

DePaul University  
CDM | School of Design  
Semiotics & Visual Design GD270

Tuesdays 10:00AM-1:15PM on Zoom  
Professor Dolores Wilber  
dwilber@depaul.edu  
Office hours Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:30-3:00PM  
Zoom or by appointment  
Register online at Bluestar or email request

### **Course Description + Objectives**

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.

### **Learning Goals**

- Understand the theory, practice and vocabulary of semiotics and design, including symbols, index and icons
- Create examples of semiotics in design practice
- Explore semiotics in relation to diverse audiences in a variety of settings in advertising, media and culture

### **Course management system: D2L**

<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home>

### **Class work**

Much of your work will be conducted outside the class, including idea development, content development, planning and sketching. All projects are posted to D2L Discussion Boards and finals to the Submissions folder.

### **Critiques**

We will have project critiques and presentations that ensure that we learn from one another and share information. Attendance and participation in critiques is mandatory.

### **Typeface Access to Adobe Typekit**

Adobe Fonts are also available through the Creative Cloud launcher, on the left-hand-side.

<https://fonts.adobe.com>

### **Access to Font Folio**

Students will need to log in with their Campus Connect credentials. For the email field, they will need to enter their Campus Connect username followed by @depaul.edu – below is an example:

- If a student's Campus Connect username is johnappleseed, they will need to enter johnappleseed@depaul.edu in the email field. For the password field, they will need to enter their Campus Connect password.

Link to Font Folio: [https://depauledu-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/wji2\\_depaul\\_edu/EiR-WBDIS05GjUnJMa0SD4gBVyYmsbmDwiN-FHs0gkkVSw?e=JphU1L](https://depauledu-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/wji2_depaul_edu/EiR-WBDIS05GjUnJMa0SD4gBVyYmsbmDwiN-FHs0gkkVSw?e=JphU1L)

**Attendance**

Class attendance and participation is mandatory. Please note that because our class meets once weekly that is equal to two class periods in classes that meet twice a week. One and a half absences will result in one full grade drop; additional absences will result in additional grade drops. Having to work at an outside job is not an acceptable reason to miss class. If you are more than 15 minutes late for class, you will be marked absent. If you miss a critique without an "emergency" excuse, your project grade is automatically dropped by one full grade (e.g., a "B" would become a "C"). You will receive an automatic F, if you miss three classes.

**Textbook**

*This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics*

PDF Excerpts under Content in D2L

Sean Hall

Laurence King Publishers

2014

ISBN-10: 1856697355

**Grading Formula**

Signs, Icons, Symbols, Observations	25%
Project: Thematic Icon Set	25%
Project: How to Guide	25%
Project: Wayfinding	25%

Please note that **all** Assignments and Projects must be completed to receive a passing grade in the the class.

## Project Descriptions

### Signs, Icons, Symbols, Observations Assignment

(1) Provide examples of the following concepts, based on the class presentation and discussion.

- Icon, Index and Symbol of a concept not mentioned in class or the readings:
- Symbol
- Index
- Fused Metaphor
- Discuss what treachery of an image means and provide an example.

(2) Field Guide: Signs, Symbols and Systems

Your second task is to observe and document signs, symbols, and systems, both metaphorical and literal through photography in your home, your neighborhood, or if you prefer, from an exhibition website (some noted below) or at a museum that has social distancing in place. Gather ten images of parts of a system or system(s). Please remember that “signs” do not literally represent signage.

In the context of semiotics, “signs” are manufactured in and about culture. Identify with captions what you have photographed and what category describes them. Upload your images and statements to the D2L Discussion Board “Signs, Symbols, Systems.”

If you wish to visit a museum in person (social distancing observed), here are a list of free museums on certain days with your DePaul student ID card:

<https://resources.depaul.edu/demon-discounts/arts-entertainment/Pages/art-institute-chicago.aspx>

<https://do312.com/p/chicago-free-museum-days#>

Here are some websites where you could observe online photography that you could use to gather examples and interpretations of signs:

<https://petapixel.com/2017/01/28/40-best-street-photos-2016-photographers-around-world/>

<https://iso.500px.com/2017s-best-street-photography-far/>

This should be fun and adventurous.

### Project: Thematic Icon Set

Students will generate a set of 10 icons and one invented symbol based on the plot of a novel or movie. At least two of the icons must represent abstract ideas rather than concrete objects. The icons will progress from hand-drawn rough sketches to a more refined fidelity, either digitized or through skillful hand-rendering. The set will be fully realized as a printed poster series.

### Project: How to Guide

For this project, you will create a How To Guide that outlines the steps to complete a task. The guide must include at least eight steps. Each step must be expressed with both text and visuals, included but not limited to: iconography, photography, illustration. The deliverable possibilities: Book, Website, Poster, Card set, App, Video.

### Project: Wayfinding

Students will create a cohesive way finding system that spans environmental graphics, print collateral, and an interactive touch point. The final deliverable will include printed pieces, as well as printed “mockup” photographs of the way finding system as it would be seen in the world. Creating convincing mockups will be demonstrated in an upcoming lecture, and links to helpful resources will be provided.

### 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?
- \\ Design Quality: Does the final piece look coherent, visually strong and communicate the goals?
- \\ 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

#### **Grading**

A	95-100	C+	83-84	D	72-75
A-	93-94	C	80-8	D-	70-71
B+	91-92	C-	81-78	F	Below 70
B	87-90	D+	76-77		

#### **Pass/D/Fail Grading Options for Fall 2020 Quarter**

Students in all undergraduate classes, with the exception of those in CEO cohort programs, may opt to change the grading basis for any or all of their courses to Pass/D/Fail. A grade of Pass (P) will indicate that the student's work met expectations for a grade of at least C-. Work that would merit a grade of D+ or D in the traditional grading basis would still earn a D+ or D. Work that does not merit a passing grade will earn a Fail (F). The Pass/D/Fail grading option may apply to any graduation requirement, including courses in the major, minor, Liberal Studies Program or open electives.

