ARH 4930 / graphic design history / syllabus

Course information:
ARH 4930 Class #23670 | cross-listed as ARH 6917 (graduate independent study, modern art)
Meets: FAC 201 M/2 (8:30–9:20 AM) & W2–3 (8:30–10:25 AM) | Final exam TH 12/12 12:30–2:30 PM

Instructor information:
Dr. Dori Griffin | email dgriffin@arts.ufl.edu | office FAC 103
Office hours M 9:30–10:30 AM, W 3:00–4:00 PM, and by appointment | book online here

I regularly check/reply to email in the early morning and late afternoon of every business day (M-F). I'm happy to make an appointment to meet outside regular office hours, especially if your class schedule conflicts with these; email to work out a time.

Texts & materials:
Required: Links to all required readings and viewings will be posted to the course website. Suggested: If you find it helpful to have a printed text for reference, you may wish to purchase either edition of Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide by Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish. Many lectures loosely follow this text. All information and images needed for tests and assignments will be discussed in class and posted to the course website; there are no required readings from this text.

Course description:
ARH 4930: History of Graphic Design investigates the diverse cultural functions and critical definitions of design over time and across places. The course introduces the broad stylistic movements common to western European and North American graphic design, as well as interrogating and re-writing a received definition of design history which excludes globally diverse artifacts, designers, practices, and users. Readings, viewings, discussions, and critical making activities focus on (1) how design functions in relationship to specific cultures and (2) how expanded knowledge of global historical contexts might enrich contemporary design practice.

Graduate credit:
Graduate students enrolled in ARH 6917 will participate in the meetings, assignments, and activities of ARH 4930 as described on this syllabus. Though point distribution is the same (see below), the individual project for graduate students will have distinct requirements, described in a separate assignment brief with its own grading rubric. The project offers significant flexibility, allowing students to design and carry out original, individual research to enrich their program of study. Additionally, graduate students must schedule one individual meeting before the mid-term exam to discuss their research project’s focus and desired outcomes.

Course objectives:
This course will foster cooperative, dialogic engagement with three questions: One, what is the broad outline of graphic design history as traditionally defined? Two, how have designers and historians expanded that definition to be more global, inclusive, and participatory? And three, how might we, as individual designers/scholars, contribute to an expanded notion of graphic design history?

Course outcomes:
At this end of this course, students will be able to: (1) recognize and identify the stylistic designations applied to canonical examples of western European and North American graphic design; (2) demonstrate familiarity with globally diverse examples of expanded graphic design practice through discussion and writing; (3) articulate meaningful connections and critique unequal power structures when viewing the canon of design history in relationship to an expanded or global history; and (4) demonstrate in-depth knowledge of a single subject area within this expanded field through sustained, image-based research which will be presented in written and audio-visual formats.

Course structure:
On Mondays, we’ll have a short lecture to introduce canonical ideas, technologies, images, designers, and stylistic movements fundamental to the received history of graphic design as a professional activity, a means of production, and a tool for visual communication. While this material doesn’t make
up the whole of graphic design history, it does provide a shared formal and contextual vocabulary for most designers practicing in North America and western Europe today. These introductions will move chronologically, and they'll be organized to provide a broad overview supported by primary texts and image examples. On Wednesdays, we'll push back against this received, canonical history and expand our view of graphic design history to include designers, audiences, places, and activities that have – until very recently – been excluded from the definition of graphic design. During the first half of Wednesday meetings, we’ll discuss ideas and view examples from an assigned reading that offers a global case study relevant to the week’s chronological and technological framework. During the second half, you'll meet together in small working groups to develop individual, semester-long research/writing projects. These will expand and de-center the history of graphic design around a theme of your choice.

**Course deliverables:**
This course prioritizes (1) active engagement in scheduled meetings – demonstrated by attendance and participation and documented with in-class response activities; (2) commitment to completing weekly lecture/reading/viewing assignments – demonstrated through participation in class discussions and two image ID + reflective writing exams; and (3) meaningful contributions to our shared goal of expanding and de-centering graphic design history – demonstrated through your individual, semester-long research project. Expanding and de-centering graphic design history is complex, on-going work with no quick ending point. Likewise, your individual project will develop incrementally over the semester.

