

meeting times

m/w 1pm-2:15pm

location

lind hall, room 303

WRIT 3671

Visual Rhetoric & Document Design

instructor

mckinley green

office

nolte 338b

office hours

m/w, 10:30am-12:30pm

& by appointment

Course Description

It's kind of reductive to say, but visuals persuade us. Visual forms of communication affect the way we take up information, interpret complex data, trust sources, understand the world around us, and relate to or identify with others, and they encourage us to think, feel, and act in specific ways. Understanding visuals in terms of persuasion, identification, and trust easily links visual communication with rhetorical theory. And, considering that many of the public, political, and workplace contexts where we interact are mediated by visual forms of communication, understanding visual rhetoric can help foster democratic citizenship, effective workplace communication, and rhetorically aware action.

This course will explore various iterations and understandings of visual rhetoric through theory and practice. I designed this course to balance rhetorical criticism's traditional emphasis on analysis with visual design's emphasis on production and creation. So, you'll have opportunities to both analyze visual communication and practice visual rhetoric through various design-based workshops. The first half of our course combines rhetorical theory readings with small in-class activities where we will practice different applications of visual rhetoric. The second half involves a community-based partnership with a local nonprofit—The Youth and AIDS Projects (YAP)—where you will design a range of branding materials and professional documents for the organization.

Required Resources

There is no textbook for this class. Here are the only things you need:

- Access to laptop or personal computer
- Access to Canvas (All readings will be posted there)

Course Policies

Use of Electronics

I encourage you to bring electronic devices, including laptops, cell phones, and/or tablets, to class and use them as you see fit. Many of our activities could be supplemented with access to internet-connected devices. Please let me know if accessing a personal electronic device poses any challenges.

Attendance

If you miss more than two days without letting me know in advance (pending extreme circumstances), I will lower your participation grade. If you have more than four unexcused absences, I will assign you a failing grade in the class. We'll talk, though, if things get out of hand. Please feel free to reach out if you are struggling with anything regarding attendance.

Revision

If you would like, you may revise your Style Guide Analysis. If you decide to revise, here's what to do:

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

Late Work

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

Assignment Descriptions

Participation (15%)

Our class involves a range of discussions, activities, workshops, and readings. Class gets pretty miserable when people don't get involved. To that end, I will assess your participation on how actively you engage with class activities, discussions, and workshops, your attendance, and your completion of reading assignments. Find a way of participating in class that works well for you.

Reading Portfolio (15%)

Periodically throughout the semester, you will write about the day's assigned text with a brief reading response (250-350 words). Refer to Canvas for specific instructions, but, in general, your post should 1) develop a deeper understanding of the text and 2) pose a discussion question or set of discussion questions about the text. Asking a good question is almost always more important than finding an answer.

Leading Class Discussion (10%)

Once over the course of the semester, you'll help lead our discussion on a text. This assignment is an opportunity for you to dig deeper into a theory and to take an active role in guiding our class discussion. Refer to Canvas for specific instructions, but, in general, you have to 1) write an extended response (500-750 words) based on the reading, and 2) help discussion move along in class by asking questions, following up on other students' comments, and/or bringing in examples from outside class that help illustrate or extend the theory we're reading. Depending on our schedule, you will likely lead class discussion with 3-4 other students. You do not need to meet or coordinate with other discussion leaders before class. On the day you are leading class discussion, you do **not** need to write the usual weekly writing portfolio.

Visual Portfolio (10%)

There are examples of visual rhetoric everywhere. For the visual portfolio, you will collect examples of visual communication from your own life. For each entry into your visual portfolio, you have to do a couple things:

1. Take a picture (or somehow capture) 2 examples of visual forms of communication. Look for examples that inspire you or that somehow connect to our readings/discussions.
2. Write 1-2 sentences about why you chose each example. No need for anything complex here.

This assignment allows you a context to explore different designs/visuals and use those examples to get ideas for your own work.

Style Guide Analysis (15%)

For this assignment, you will analyze a style guide (I will provide options for you). Here are the expectations for your analysis:

- Identify the central theme of the style guide—the ‘thesis’—what ethos does this brand communicate through its style guide?
- Analyze one element of the style guide (typography, images, logo, etc.). How does that particular design element contribute to the brand’s central theme/ethos?
- Refer to at least two of our class readings (or outside texts) in your analysis.
- What does this style guide tell you about the genre of the style guide in general? What particular conventions will you apply to your own style guides?
- Compile your findings in a document with 1000-1250 words of text. I encourage you to include images and format your document creatively.

Think of this assignment as a way of preparing you for our partnership with the Youth and AIDS Projects (YAP). 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 for YAP.

Final Project (35%)

For this assignment, you will divide into groups. Each group will help create a redesigned website, style guide, and associated visual materials for our class' partner organization, YAP. Each group will focus on a specific theme or contribution for the overall project (see below). This is an opportunity for you to deepen your design skills and apply some of the theories we've been reading in class to an actual design situation. Here are the various groups you could be part of:

1. Website (5 people):

Your task is to redesign YAP's website. You will need to write a brief rationale for your design decisions.