More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/faqs/Pages/classes-academics-students.aspx>

## Important Dates

### Autumn Term

<input type="checkbox"/>	Date	Event
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday April 30, 2020	Begin AQ2020 registration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday September 3, 2020	Annual Academic Convocation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday September 4, 2020	TUITION DUE: AUTUMN QUARTER
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday September 7, 2020	Labor Day - University officially closed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday September 9, 2020	BEGIN AQ2020 ALL CLASSES
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday September 15, 2020	11:59 PM Deadline to add classes to AQ2020 schedule
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday September 22, 2020	Last day to drop AQ2020 classes with no penalty (100% refund of tuition if applicable and no grade on transcript)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday September 23, 2020	Grades of "W" assigned for AQ2020 classes dropped on or after this day
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday September 29, 2020	Last day to select auditor status for AQ2020 classes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday October 7, 2020	Begin AQ2020 optional mid-term exam week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday October 13, 2020	End AQ2020 optional mid-term exam week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday October 27, 2020	Last day to withdraw from AQ2020 classes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday November 17, 2020	End AQ2020 Day & Evening Classes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday November 18, 2020	Begin AQ2020 Day & Evening Final Exams
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday November 24, 2020	End AQ2020 Day & Evening Final Exams
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday November 24, 2020	END OF AUTUMN QUARTER 2020
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday November 26, 2020	Thanksgiving Holiday - University officially closed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday November 27, 2020	Thanksgiving Holiday - University officially closed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday November 28, 2020	Thanksgiving Holiday - University officially closed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday November 29, 2020	Thanksgiving Holiday - University officially closed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday December 3, 2020	"R" grades issued Autumn 2019 lapse to "F"
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday December 3, 2020	GRADES DUE: AUTUMN QUARTER 2020
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday December 6, 2020	Last day to select pass/fail option for AQ2020 classes (See college for deadline for Grad Programs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday April 29, 2021	Begin AQ2021 registration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday June 18, 2021	"IN" grades issued Autumn 2020 lapse to "F"

### **Online Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online on CampusConnect.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

### **Academic Policies**

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002 Fax: (312)362-6544 TTY: (773)325.7296

### **Harassment**

The policy as specified in the DePaul Student Handbook will be adhered to in this class.

### **Name and pronouns**

Please email the teacher regarding your name preferences and pronouns.

### **Changes to Syllabus**

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

### **Withdrawal**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

### **Retroactive Withdrawal**

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM.

The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent Winter quarter

### **Excused Absence**

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

### **Incomplete**

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in MyCDM.

All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptional cases will receive such approval.

If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form.

By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor.

### **Supplies**

Sketchbook, 9x12 inch, many available;

Sketching tools – black ink pen, black marker, pencil (examples below)

Metal cork-backed ruler, 18-inch, minimum, cork prevents slippage

T-square, 18", metal with cork back

Triangles, 30/60 necessary; 45/45 good as well but not necessary

Easy-stick drafting tape or removable scotch tape, 1/2 inch or 3/4 inch

Kneaded eraser

### **DePaul Design Mailing List**

All students are strongly encouraged to sign-up for the DePaul Graphic Design mailing list

[Design@mailman.depaul.edu](mailto:Design@mailman.depaul.edu)

<http://mailman.depaul.edu/mailman/listinfo/design>

### **Join the DePaul AIGA on Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AIGAdepaul/>

## Syllabus

Readings will periodically be assigned.

### WEEK ONE

Thursday 9.15

Introduction to class

Examples of projects

Read, watch, define

Semiotics is about the study of meaning. It is the theory of graphic design, how we visually communicate in the through the lens of graphic design. It is the study of how meaning is created.

*New Nike Ad*

<https://musebycl.io/sports/nikes-new-ad-editing-marvel-and-maybe-best-covid-spot-yet>

*Semiotics and Memes*

Why Protest Tactics Spread Like Memes

When items like umbrellas and leaf blowers are subverted into objects of resistance, they become very shareable.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/style/viral-protest-videos.html?>

Memes to movements

<https://datasociety.net/library/an-xiao-mina-memes-to-movements/>

Technologist and digital media scholar [An Xiao Mina](#) provides a global exploration of internet memes as agents of pop culture, politics, protest, and propaganda on- and offline. Based on her new book, [Memes to Movements: How the World's Most Viral Media is Changing Social Protest and Power](#) (Beacon Press, January 2019), Mina uses social media-driven movements to unpack the mechanics of memes and how they operate to reinforce, amplify, and shape today's politics.

### WEEK TWO

Thursday 9.22

Signs, Observations Review

Intro to Thematic Icon Set

### WEEK THREE

Thursday 9.29

Thematic Icon Set Critique 1

### WEEK FOUR

Thursday 10.6

Thematic Icon Set Critique 2

### WEEK FIVE

Thursday 10.13

Thematic Icon Final Critique

Introduction to How-To Guide

### WEEK SIX

Thursday 10.20

How-To Guide Critique 1

### WEEK SEVEN

Thursday 10.27

How-To Guide Critique 2

WEEK 8  
Thursday 11.3  
How to Guide Final Critique  
Wayfinding Intro

WEEK 9  
Thursday 11.10  
Wayfinding Critique 1

WEEK 10  
Thursday 11.17  
Wayfinding Critique 2

Final Exam  
Thursday 11.24  
Submission of Wayfinding Final Due