Steps will include weekly written reports centered around images which you’ll locate and annotate; regular peer review and revision sessions with your working group; a (brief) audio-visual report to the class during a “debriefing” week; and a finalized text collecting your (revised) weekly writings into a cohesive whole. We may choose (at midterm) to add a visual design component to the final text; see the project brief for details.

**Point distribution – 1000 points total**
* to pass this class, you must take both exams and give a report on your project

*Exams – 300 points maximum*
2 exams (image ID + reflective writing) x 150 points each = 300 points
Mid-term and final exams; match images to styles, date ranges, vocabulary; respond critically in writing to course readings and lectures; the final is not comprehensive

*Individual project – 500 points maximum*
Weekly image annotation draft: 12 images x 15 points each = 180 points
+20 points for on-time, satisfactory delivery of all 12 drafts
Audio-visual report on your project, at midterm or final = 50 points
Finalized text collecting and contextualizing your revised images/writing = 250 points

*In-class activities – 200 points maximum*
Small-group activities based on assigned readings for Wednesday meetings
15 points each for 13 W meetings:
Completed in-class response sheet / activity documentation (10 pts)
Participation in your working group’s critique of drafts; yours must be posted before class to earn this credit (5 pts)
To earn points for a completed in-class activity, you must arrive on time, remain until class ends, and disable electronic communications/chat (phone and laptop) for the duration of class.
Complete all 15 in-class activities for a 5-point bonus.

**Grading scale:**
The grading scale for this course is consistent with the current UF policy for assigning grade points and can be viewed at [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx).

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<th>Letter</th>
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Course policies:

**Attendance:** Being present for class allows you to participate in credit-earning, in-class activities and prepare for exams; more importantly, your contributions to discussions and peer review sessions facilitate an engaged learning community. After the first two absences, each additional unexcused absence will reduce the final course grade by 50/1000 points, or half a letter grade. Official documentation of university-approved circumstances (illness, military service, university travel, religious observances, etc.) is required for absences to be excused. Two late arrivals or early departures equal one absence. More than six absences will result in automatic failure of the course, unless we’ve made arrangements ahead of time to accommodate ongoing, documented situations.

**Make-up exams + activities:** Exams can only be made up in the case of documented emergencies or for university approved reasons such as military/university travel, illness, or religious observances; contact me ahead of time to make arrangements. Similarly, without official documentation of university-approved circumstances, in-class activities can’t be made up.

*Read* the full university policies regarding attendance, excused absences, and make-up exams at: [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx)

**Academic integrity:** If you use words, images, or ideas that are not your own, cite them. Claiming the work of others as your own is a serious breach of professional ethics and will result in a failing grade in this class. The UF Honor Code specifies a number of other behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. View the Honor Code online: [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/)

**Course evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu](https://evaluations.ufl.edu). Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/](https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/).

**Campus resources:**

**Emergency Contacts**
- UF Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575 or [http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/)
- UF 24/7 Crisis Center: [http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Emergency-Services](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Emergency-Services)

**Student Healthcare Center**
- Dial 911 for medical emergencies
- Dial 352-392-1161 for urgent after-hours medical questions
- Dial 352-392-1171 for after-hours mental health assistance, [http://shcc.ufl.edu](http://shcc.ufl.edu)

**General University Policies**
Most policies and procedures important to students recorded here: [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/)

**Academic Services**
- Library Support, [http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask](http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask)
- Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138; [http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/)
ARH 4930 + 6917 calendar

Unit 1 – Before Modernism(s)

Week 01
W 08/21  Class introduction
Review syllabus & policies
Preview topics & assignments
Establish small working groups
Reading: “Decolonizing Design” editorial statement (in-class)
https://www.decolonisingdesign.com/statements/2016/editorial/