2. Visuals (5 people):

You are responsible for assembling the visual components associated with YAP. You must collect a series of photos that YAP can use, redesign their logo, decide on brand color schemes, and determine a set of brand typefaces. You will need to write brief rationales/descriptions for each of these visual elements.

3. Flyers and Brochures (5 people):

YAP has a number of different programs. Your goal is to design flyer templates and brochures that describe and support those programs.

4. Introductory Power Point (3 people):

In many situations, organizations will have a basic slide deck that introduces audiences to their organization. You will create one that YAP can use when YAP representatives speak at meetings or outreach events.

5. Introductory Booklet (3 people):

YAP would like a small booklet they can leave with potential clients, donors, and/or collaborators. This booklet should introduce the organization and make a case for getting involved with YAP in some way.

6. Management and Style Guide (5 people):

Over the course of this project, many groups will need to work together to ensure consistency. Your task is to facilitate that collaboration and ensure consistency across all groups. Importantly, you will also be in charge of assembling the final style guide we submit to YAP. Last, you will create a formal presentation to show YAP the class' designs.

We will work closely with YAP representatives over the latter half of the semester—some representatives of YAP's staff will present in class; they will give feedback on our work; and you will present your designs to them at the end of the semester. Further, I work at YAP part time, so I can help answer questions about the organization and facilitate communication.

This is a complex project with a number of moving parts. As such, I imagine there will be a number of bumps in the road along the way. I hope to address as many of those potential pitfalls before they impact your work, but I also ask for patience and flexibility while working on this project.

Grade Distribution

Assignment Values

Assignment	Points
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Weekly Reading Portfolio	15
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Leading Class Discussion	10
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Visual Portfolio	10
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Style Guide Analysis	15
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Final Project	35
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Participation	15
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Total	100
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Grading Scale

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

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	Have Completed
1/22	Course Introduction	No Homework Due
1/27	Discussion	Have Read: Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking Have Completed: Reading Portfolio
1/29	Discussion	Have Read: Ramos, Cultural Rhetorics Have Completed: Visual Portfolio
2/3	Discussion	Have Read: Foss, Defining Visual Rhetorics Have Completed: Reading Portfolio Have Completed: Leading Class Discussion
2/5	Discussion	Have Read: Chris, " The Hoodie " Have Completed: Visual Portfolio
2/10	No Class Meeting: Writing Assigned on Canvas	Have Read: Hersch, Fonts and Culture Have Read: Language Magazine, " Staying True to Type " Have Completed: Visual Portfolio
2/12	Discussion	Have Read: Wyatt, "Typographic Anatomy" Have Read: Nichols, "Text Reveals Culture"

		Have Completed: Reading Portfolio Have Completed: Leading Class Discussion
2/17	Discussion	Have Read: Quispe Agnoli, “Spanish Scripts” Have Completed: Reading Portfolio Have Completed: Leading Class Discussion
2/19	Discussion	Have Read: Tufte, “Visual Display” Have Completed: Reading Portfolio Have Completed: Leading Class Discussion
2/24	Data Visualization Workshop part 1	No Homework Due
2/26	Data Visualization Workshop part 2	Have Completed: Visual Portfolio
3/2		Have Read: Haas, “Wampum as Hypertext” Have Completed: Reading Portfolio Have Completed: Leading Class Discussion
3/4	Infographic Workshop	Have Read: Snoad, “ Back in 1900 ” Have Read: Anderson, Me Too Have Read: Lee, Emoji in Court Have Completed: Visual Portfolio
3/9	No Class – Spring Break	No Class – Spring Break
3/11	No Class – Spring Break	No Class – Spring Break

3/16	Discussion, Introduce Final Project	Have Read: Engelmann, “Photographing AIDS” Have Completed: Reading Portfolio Have Completed: Leading Class Discussion
3/18	YAP Presentation	Have Completed: Review YAP’s website, and come in with two questions for YAP presenters
3/23	No Class Meeting	No Class Meeting Have Read: Skillman, “ Branding ,” Canva, Building a Style Guide ; Nediger, Creating a Brand Style Guide Have Completed: Reading Portfolio
3/25	No Class Meeting	No Class Meeting
3/30	Style Guide Peer Review	Have Completed: Rough Draft of Style Guide Analysis
4/1	Document Design Workshop	Have Read: WSNYE, selections Have Read: Miller, Using Color Have Completed: Style Guide Analysis
4/6	Watch: “ Why Design Should Include Everyone ”	Have Read: Collins, “ The Body Adaptive ” Have Read: Hendren, “ An Icon is a Verb ” Have Read: Hamraie, “ A Smart City is an Accessible City ” Have Completed: Reading Portfolio
4/8	Discussion	Have Read: WSNYE, selections
4/13	Workshop	Have Read: Stanley, “ Designing for Accessibility ” Have Read: WebAIM’s Accessibility Guidelines Have Read: Romano, “ Common Sense ”

4/15	Rough Draft Presentations to YAP	Have Completed: Rough Draft Presentations
4/20	TBD	Have Completed: TBD
4/22	No Class Meeting – Group Conferences	No Class Meeting – Group Conferences
4/27	In-Class Workday	No Homework Due
4/29	Final YAP Presentations	Have Completed: Final YAP Presentations
5/4	Final Reflections	Have Completed: Visual Portfolio Reflection