

GD 270: Semiotics & Visual Design

Fall 2014-2015

DePaul Center C106

Thursday 5:45 pm – 9:00 pm

Amy Nicole Schwartz, Instructor

aschwartz@cdm.depaul.edu

Office Hours

Thursday 5:00 pm – 5:45 pm

Tuesday 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Hours by appointment

Course information: d2l.depaul.edu

Required Book

This Means This, This Means That:

A User's Guide to Semiotics

[2nd Edition] [Paperback]

Sean Hall

Laurence King Publishers

ISBN-10: 1856697355

Course Description

Design and designed products can be interpreted as signs that are the result of human needs and desires. This course examines theoretical issues in how design of a message or product influences the user's decision to read it, use it or buy it. Semiotics theory examines these concepts as well as design value and criteria for evaluation in contemporary culture.

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and an explanation of how people extract meaning from words, sounds, and pictures. Understanding semiotics as a designer will instill your work with references that enable them to communicate multiple layers of information.

Expectations

Knowledge of the Macintosh operating system and Adobe CS is essential for success in this course.

Be in class on time with all the necessary materials. You are expected to remain in class during the whole class session. Your projects will be graded based on your ability to express yourself within aforementioned parameters. Additionally your grade will take into account the improvement of your work relative to your starting point at the beginning of the semester. Because the class is quite short, you are expected to work a minimum of 6 hours outside of class on your current assignments. We will use class time for in-class work, lectures, critiques, and conversations on design.

Course Outcomes

- \\ Conceptual, visual and critical thinking within research-driven design projects
- \\ Pre-planning, sketchbook renderings and preliminary visualization before implementation
- \\ Composition and manipulation of type and image elements
- \\ Composition and Layout with Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign
- \\ Verbal and visual presentation of your work

Tips for Success

- \\ Do not shortcut any of the steps outlined in the project descriptions. There are no shortcuts in making good design, seriously.
- \\ Be present for each class. If you are unable to attend class, please email me and tell me why.
- \\ Check D2L for updates on assignments, fresh links for inspiration, and to engage in conversations with classmates.
- \\ Be prepared each class to present and talk about your project progress and decision making.
- \\ Everyone is expected to speak aloud and share opinions during each class.
- \\ Make informed, well-researched design decisions and to be able to articulate and present those decisions in your work.
- \\ Surf the internet on your own time.
- \\ Come to class prepared.
- \\ Do not eat in the classroom during class time.
- \\ Turn off all cellphones and messaging programs while in the classroom.

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are therefore, detrimental to the values of De-

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Paul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (academicintegrity.depaul.edu) for further details.

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week), and make sure that you have contacted the PLUS Program (for LD, AD/HD), and the Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773.325.1677, Student Center #370.

Studio Safety

Spray fixatives and solvents must be used outside or in designated spray booths (you are not allowed to spray in this room). Practice extreme caution when using box cutters and x-acto blades (please no headphones while cutting). Open music is not allowed. Please be aware that many of the materials you'll be using in class are messy. Label all materials and containers with your name to avoid theft. Familiarize yourself with emergency exit and stairwells in the event of a fire alarm. For more info on emergency response and evacuation procedures, please visit the Office of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety website at rmehs.depaul.edu.

Project Evaluation

This is a highly rigorous course that will require outside work, in-class work and verbal critique. Work as hard as you can and to the best of your abilities. Come to class with all supplies and work due. Partially completed work will not be critiqued. If something isn't working for you, please let me know and we'll make it work. I will evaluate your progress work while you are developing a project, as well as during all intermediate and final critiques. All projects will culminate in a 100 point-based grading rubric (example attached in syllabus). Please remember that any comments toward your work from myself or a fellow student should not be taken personally, but viewed as constructive criticism geared toward making your work stronger and more refined. Final grades will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- \\ Research and Development: Did you develop a clear problem statement?
- \\ Sketches and Ideation: Did you produce a lot of process work?
- \\ Concept: Does the piece work in a cohesive, well thought out manner?
- \\ Elements of Composition: Is the piece visually unified?
- \\ Transformation Incorporation: Did you explore techniques to add visual interest to the work?
- \\ Artistic Quality: Does the final piece look good, overall?
- \\ Craft: Is the piece neat and well made, including attention to details?
- \\ Work Ethic: Did you push yourself—and then push yourself further?
- \\ Critique Professionalism: Did you speak up during critique and remain positive/constructive?
- \\ Meeting Deadlines: Is your final work or any stage of the assignment late?

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Grading Policy

Grading is based on the following criteria and is subject to additional requirements depending on how individual and class projects progress. We will critique in progress work as well as finished assignments.

20% Assigned Readings & Blog Responses

20% Participation & Attendance

60% Design Projects

Grading Scale

A 100–92

A - 91.9–90

B+ 89.9–88

B 87.9–82

B- 81.9–80

C+ 79.9–78

C 77.9–72

C- 71.9–70

D+ 69.9–68

D 67.9–60

F 59.9 and below

Incomplete Grades & Attendance

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the course final, and approved by an Associate Dean of the College of Computing & digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

This is an applied, hands-on studio art class, with class lectures, demonstrations, and peer critiques, which are vital and cannot be duplicated. Attendance is crucial. Class will begin promptly at 5:45 pm. A tardy means arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, leaving before class is dismissed, or leaving class to retrieve forgotten supplies or assignments. An unexcused absence includes any absence without documentation. Excused absences include any absence that is cleared with me at least one week in advance via email, as well as any documented illness, hospitalization, or family emergency. Your final grade will be lowered as follows when unexcused absences and tardies occur: two absences (excused or unexcused) are permitted without grade penalty. Every unexcused absence thereafter results in cumulative five point grade deduction from your final grade (on the third unexcused absence, your final grade is lowered by five full points; on the fourth unexcused absence, your final grade is lowered by ten full points, the equivalent of one full letter grade). On the fifth unexcused absence I reserve the right to fail you from the class. Two tardies (tardies start

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at five minutes late) equal one absence. Showing up more than twenty minutes late to class constitutes one full absence. An unexcused absence on project due dates/final critiques will constitute as both an absence and a late assignment, which is subject to a loss of five points from the project's final grade for every late class session, in addition to the aforementioned absenteeism penalty.

Changes to Syllabus

With the exception of the departmental policies, this syllabus is subject to change in order to accommodate the activities and progress of the studio. In the event of a change, students will be notified in class or via email.

Assignments

Methodical process work precedes each of the four main projects. Short cutting the project steps outlined in the syllabus will not only affect your cumulative grade, but also the visible results of each final.

About Your Instructor

Amy Nicole Schwartz is an Interaction Designer at gravitytank and Programming Chair of AIGA Chicago. She received an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art and degrees in Art & Design and Interactive Media from DePaul University. Her work has been published by Frame and Brand New and shown in galleries in Chicago and Detroit. Amy was selected as one of AIGA NY's Fresh Blood 2014 and was the winner of the AIGA What's Next Grant.