Week 02
M 08/26  Medieval letterforms & book formats
W 08/28  Case study: global translations of manuscript herbals

Week 03
M 09/02  Labor Day – holiday
W 09/04  Reading: “Searching for a Black Aesthetic in American Graphic Design” by Sylvia Harris (in The Education of a Graphic Designer by Steven Heller)
AND
“Creative Curating: The Digital Archive as Argument” by Joanne Bernardi and Nora Dimmock (2019)
https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-aa1769f2-6c55-485a-81af-ea82ce869662ection/d25ff116-befe-484c-8460-c372bf25998c#ch21
AND (required for grads, optional for undergrads)
Collaborative in-class activity for W credit – see Canvas; requires an image annotation: post & write about the image that drew you to your topic

Week 04
M 09/09  Renaissance design conventions
W 09/11  Case study: the printed book form in Japan
“Art Meets Commerce: Illustrated Books and the Japanese Publishing Enterprise in the Edo Period and Beyond” by Ann Yonemura
https://pulverer.si.edu/essays/hokusai-as-an-illustrator-of-books

Week 05
M 09/16  Modern typography and the public sphere
W 09/18  Case study: Mexican book & newspaper typography

Week 06
M 09/23  Industrialization & mass media
W 09/25  Case study: Chinese advertising design

Week 07
M 09/30  Proto-modernism(s) Exam 1
T 10/01  Guest speaker Saki Mafundikwa, 6:00pm (required)
W 10/02  “Modern Native American Art: Angel de Cora’s Transcultural Aesthetics” by
Unit 1 wrap-up – Exam 1 & Research presentations

Week 08

M 10/07  Exam 1
W 10/09  Student research presentations

Unit 2 – Modernism(s) & Beyond
Note that some readings may change for unit 2; if so, all changes will be posted by M 10/07

Week 09

M 10/14  Avant-garde Modernism(s)
W 10/16  Case study: The New Typography in Hebrew
          “Hebrew Type Design in the Context of the Book Art Movement and New Typography” by Phillip Messner, in New Types (by Ada Wardi, 2016)
          “Berthold’s 1924 Hebrew Type Catalogue” by Steven Heller
          https://www.hellerbooks.com/pdfs/baseline_new_berthold.pdf

Week 10

M 10/21  Avant-garde Modernism(s)
W 10/23  Case study: Japanese & Taiwanese translations of Modernism

Week 11

M 10/28  Consumer culture
W 10/30  Case study: Kuwaiti advertising design

Week 12

M 11/04  Civil & military information campaigns
W 11/06  Case study: Propaganda posters in 1930s China

Week 13

M 11/11  Veteran’s Day – holiday
W 11/13  Corporate Modernism
          Case study: TBD

Week 14

M 11/18  Pop, protest, & counter-culture
W 11/20  Case study: Cuban political posters
          AND

Week 15

M 11/25  Postmodernism(s)
          Case study: TBD, possibly –
W 11/27  Thanksgiving – holiday

Unit 2 wrap-up – Exam 2 & Research presentations

Week 16
M 12/02  Exam 2
W 12/04  Student research presentations

Final
TH 12/12  Electronic delivery of finalized individual project by 12:30 pm
**ARH 4930 + 6917 / image annotations**

Weekly image annotations: 12 images x 15 points each = 180 points  
Weekly due date for annotations: midnight on Tuesday

For your semester-long research and writing project, choose an under-represented subject area and explore how it intersects with and enlarges the received history of graphic design. Each week, we'll encounter a brief introduction to designers, styles, and ideas considered “canonical.” We'll also discuss, as a group, one case study that expands our view beyond this canon. These introductions and case studies will move roughly chronologically. As emergent scholars of design, you’ll also contribute to the work of expanding the history of graphic design through your weekly search for – and contextualization of – what we might call “extra-canonical” image examples. Using the week’s chronological, stylistic, and/or conceptual focus as your starting point, you’ll locate an image example that connects the week’s topic to your semester-long research theme.

