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Course website: canvas.csun.edu
Office hours: email to setup meeting

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Introduction to the two-dimensional elements of art and principles of design that are the language of the visual arts. Foundation course stressing visual perception and an effective knowledge of the graphic means of expression and communication.

CLASS DESCRIPTION

2D design refers to the underlying visual structure of 2D art/design like painting, drawing, photography, graphic design and illustration. This class is a requirement for art majors but we welcome non-art majors taking it as a GE course.

What does it mean to study design?

In design class, we learn the concepts and practices that serve as a foundation for professional 2D visual work whether it is photography, graphic design, interface design, painting, drawing, illustration or video. Design is more than following rules. It requires artistic judgment since good design is not formulaic. At the same time, design is not purely spontaneous and improvisational. In this way, design is like dance or sports. What looks free and easy is built on a foundation of basic skills and practice. The goal of design is not to satisfy the designer's needs: the goal is to solve visual problems. During the semester, we'll cover topics like these—

- How to arrange elements on a page
- How color works
- What makes a good shape
- How to use the "rule of thirds"
- How to create emphasis
- Different kinds of contrast and why it's important
- How do designers use grids and spatial divisions?

Myths about art and design

Myth #1. Art/design is subjective

When people say that art is subjective, they usually mean that we all have different tastes in art, movies and music, etc. But usually, this involves a comparison among works of similar quality. You may or may not like Adele, but virtually everyone will agree that she's a better singer than the bad vocalist who got thrown off a reality show, Art is the same. We can all tell the difference between good and poor (or beginning) work just like we can tell the difference between a good film and a shlocky bad film. It's true there are works of art that may not look like they required skill to create, but the skill is there if you know where to look.



There's a charm to simplistic art but this is not what we aspire to in art class.

Myth #2. Art/design is about therapeutic self-expression

We live in the aftermath of 60s counter-culture, especially here in California. In the 60s, the Esalen Institute in Big Sur was one of the dominant forces in the influential human potential movement and its concern for self-actualization. California was also the home of the California Self Esteem commission (1987-1990), a task force that sought to lower crime rates, violence and academic failure by raising self-esteem. We still feel the echoes of these influences in the belief that art is therapeutic.

It's true that art *can* be therapeutic. But at the university level, art and design are not necessarily therapeutic. One analogy would be studying music. Playing music can be therapeutic and inspirational, but for professional musicians, playing is also work that requires study and practice. Studying art is similar. It takes discipline and practice to create a good website, work on movie visual effects or show at a gallery. We've discovered that many students like this professional orientation to design because it's practical and concrete. In our class, everything we do is based on concepts that have a broad range of application.

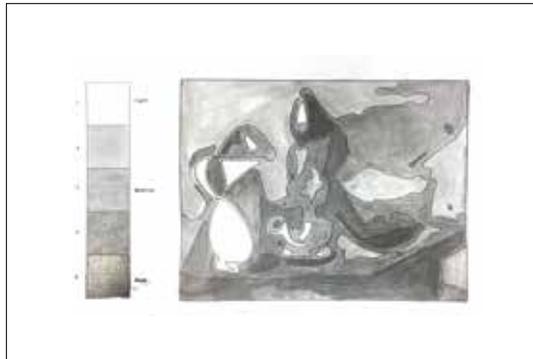
Myth #3. Art/design is freedom

In the US, we're taught to think of freedom as *negative freedom*—freedom from obligation and constraint. The study of art, on the other hand, is premised on the idea of *positive freedom*. In positive freedom, we become free by entering into practices that develop our skills and sensibilities. Think about it like language. If you're a beginner at speaking a foreign language, you're not free to express yourself. Your vocabulary is limited. You don't know how to say what you mean. Art is similar. Without an understanding of creative vocabularies and how art works, it is difficult to express oneself visually. In art, we become free through study and practice. We learn how our art comes across through frequent critique. Skilled mature artists make it look easy because they *are* free. But they didn't start out that way!

Myth #4. Art/design = graphic design

This class may seem like a graphic design class because we use Illustrator, a program used by graphic designers. But it's more accurate to say that in this class, we cover design in a broad general way, and that graphic design is a specific discipline. Not everything we do can be directly applied to graphic design which has a specific history, rules and practices.

SAMPLE EXERCISES AND PROJECTS



LEFT COLUMN

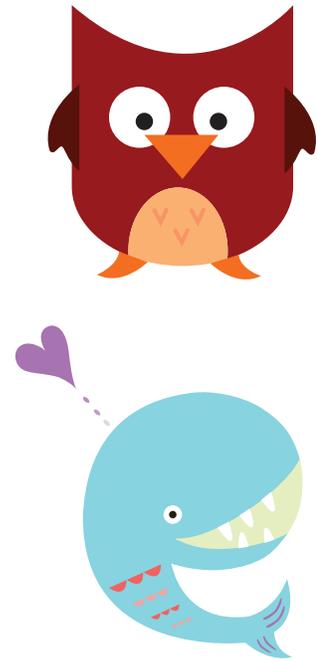
VALUE EXERCISE (PENCIL)

COLORING EXERCISE (ILLUSTRATOR)

STUDENT WORK: PHOTO MONTAGE (ILLUSTRATOR)

RIGHT COLUMN

STUDENT WORK: CREATURE PROJECT



HOW THIS CLASS WORKS

This class is asynchronous. This means we won't be doing real-time Zoom meetings that you have to attend at a specific time. From past experience, email works very well for communication and support. Each week there will be short videos to watch and accompanying exercises/projects. Most of these exercises will involve working on the computer in Adobe Illustrator. Some of these exercises will involve basic shading with a pencil/pen or taking photos (phone is OK).

