

*An open letter to my students*

**Hello - and welcome to the History of Graphic Design.** I'd prefer a different name, and without the capitalization. As graphic design has permeated the world, and the world is large, I prefer to call this graphic design histories. In part the lower-case naming also reflects my own ambivalence toward graphic design and history. No doubt it will be inadequate.

This combination is troubling to me for a few reasons. On one hand, I'm intensely interested in design, and graphic design in general. It reflects the inventiveness of humans to communicate through a complex (predominately) visual system of their own making. As visual animals, we look for (no pun intended) things that hold our attention and ask us to decipher them. We want to know what we see. We want to make meaning out of the world and the things in it should help us, especially if we make them. We are fascinated by the visual —beautiful, ugly, clear or mysterious. We want to engage our minds as well, as we look for the intriguing interplay of text and image and color and form and other formal constructions; all in an effort to make knowledge emerge.

We also desire to engage our bodies in a more visceral way —we want to feel something beautiful around us and find its form in touch and experiential moments. We connect the visual with these other senses; another place for graphic design to have its way with us.

We also desire to fit visual experiences into context. We want meaning to emerge not only from the artifact itself, but where that artifact floats in the world. This contextualization is as good as any reason to study graphic design histories. While I often hear that something looks / is “old-school”, the lack of contextualization of that material both makes me crazy and saddens me. We should know better.

On the other hand (remember the other hand, a few paragraphs back?) Histories are always written by those people, their ideas and their artifacts that survive and float to the authoritarian top. This means very much is forgotten, lost buried, burned, erased, and neglected. It also means that whoever writes and *archives*, tends to win, as writing the text of history usually gives it both authority and preservation.

It is often myopic, and this especially troubles me. Where are the graphic design histories of cultures that are less than dominant in a global sense, and may not even care to examine the path of visual materials as carefully as others? What about those disenfranchised groups that produce graphic design artifacts because they have to, but fail to re-contextualize them into a “history”? Thank the gods for those that care enough to frame and re-frame these histories so that we can examine them from some distance, and try to do something with them. Sad though in imagining all that richness of visual stuff that has passed away. Grateful too that some of it might have been such crap that it should disappear, or maybe our culture needs to shift its thinking away from preservation altogether, where stories of graphic design are told with voice and hand-gestures, so that we have to imagine them over and over again as they slowly change through this translation of telling. All that stuff reduced to memory and story —imagine. For what then all of these “histories”?

What about this then? What are we supposed to “do” with graphic design histories? Why should we even spend the time (all these glorious Tuesday - Thursday brunch-times wasted in a darkened room listening and looking at what?). Why should we care, when much of what we desire to see or tap into is available without the tedium of gathering together and talking among ourselves about it? This too is a bit of a conundrum, as we have to question why this conversation? Why this cohort? Why this time to retell and translate and explore and watch and misinform and look on with fascination on what has come before? A tough question and one I've struggled with since having first been told I'd be teaching this class. Hopefully we'll answer this question all-together-now, and come up with a reason for this.

I have my own reasons that I'll be sharing as we go along. I'll also ask you for yours. Please give them.

How and when we give them matters. This class meets every tuesday and thursday, from 2:00 to 3:15 in the afternoon.

During that time, you will be expected to be present in class. This does not only mean that you will bring your body to class, this also means that you will bring your attention and passion to class, as best you can.

I know this will vary each day, and during each class period, but I will expect you to do your best. I will expect this from each interaction I ask you to perform, from asking questions to giving presentations and engaging readings. If this material does not interest you, I will ask you to “perform” your interest as best you can.

This idea of attention —to attend to what’s at hand —is tempted by the many devices that are meant to save us from this difficult task. These devices are small, easily secreted in your hand, quiet and discrete, they offer a small portal out of slowness and boredom. During this class I’d ask that you refrain from using them, or if you need to, that you would step outside the classroom to use them.

This class is an based on a construct of ignorance, mine as well as yours. Its also based on a construct of knowledge; again mine as well as yours. This is the pleasure of the group-learn-in-place-all-together; it offers a collective opportunity to explore something with the vastness of experience from all of our lives coming together at one point. Potentially very powerful.

