

# WRIT 3671: VISUAL RHETORIC & DOCUMENT DESIGN

University of  
Minnesota, Twin  
Cities

Spring 2017



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Course & Instructor Information.....	2
Course Description.....	3
Assignment Descriptions.....	4
Assessment Policies.....	6
Course Schedule.....	8

# COURSE & INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

## COURSE

WRIT 3671: Visual Rhetoric and Document Design (class no. 51023)

## MEETING TIMES

M/W 1pm - 2:15pm

## LOCATION

Lind Hall, room 315

## INSTRUCTOR

McKinley Green  
gree1968@umn.edu

## OFFICE

Nolte Center 338b

## OFFICE HOURS

Tuesdays  
12:00pm – 2:00pm  
Wednesdays  
11:30am – 12:30pm



## REQUIRED RESOURCES



Our Course  
Canvas Page



Access to a laptop  
or personal  
electronic device

# COURSE DESCRIPTION



## VISUAL RHETORIC

I think of rhetorical theory as an analytic tool that attunes to questions of purpose, context, power, culture, and audience and the processes by which authors interact with audiences. I use visual rhetoric, then, to locate those questions in situations that use visual media to communicate information. As such, visual rhetoric encompasses a wide purview of communicative forms—really any communicative act that uses visuals, including obvious iterations of visual communication (e.g., advertisement, data visualization, company branding) and more innocuous or often-unnoticed acts of visual communication (e.g., typography/font, color, fashion or clothing).

## COURSE OUTCOMES

I designed this class with a few primary outcomes. While I've outlined my initial thoughts on visual rhetoric above, I hope you can use this class to develop your own perspectives, definitions, and areas for inquiry associated with visual rhetoric. I also designed this course to balance rhetorical criticism's traditional emphasis on analysis with visual design's emphasis on production and creation. So this course allows you to both analyze instances of visual rhetoric and practice visual rhetoric by designing and creating your own visuals.

## DAY-TO-DAY

This is a reading-intensive course that requires participation and discussion; the first half of this course has a substantial reading load, and the second half of the course asks you to undertake a substantive design project. I recognize this workload may pose a challenge for those of you balancing commitments to jobs, classes, and clubs/activities, so please let me know if our class causes you an unhealthy level of stress.



# ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

## PARTICIPATION (20%)

For each class meeting until Spring Break (1/22/18 – 3/7/18), you must **come to class with two questions written about the day's readings**. These questions should not be simple, easily answerable inquiries (like 'when was this written?' or 'where did this author do their graduate work?'), but substantial questions that require significant analysis to answer. For example, you might draw connections between our course readings, focus on a short section or quotation from the text, or apply the ideas discussed in the reading to a situation from your own lives. You will turn these questions in at the end of each class, and I will assess your questions on a check-minus/ check/ check-plus scale. Your participation grade will reflect your engagement with these daily questions as well as your level of engagement in class discussions and activities.

Please find a way of participating that is productive for you.

## CLASS DISCUSSION LEADING (10%)

For each class meeting until Spring Break (1/22/18 – 3/7/18), groups of three students will help lead our class discussion. To lead class discussion, you must do three things:

1. Carefully and thoroughly read that day's assigned texts
2. Help discussion move along in class by asking questions, following up on other students' comments, or, if you want, designing a brief activity for the class
3. Most importantly, **you must bring in two example of visual rhetoric that relate to the day's reading** (pictures, short video clips, documents, any example you want). You will briefly describe those examples to the class at the beginning of our discussion.

You do not need to meet with your other discussion leaders before class, and you do **not need to write your usual daily questions on the day you lead class. discussion.**

# ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS (CONT.)

## IN CLASS ACTIVITIES (20%)

During four of our classes, you will participate activities that ask you to apply the theories we have read. First, you will practice concepts associated with typography; second, you will visualize data; third, you will take an online tutorial to learn more about a visual design software, and last, you will define visual rhetoric based on our work over the course of the semester. You will be graded on your participation in these activities.

## STYLE GUIDE & WEBSITE REDESIGN (35%)

In the second half of this course, you will work in groups of three to four to develop a style guide, design document templates, and redesign a website for a campus organization, the Environmental Humanities Initiative. Representatives from the campus group will select one group's re-design to use in their future documentation (website, posters, flyers, meeting handouts, etc.). You will present your redesign to the campus organization near the end of the semester.

## VISUAL BRAND ANALYSIS (15%)

Your most substantial analytic assignment in this course asks you to analyze a company/organization's visual brand, including their style guide, website, logo, and social media presence. While this is an individual assignment, all of the members of your Style Guide Group will analyze the same company/organization's visual brand. Each member of your group will analyze a different aspect of the company's design theme (i.e., typography, website organization, images, color, organizational ethos) in a 1200-word essay. I hope that this assignment will help you be analytically aware of the decisions you make in completing your own style guides and website designs.

