

**GD153**

Typeface Design Workshop  
 Fall 2015  
 11 weeks  
 2 units  
 Tuesday  
 14E 213  
 3.10–4.40

**INSTRUCTOR**

Nathan Matteson  
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 312 961 9868 (text)  
 CDM520

T 10–1.15; TH 10–11.30, 3.15–5;  
 M, W, F by appointment

**DESCRIPTION**

The course is an introduction to the formal, technical, and historical foundations of typeface design. Students will use a combination of analog and digital methods to design and build usable fonts.

**OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this quarter, you will be acquainted with the vocabulary of type design; understand the technical process of drawing type as opposed to writing letters; be familiar with the historical basis of the pen in type design; be able to draw a set of letters (though likely not a full font) that are formally consistent with each other; know how to leverage your knowledge of letterform design in other areas of the graphic design industry.

**TEXTBOOK**

None required. A list of online & print material can be found below. Other readings will be supplied through D2L as necessary.

**MATERIALS**

You'll want to get these materials as soon as possible. Paper and pens can be purchased nearby at Blick.

- **EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE.** You may also use an online service such as iCloud, DropBox, S3, etc. You are responsible for backing up your own work. Failure to turn in a project will result in a zero grade for that project. I'd advise you not to use a 'thumb' or 'flash' drive, as they're notoriously prone to fail without notice.
- **TRACING PAPER.** 9 × 12 inches is sufficient. If you don't have a preferred paper already, I suggest Bienfang Graphics 360 for working out ideas.  
 OPTIONAL: For inking and scanning, Borden & Riley's Denril pads are unbeatable.
- **BLACK INK PEN, BLACK MARKER, PENCIL.** Again, if you don't already have a preferred writing implement, several companies make good tools: Staedtler, Copic, Rotring, and Micron come to mind. Pens and pencils come in an array of widths (.3, .5, and .7mm being the most common), and markers come in an array of shapes. You want proper felt-tip drawing pens and markers—not ball-points, rollerballs, or other cheap writing implements.

**ATTENDANCE**

You are expected to show up to class prepared and on time. While the university has policies regarding excused absences (see below), in reality there's being here and there's *not* being here. If you chose to miss class, you (and only you) are responsible for the content you miss when you're absent—make friends with someone early if you anticipate being absent later in the quarter. Failure to attend will generally result in a lack of participation, and consequently a reduced grade.

**LATE WORK**

Punctuality is integral to a successful design career. So too is turning in your work on time. I do accept work up to 24 hours late—though at the expense

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of a reduced grade. I also accept revisions of work for a potentially improved grade! So please turn in your work on time, and revise it as necessary *after* it's due. The importance of these two skills cannot be over-stated.

**CLASSROOM CONDUCT**

Given the nature of our work, we'll be having discussions and lectures during class. You are expected to participate in these exchanges in a professional manner. Participation in critiques and reviews is not optional. You are expected to both comment on your peers' work as well as offer your work for feedback.

When you're discussing someone else's work, treat them with respect. When someone else is talking about your work, don't take it personally.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

This class is driven by a single project that will last the entire ten weeks, with a shorter optional project during the last half of the class. We will have group critiques of your work during several class sessions. Roughly speaking we'll be drawing on paper for the first five weeks, and then transferring those drawings to a digital format during the latter five. Typeface design is notorious complex, arcane, and difficult—don't expect to get a complete font drawn in ten weeks (though some of you may).

**GRADING POLICIES**

Grades are perhaps the least interesting (and possibly least *important*) component of a design education. Generally, employers won't be asking you what your GPA is, or nit-picking over the fact that you graduated *magna cum laude* rather than *summa cum laude*. They are however an important part of teaching methodology, and they should at least mean something.

Final grades will be based on your projects throughout the term, as well as class participation. Final grades are calculated based on standard deviation (ie, a so-called bell curve)—though this does *not* mean that only one person gets an A and most people get Cs.

Participation includes (but is not limited to) contributing to discussions in class; participating in critiques and design reviews; asking your peers for help during lab time, and offering help if you're able. Failure to be an active member of the class will result in a lower grade.

Each project grade is based on the following components of your work. Bear in mind that not every project will require the same amount of each component.

