us
 - 7 minute presentation (no more no less)
 - 3 minute Q&A
 - Showcase all the physical thesis pieces you've made
 - Please, no shlocky 3rd grader cue cards: ie. Rehearsed
 - Considers the space you're presenting in
- specs
- Recommended:
1 voted person is in charge of setting up date/time/venue
2-3 voted persons are in charge of event notification (post cards, email blasts, etc.) This part falls under the purview of John and Erika. Please refer to them for details and event information. I will not be grading you on event ephemera.
- What matters for this class: 1) That you have a space to present your work in, 2) That you have stellar work to present, 3) How you present your stellar work, and 4) That you have invited people beyond your peers to your Thesis Review (Please note: I will not be in charge of invitations. Come together as a class to make it happen.)
- due **Class 32 [APR 23] : 9AM to 1PM : Present to everyone in front of the manifestations of your thesis work (exhibit)**

Exercise 1 Senior Thesis

Exercise One: Frame

description To frame a subject is to define a specific point of view, often in relation to a much broader range of concerns. Define the subject area of your thesis by explaining what you are NOT doing. Reference standard or generic approaches to the subject in order to define your own position, or indicate the vastness of your topic in order to locate your own point of focus.

components ± 250 words

specs Introspective
Interrogates thesis interests and insecurities
Use Text Edit: .txt Plain Text document

due **Class 02 [JAN 08]**

Exercise 2 Senior Thesis

Exercise Two: Creative Brief

description Verbalize a course of action.

- components
01. Name of Thesis :
 02. Purpose :
 03. Strategy [how do you achieve the purpose?] :
 04. Target Audience :
 05. Call to Action :
 06. Describe the Composition :
 07. Mediums :
 08. Content :
 09. Tone :
 10. Theme [a theme is the central topic, or subject, ie. "Love"] :
 11. One Sentence Thesis Statement [a thesis statement clarifies the "so what about the theme?", ie. "Love bites"] :

specs Post on blog

due Class 05 [JAN 20]

Exercise 3 Senior Thesis

Exercise Three: Scope

description In the year 2050, roughly 30 class periods later, a tally of 8 dead soul-sucking squirrels, or 147 Ramen lunches: And so it goes. Graphically diagram your thesis trajectory in keeping with the content of your thesis itself. In other words, the manner in which you construct your scope diagram should be in keeping with the nature of your thesis topic itself.

Information design or data visualization is the field of design that compares sets of information in an effective graphic form. Your task is to chart out your thesis time. This is not busy work; please use this to help yourself. It could very well become a portfolio piece for you.

Work quickly and decisively. Approach this exercise with a definitive course of action even if you plan on changing things later on.

components Time and goals

specs Delineates progress over time
Cannot include "panic" or "cry" as a scheduled event
Precise and definitive benchmarks
Visualize and predict a course of action
Form and content relate
Medium is up to you: physically produced
Post on blog

due Class 07 [JAN 27]

Exercise 4 Senior Thesis

Exercise Four: Conceive Output

description The beast is getting warmer. Don't worry, every new idea follows the same initial progression: (1) I don't know what to do, (2) I don't have any way out, (3) I have to do it, (4) Hey, that wasn't so hard!

Now that you've defined your sandbox, take a shovel and dig around in it. Conceive and plan your first five endeavors. How do you visualize your message[s]? If Michel Gondry can produce a film with cardboard [The Science of Sleep], and Alan Moore can force comics to be everything that they're not supposed to be [V for Vendetta], I'm here to inspire you: Go make design DO something.

components Ideas put into physical form
Answers: What are you doing? How are you doing it?

specs Conceive ideas for 5 pieces (will narrow later)
Post on blog

due **Class 09 [FEB 03]**

Exercise 5 Senior Thesis

Exercise Five: Exhibit Plans

description	Now that you have a growing body of work, how will you organize and exhibit it? Compose a physical space that makes sense for displaying your unique thesis work. Curate the entire experience from what we experience first, second, third, etc. How do you reveal information and visuals? Is it an overwhelming experience or rationed? Albeit, both instances are highly controlled. Do you need to make additional signage, didactics, or informational plaques? Consider supporting structural elements like floating walls, suspended scrims, and pedestals. How do viewers walk through? Running out of time? Trade busy work with your peers or group together to crank out production. The juniors are also a helpful resource of production.
components	The curated presentation
specs	The experience must relate to thesis work This will be graded at the time of your thesis review
due	Class 22 [MAR 19]