How to do this? Another question I have wrestled with in constructing this course. My answer comes from both my own selfishness in wanting to learn and my desire to satisfy what I see as a particular audience’s desire to learn.

What I’m putting forward then is a shifting structure, that might change as we go along. For those of you that know me as a teacher already, you’ll know this to be a challenge.

So here we go.

### **Required textbook (available at the UWSP bookstore)**

*Graphic Design History*, by Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish

### **Structure of the course**

This course covers 15 weeks, meeting each monday and wednesday except for spring break and other designated dates.

At this time, we will meet the following dates.

January 23/ January 25  
January 30/ February 01  
.....  
February 06 / February 08  
February 13 / February 15  
February 20 / February 22  
February 27 / March 01  
.....  
March 06 / March 08  
March 13 / March 15  
March 20 / March 22  
*spring break*  
.....  
April 03 / April 05  
April 10 / April 12  
April 17 / April 19  
April 24 / April 26  
.....  
May 01 / May 03  
May 08 / May 10  
.....  
exam Thursday, May 17th 8:00AM - 10:00AM

### **Daily structure**

Each meeting time will follow this general structure. This will vary or evolve as learning needs dictate.

*Note : you must be present for attendance*, or you will be considered absent.

I will review my attendance policy with you. Please contact me by email to let me know.

**2:00 - 3:00**      lecture + discussion / panel discussion  
**3:00 to 3:15**      questions raised + other announcements

# schedule

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- January 23 : introduction + discussion : *why / what (is) - graphic design? communications model*  
January 25 : lecture / discussion : *from prehistory to early writing*  
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- January 30 / February 01 : lecture / discussion : *classical literacy*  
: lecture / discussion : *medieval letter forms + book formats*
- February 06 : lecture / discussion : *renaissance design : standardization and modularization in print*
- February 08 : lecture / discussion : *modern typography and the public sphere*
- February 13/ February 15 : lecture / discussion : *the graphic effects of industrial production*  
: lecture / discussion : *mass mediation*
- February 20 / February 22 : small group meetings and planning for presentations  
February 27 / March 01 : small group meetings and planning for presentations  
.....
- March 06 / March 08 : lecture / discussion : *formation of the modern movement*  
: lecture / discussion : *innovation and persuasion*
- March 13 / March 15 : lecture / discussion : *the culture of consumption*  
: lecture / discussion : *protest and alternative life*
- March 20 / March 22 : lecture / discussion : *public information campaigns and information design*  
: mid-term exam : *in-class exam + presentation outlines w/ images due*
- week of March 27th** : *spring break*  
.....
- April 03 / April 05 : lecture / discussion : *corporate identities and international style*  
: lecture / discussion : *post-modernism in design + concepts for Museum of Graphic Design panel concepts due*
- April 10 / April 12 : lecture / discussion : *graphic design activism : The AIDS crisis + ACTUP / Occupy Wallstreet, #MeToo etc.*
- April 17 / April 19 : lecture / discussion : *digital design*  
: lecture / discussion : *graphic design and globalization*
- April 24 / April 26 : presentations  
: presentations  
.....
- May 01 / May 03 : presentations  
: lecture : TBA
- May 08 / May 10 : lecture : TBA  
: install the *Museum of Graphic Design History*  
.....
- May 17 : exam 8:00AM - 10:00AM

*attendance at lectures and discussions + assigned lectures + in-class participation (overall grade added to other grading)*

Finally, you must participate in-class as much as a course this size allows. Be curious and for the gods' sake show some passion, or at least work hard to fake it.

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*connecting contemporary graphic design with the history of graphic design (presentation) : (1/3 grade)*

Starting February 20, you will select two partners (3 people together) and meet with them to discuss options for topics and an approach to creating a presentation that will last 15 minutes. The presentation will last 10 minutes, with time for 2 questions that will account for the remaining 5 minutes.

Obviously content is important here. Your task is to look for current events (within the last 3 years) that are somehow impacted / shaped / related to the graphic design. Please make those connections clear in your presentation, and also make sure that your audience understands why you think this is important to consider.

A clear path of critical thinking should be evident in your presentation.