- **THOUGHT.** This is the intellectual or conceptual component of a project. You might equate it with 'art direction' or 'strategy'.
- **STRUCTURE.** Your use of the basic 'elements and principles of design' as we say. How well you've managed to communicate the previous component. Sometimes we call these two aspects of our work: form and content.
- **CRAFT.** Ability to follow project parameters and instructions. Attention to detail. Desire to have a clean X-acto cut rather than a raggedy one.
- **PROCESS.** This is where we collect some aspects of our work that are perhaps a bit more intangible. Both 'effort' and 'professionalism' fall into this category.

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Your ability to show up to class on time, participate meaningfully in critiques, attempt things that seem beyond your reach, etc.

The grade ‘breakdown’ is as follows:

- PARTICIPATION. 15%
- PROJECT 1 EXECUTION. 20%
- PROJECT 1 CONCEPT. 15%
- PROJECT 2 EXECUTION. 20%
- PROJECT 2 CONCEPT. 15%
- FINAL PRESENTATION. 15%

**COURSE TOPICAL SCHEDULE**

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC
One	Sep 15	Introduction to the course. Historical overview. Begin drawing lower case controls.
Two	22	Critique and revisions. Stress, contrast, weight, and proportion.
Three	29	Critique and revisions. Expand control families.
Four	Oct 6	Critique and revisions. Problem characters. Upper vs. lower case.
Five	13	Drawing lab. (Independent project proposals due)
Six	20	Bezier best practices. The em quad. Begin digitizing controls.
Seven	27	Drawing lab.
Eight	Nov 3	Spacing and kerning.
Nine	10	Critique.
Ten	17	Drawing lab.
Eleven	24	Final presentations, 11:45–2:00

**OTHER RESOURCES**

There’s no complete reference or textbook for type design, though I would recommend these books to those who are curious:

- Walter Tracy. *Letters of Credit*. Boston: David R Godine, 2003.
- Gerrit Noordzij. *The Stroke*. London: Hyphen Press, 2006.
- Karen Cheng. *Designing Type*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Websites with useful information are also somewhat rare.

- [briem.net](http://briem.net) is the website of Icelandic type designer Gunnlaugur Briem, and has a copious amount of information available for free. Of particular use to a beginner is his description of drawing an ‘S’.
- Reading through the Critique section of [typophile.com](http://typophile.com) can be a useful enterprise, although this site has generally been less active of late.

Also, please sign up for the DePaul Graphic Design Mail List: [mailman.depaul.edu/mailman/listinfo/design](mailto:mailman.depaul.edu/mailman/listinfo/design).

And be aware that DePaul has recently acquired an institution-wide license

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for lynda.com, which is a wonderful resource for all kinds of technical training. You'll need to sign in with your DePaul user and password using the link found at [software.depaul.edu/training](http://software.depaul.edu/training). Lynda.com covers everything from using Photoshop, to micing a drumkit, to writing an operating agreement for your startup.

**MY SCHEDULE**

I'll be available on-campus outside of class during the week. My office is CDM520; my office hours are listed on the CDM website and in the left-hand column of this syllabus. Also, I have another office downtown, about 2 blocks from CDM—you're welcome to come by if I'm not on campus. Please text or email to let me know, as sometimes I'm out for a meeting, etc. I'm in the Monadnock Building at 53 W Jackson, Suite 660.

**COMPUTER LABS**

Computer labs are available for your use outside of class. For schedule information, please check here: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Labs.aspx>. You'll need to swipe into the rooms with your DePaul ID, so please be sure it's activated.

**TEACHING EVALUATIONS**

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue—the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at [academicintegrity.depaul.edu](http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu).

**PLAGIARISM**

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The

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strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Plagiarism (or intellectual property theft) is a tenacious problem in type design and font distribution. There's a very fine line between basing the design of a new font on patterns from history—and creating a blatant and tasteless rip-off. We shouldn't have to worry too much about those intricacies. However, do not *trace* from an existing typeface. Do not open a font's outlines, and move things around to 'create your own' (though please do open typefaces outlines and look at how they've been drawn).

Also, be aware that I am obligated as a professor in the university to report all academic integrity violations, no matter how minor they may seem.

**RESOURCES FOR 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: Student Center, LPC, Suite #370; phone number: (773) 325 1677; fax: (773) 325 3720; TTY: (773) 325 7296.

**WITHDRAWAL**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system ([campusconnect.depaul.edu](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. Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
- WINTER. Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
- SPRING. Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
- SUMMER. Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

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**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 [studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html](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.

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 final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

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 exceptions 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.
- An incomplete grade does *not* grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

*This syllabus is subject to change at any time, with notice.*