# ASSESSMENT POLICIES

## GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Assignment	Point Value
Participation	20
Discussion Leading	10
In-Class Activities	20
Style Guide Analysis	15
Style Guide	35
Total Points	100

## GRADING SCALE

Total Points	Grade
93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
65-70	D
Below 65	F

## LATE WORK

I don't mind if you need extra time on an assignment, so let me know at least two (2) days in advance if you need an extension. If you turn in work late without clearing it with me, I will dock ten (10) points per day past the due date. I will not accept work that is more than three (3) days late, pending extreme circumstances.

# ASSESSMENT POLICIES (CONT.)

## USE OF ELECTRONICS

While you need access to an internet-compatible device to access our course readings and activities outside of class, you are not required to have access to one inside of class. However, you are welcome to bring electronic devices, including laptops, cell phones, and/or tablets, to class and use them as you see fit. In fact, some of our activities and workshops could be supplemented with access to internet-connected devices. If you would like to rent an electronic device, check out this link:  
<https://www.lib.umn.edu/media/equipment>.

## ATTENDANCE

If you miss more than two (2) days without letting me know in advance (pending extreme circumstances), I will lower your participation grade. If you have more than four (4) unexcused absences, I will assign you a failing grade in the class. We'll talk, though, if things get out of hand.

## REVISION

If you would like, you may revise your Style Guide Analysis. If you decide to revise, here are the steps to take:

- You must meet with me in person, no more than two (2) days after receiving your graded project.
- During our meeting, we will make a written plan for revision.
- After our meeting, you have one (1) week to turn in your revisions.
- When you turn in your revised work, also turn in your original graded paper and your revision plan.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Information in our course calendar is subject to minor changes based on how we develop as a class. For example, we may need to add a discussion topic, eliminate unnecessary readings, or move readings to a different day. I will let you know in advance if I make any changes, and keep an eye on our Canvas calendar.

Date	In-Class	Homework Due
1/17	Course Introduction	No Homework Due
1/22	Rhetoric	<b>Have Read:</b> Haas, "Race Rhetoric, and Technology" from our library reserves page
1/24	Visual Rhetoric	<b>Have Read:</b> Foss, "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric" from our library reserves page
1/29	Visual Rhetoric	<p><b>Have Read:</b> Kress, "Multimodality" from our library reserves page</p> <p><b>Have Read:</b> Golombisky &amp; Hagen (White Space is not your Enemy), Chapter 1 from our library reserves page</p>
1/31	Visual Rhetoric	<b>Have Read:</b> Quispe Agnoli, "Spanish Scripts Colonize the Image" from our library reserves page

2/5	Typeface	<b>Have Read:</b> Wyatt, "Typographic Anatomy" from our library reserves page
2/7	Typeface	<b>Have Read:</b> Brumberger, "Typeface Personas" from our library reserves page  <b>Have Read:</b> Nichols, "Type Reveals Culture" from our library reserves page
2/12	Typeface Activity	<b>No Homework Due</b>
2/14	Visual Rhetoric	<b>Have Read:</b> hooks, "Choosing the Margin" from our library reserves page
2/19	Data Visualization	<b>Have Read:</b> Tufte, <i>The Visual Display of Quantitative Data</i> Chapter 1 from our library reserves page
2/21	Data Visualization	<b>Have Read:</b> Tufte, <i>The Visual Display of Quantitative Data</i> Chapters 4 and 5 from our library reserves page
2/26	Data Visualization	<b>Have Read:</b> Dragga and Voss, "Cruel Pies" from our library reserves page
2/28	Data Visualization	<b>Have Read:</b> Dunlap & Lowenthal "Infographics Design" from our library reserves page
3/5	Data Visualization Activity	<b>No Homework Due</b>

3/7	Visual Rhetoric	<b>Have Read:</b> Haas, "Wampum as Hypertext" from our library reserves page
3/12	<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>	<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>
3/14	<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>	<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>
3/19	Presentation from Environmental Humanities Initiative (EHI) Document Design	<b>Have Read:</b> Golombisky & Hagen (White Space is not your Enemy), Chapter 4 from our library reserves page
3/21	Document Design	<b>Have Read:</b> Golombisky & Hagen (White Space is not your Enemy), Chapter 6 from our library reserves page
3/26	Document Design	<b>Have Read:</b> Golombisky & Hagen (White Space is not your Enemy), Chapter 7 from our library reserves page
3/28	Document Design	<b>Have Read:</b> TBD
4/2	Lynda Tutorials	<b>Have Completed:</b> Visual Brand Analysis
4/4	Document Design	<b>Have Read:</b> Golombisky & Hagen (White Space is not your Enemy), Chapter 9 from our library reserves page

4/9	Document Design	<b>Have Read:</b> Golombisky & Hagen (White Space is not your Enemy), Chapter 10 from our library reserves page
4/11	Individual Meetings with EHI	<b>Have Completed:</b> Rough Draft of your Website Redesign and Style Guide
4/16	Work Day	<b>Have Completed: TBD</b>
4/18	Usability	<b>Have Read: TBD</b>
4/23	Usability	<b>Have Completed:</b> A Rough Draft of your Website Redesign
4/25	Presentations to EHI	<b>Have Completed:</b> Presentations
4/30	Presentations to EHI	<b>Have Completed:</b> Presentations
5/2	Finals	<b>Have Completed: TBD</b>