You will produce a specific outline for the presentation, and include proper citations and acknowledgements.

*museum of graphic design history (1/3 grade)*

This final project will be individually completed. As a class we will define our own relevant history of graphic design. Your charge will be to develop a panel exhibit component that examines an individual who has made a significant contribution to some part of graphic design history. We will produce this as a physical exhibition and a digital exhibition to be displayed in a location on-campus tbd.

On March 27, you will be sent an illustrator file that will contain a standard design grid, a header and type and image specs. that will allow you to prepare an exhibition panel that you will be preparing for digital output through print and design. On those dates you will have prepared a complete proof for review and discussion by all members of class, so that we can determine any changes and corrections to what will become the final exhibition panels.

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*final exam (1/3 grade)* The content of the exam will be determined prior to the exam.

*Adrian Frutiger*  
*Alan Aldridge*  
*Alan Fletcher*  
*Aldus Manutius*  
*Alexey Brodovitch*  
*Angus Hyland*  
*April Greiman*  
*Armin Hofmann*  
*Baron Barrymore Halpenny*  
*Brandon Rike*  
*Breuk Iversen*  
*Brian Webb*  
*Bruce Mau*  
*Bruno Munari*  
*Bugra Gulsoy*  
*Carol Twombly*  
*Catrin GroÙe*  
*Charles and Ray Eames*  
*Chip Kidd*  
*Christopher Simmons*  
*Dave Halili*  
*David Carson*  
*Debbie Millman*  
*Denise Gonzales Crisp*  
*Dick Bruna*  
*Elaine Lustig Cohen*  
*Ellen Lupton*  
*Emil Ruder*  
*Eric Carle*  
*Eric Gill*  
*Erik Nitsche*  
*Erik Spiekermann*  
*Fons Hickmann*  
*Friedrich Kurt Fiedler*  
*Gail Anderson (graphic designer)*  
*Ghobad Shiva*  
*Giambattista Bodoni*  
*Hans Hulsbosch*  
*Harry Beck*  
*Heinz Edelmann*  
*Herb Lubalin*  
*Herbert Bayer*  
*Hugh Syme*

*Irma Boom*  
*István Orosz*  
*Ivana Tomljenović-Meller*  
*Jacqueline Casey*  
*Jake Tilson*  
*James Victore*  
*Jan Balet*  
*Jan Sawka*  
*Jan Tschichold*  
*Jeff Arwadi*  
*Jessica Helfand*  
*Jessica Hische*  
*Jessica Walsh*  
*Jock Kinneir*  
*John Alvin*  
*John Bielenberg*  
*John Lloyd*  
*John Maeda*  
*Jon Burgerman*  
*Jon Hicks*  
*Jonathan Barnbrook*  
*Josef Müller-Brockmann*  
*Julian House*  
*Jurek Wajdowicz*  
*Kadington*  
*Kate Moross*  
*Katherine McCoy*  
*László Moholy-Nagy*  
*Leif Podhajsky*  
*Louise Fili*  
*Louise Sandhaus*  
*Lynda Weinman*  
*Margaret Calvert*  
*Marian Bantjes*  
*Martin Majoor*  
*Massimo Vignelli*  
*Max Huber*  
*Mehdi Saeedi*  
*Milton Glaser*  
*Mirko Ilić*  
*Morteza Momayez*  
*Muriel Cooper*  
*Neville Brody*

*Noma Bar*  
*Oscar Mariné*  
*Otl Aicher*  
*Paul Rand*  
*Paula Scher*  
*Peter Buchanan-Smith*  
*Peter Saville*  
*Philip B. Meggs*  
*Pilar Zeta*  
*Poul Lange*  
*Reza Abedini*  
*Robert Brownjohn*  
*Robert L. Peters*  
*Roberto Baldazzini*  
*Rudy VanderLans*  
*Saul Bass*  
*Shekhar Gurera*  
*Sheila Levrant de Bretteville*  
*Shigeo Fukuda*  
*Soundarya Rajinikanth*  
*Stanisław Czerski*  
*Stanley Donwood*  
*Stefan Sagmeister*  
*Steven Heller*  
*Storm Thorgerson*  
*Susan Kare*  
*Tariq Jakobsen*  
*Tibor Kalman*  
*Tina Roth-Eisenberg*  
*Tom Eckersley*  
*Tom Geismar*  
*Urso Chappell*  
*Vaughan Oliver*  
*Vincent Connare*  
*Vittorio Fiorucci*  
*Wally Olins*  
*Walter Landor*  
*William Caslon*  
*William Morris*  
*Wim Crouwel*  
*Wolfgang Weingart*  
*Zuzana Licko*