SCHEDULE

S	S	M	T	W	T	F
↓			↑	↓		↑

This is our weekly schedule subject to change. Assignments are released on Saturday. Submissions are due Tuesday at 11:59 pm. You'll receive feedback on your work on Wednesday and changes/revisions are due on Friday at 11:59 pm. A big part of successfully navigating this class is managing your time to complete submissions by the due date.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

Computer/software/internet

Computer with current version of Adobe Illustrator. As a CSUN student you can download Illustrator without charge. If you don't have a suitable computer, you can borrow a laptop/hotspot from CSUN. For more information on computer requirements or borrowing laptop, see our class website on Canvas. You need bandwidth sufficient to watch or download short videos.

Pencil, pen, sharpener, eraser, paper

Generally, any pencil with a B, like 2B is good. Pencils with an H designation like 6H will be too hard and won't work well. While any black pen is fine, one with a sharp point like a roller ball pen or razor point pen is best. A cheap white eraser is good. Pink erasers are not recommended.



Printout

You need to print several PDFs for exercises.

Textbook

The class text is a free downloadable PDF.

Recommended

Grayscale value finder (left). Available on Amazon and art stores for about \$6 (price fluctuates). If you don't buy one, you can use a provided print out as a substitute.

GRADING

Overview

1. Late work is not accepted because this class is sequential. Each week's assignments build on previous assignments. The number one comment from previous students is: *don't fall behind!*

2. Missing submissions will substantially affect your grade. If you miss three weeks of work (or equivalent), your final grade will be a C or lower. Miss four weeks of work (or equivalent) = final grade D or lower. Miss five weeks of work (or equivalent) = final grade F. Note that for grading purposes, turning in half the work due for two weeks is the same as missing one week of class. Turning in half the work for four weeks of class is the same as missing two weeks, etc.

3. Quizzes are open book/note/video and are based on that week's topics.

4. There are three major projects that count for a substantial part of your grade: Ch. 16, Creature, Ch. 18, Compound Good Shape and Ch. 35, (semi) Abstract Compound Good Shape.

Grading percentages

Weekly submissions: 40%
Three major projects: 50%
Quizzes 10%

Notes on grades

• The grading percentages you see on Canvas can be misleading. For example, Canvas may display 8 as your grade for the creature project, but this doesn't show that this projects counts for a higher portion of your grade than other projects.

• Do not email work to me unless I ask you to do so. Submit work in the proper module please.

• If you're late with a submission, the module will be closed and you won't be able to submit your work.

• Creating and evaluating artwork involves making artistic judgments. Criteria for grading includes level of craft, understanding of the assignment, understanding of technology/procedures and the ability to extend the assignment in a meaningful way going beyond a simple duplication of the provided examples. Following my feedback suggestions does not automatically mean

that a completed exercise/project is deserving of a good grade. Like all instructors, my aim is to help you make your work as good as possible. But "better" is not always the same as "great" although that is always our aspiration.

• Factors affecting grading include submitting work with proper file names in the right format, submitting work to the proper modules, participating with courtesy in discussion forums, etc.

• It's important to keep backups of your work. Simply copying work to a flash drive or network drive is one good way to make sure you don't lose anything. Losing work/technical problems aren't considered valid excuses for late work.

• Please don't try to turn all your work in late at the end of the semester. You will not pass the class.

• Students are expected to follow the student code of conduct available on the CSUN website.

COURSE DESCRIPTION DETAIL

Production, analysis and discussion of 2D images and compositions incorporate artistic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context, aesthetic valuing and connections, relationships and applications. Course activities and objectives align with the goals for General Education in the area of Arts and Humanities.

Art Department Program Goals Addressed in This Course

- Students will acquire competent knowledge and skills in various art media, concepts and methodologies.
- Students will solve visual problems at a competent level, including understanding/application of the elements of art and principles of design.
- Students will utilize and apply critical thinking skills to communicate ideas for their intended audience at a competent level in visual, oral, and written formats.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- Explore and utilize various two-dimensional art media and techniques, using the Elements and Principles of design.
- Acquire conceptual knowledge of art, accurately define and utilize the formal vocabulary (elements of art and principles of design) of the visual arts to analyze works of art.
- Explore and utilize methods for visual problem-solving, acquire and demonstrate conceptual knowledge of a diversity of 2-D forms, purposes, media, and functions of art as they respond to, analyze, interpret and critique their own and others' artworks.
- Acquire and demonstrate conceptual knowledge of 2-D art in cultural context, including the visual nature of contemporary culture, fine art and design, world arts, the history and diversity of art in societies past and present.

GE Student Learning Outcomes addressed in this course

Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions and philosophy.

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;
2. Analyze, interpret and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;
3. Produce works/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of forms;
4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

Email

CSUN considers your CSUN email account to be the official means of contacting you. This means that if the University or I send something to this address, we will assume that you received the information and you are consequently responsible for it. If you regularly use another account, please set your CSUN mail to forward to your preferred email account.