# midterm exam

ART 393 **SPRING2017**

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## *essay*

- Using what you've become aware of from the lectures to date, please write an essay connecting your personal histories as it connects with the historic advancements in digital technologies that you have encountered. I'm especially interested in your recollections of firsts—first contact with a computer interface, first use of a cell phone, first use of a graphics program, first use of a digital game or other software, first encounter with coding etc. You may also comment on the value of these realizations as they relate to your decision to become an artist / designer, or the impact they had in offering you either a positive or negative realization about these tools, the culture that was / is using them, or their impact on your understanding of global connectivity. If necessary use your book for reference.

Please make connection with your activity as an graphic designer / artist.

This assignment is due at the end of class.

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1) A clear and concise title.

Please name what you will be communicating with a title that is clear and concise. It can be clever, as you are trying to get people's attention away from their cell phones, talking with their neighbor, or thinking about when they can have lunch.

2) Begin at... well... a beginning.

This can be a place that you think is the start of a discussion you will be providing. Because I've asked you to show a connection between contemporary life and the history of graphic design, this might be the contemporary issue or a time in graphic design history that will lead up to a contemporary issue.

This is complicated. Sometimes you need to reveal why you find something interesting, and this can mirror your audience's interest or question about something. Decide how you will begin building a case for your argument that there is a link between now and then (whenever that may be).

3) Take us through a logical progression of relationships.

In your presentation, show us how and especially why you find the contemporary issue linked to the historic one. Is it about social or political issues, technological or economic conditions, taste and style? or other situations that you can demonstrate? **MAKE THESE RELATIONSHIPS CLEAR.**

4) Use images, quotes, and other evidence to indicate what you have considered.

Please, use visual stuff (images, video) to tell your story of investigation and discovery. This is a Graphic Design History course after all. Show us quotes you might feel are significant. Find related images from the periods you're speaking of that illustrate the context of the times (if this is important). You might even interview some people and show their responses.

5) Do not plagiarize.

This is an incorrect way of providing a presentation. Many resources are available on-line, often well constructed presentations about the very topics you might be presenting on. Please be original. Do not cheat.

6) Provide a conclusion or summary of your argument.

Close your presentation by providing your audience with a concluding thought. You may be recapping what you stated at the beginning, or summarizing your thinking about the case you have made. Help your audience understand what they just listened to / watched.

8) Provide a provocative and pointed question for consideration.

**DO NOT ASK** - what do you think? As the audience to consider something that you may have tried to understand, but were unable to. Call on people. If the question stalls, re frame it or add to it. **YOU'RE** the expert. Lead us into something that is interesting and possibly unresolved. Is there an existing discussion in the field that is under debate? Are people currently challenging what you have put forward or examined?

7) Provide citations in the standard form for any materials you use.

Please provide a detailed list of resources etc. at the end of your presentation. It will fit the standard MLA format. You must cite text and images.

**Format of the MLA Works Cited Page**

- **The Works Cited list typically appears at the end of a paper.**
- **Name the page “Works Cited.” While “Bibliography” and “Literature Cited” are sometimes used, Works Cited is often the most appropriate.**
- **An Annotated Bibliography is different than a Works Cited list. An annotated bibliography includes brief summaries and evaluations of the sources.**
- **Make the Works Cited page the next consecutive page number. If the last page of your project is page 12, the Works Cited list will be page 13.**

*What deliverables will you provide?*

- 1) An outline of your presentation w/ talking points and image listings.
- 2) A digital presentation in PDF format.
- 3) A citations page.
- 4) Any supporting materials

Please type all materials and include your name, the class name and number, and the date.