Your selected theme should expand our collective definition of graphic design history beyond its traditional boundaries. Choices might include under-represented people groups (women, indigenous designers, designers of color), geographic locations (Asia, Africa, Central or South America), or practices (collaboration, anonymous design, typeface design beyond the Latin alphabet). You might select a theme with a personal connection but this isn’t a requirement. You should choose a subject area broad enough for flexibility but specific enough to give you a well-defined scope for your investigation. For instance, Japanese graphic design is a more workable subject area than twentieth century female Japanese-American designers.

To earn credit, drafts must be posted on time (midnight Tuesday); each week’s post includes:

**Image (2 points)** A relevant, meaningful image at suitable resolution for useful on-screen viewing; about 800x1000 pixels is a decent minimum size; file size should be under 1MB.

**Citation (3 points)** A full citation including the title, maker, date, and source for your image, including a direct URL to the image itself if you found it online. For the final project, citations will use the Chicago author-date style; format is not graded in these weekly drafts.

**Annotation (10 points)** A 200-300 word paragraph which explains why the image you’ve chosen is meaningful in relationship to the week’s framework and your chosen project theme. Why, out of all the possible image examples, is it important to encounter and understand the one you’ve chosen? Annotations should be written in complete sentences and spell-checked, and they should convey your ideas about the image clearly. But content is more important than style in the draft phase. Your working group will critique your drafts weekly, and you’ll have time in class to collaborate, make revisions, and expand on your ideas.

Some questions your annotation might address, relative to your image example:
- Who made it, who used it, and what was the relationship between maker and user?
- What technologies and/or cultural values impacted its development?
- How did the place and time of origin influence form, function, and/or design philosophy?
- How is it similar to and/or different from more familiar or canonical examples?
- How and why has it been excluded from canonical or received histories?
- What does the field gain by expanding our notion of graphic design to include it?

Make specific observations about the image/object, and support your observations with physical evidence and/or (brief) reference to scholarly sources. You should have a solid understanding of who made the image/object and how, who its audience was, why it looks and works the way it does, and how it fits into the broader social context of its place/time. Your annotation should communicate this information to your readers.
**ARH 4930 + 6917 / project report**

Mid-term or final debriefing report: 50 points
*you’ll be assigned to mid-term or final, and you must deliver a report to pass this course*

At mid-term and final, we’ll pause and collectively review the topics each of you has engaged with in seeking to expand and de-center our definition of graphic design history. Looking back at each of your weekly annotations during your assigned half of the semester, you’ll choose the one example that’s most emblematic of your whole project. You’ll have 2 slides and 4 minutes to present how this one example represents the subject area you’ve been researching and why it’s valuable for us to encounter it. Your 2 slides might be one image of the whole object and one detail shot, or one image of the object and another of users interacting with it. The front and back of a postcard could be placed on a single landscape-oriented canvas and shown as one image. Each image will remain on screen for 2 minutes.

By the posted deadline before your assigned session, upload two JPGS to the assignment tab labeled Debrief 1 or Debrief 2. Before upload, name these with your last name and the order they should be shown on screen; mine would be griffin1.jpg and griffin2.jpg. Make sure the resolution is appropriate; 800x1000 pixel landscape images are minimally functional. File size shouldn’t exceed 1MB.

Practice ahead of time what you’d like to say. You can have one 3x5 index card with you during your presentation to help you remember names and dates, but don’t plan to read aloud for four minutes. It’s helpful if the switch from your first to second image doesn’t have to be perfectly timed to your talk.

Your report should let us know three things:
1. What is your general research area?
2. What are we seeing on-screen? (Probably: title, maker, date, materials, location, audience.)
3. How does this example critically expand the history of graphic design?

Presentations will be evaluated based on four yes/no questions:
1. Does it show clear evidence of careful preparation re: images and spoken remarks? (10pts)
2. Does it define your research area, giving us a general sense of your project at large, question 2 above? (5 pts)
3. Does it clearly describe the example you’re showing, question 2 above? (5 points)
4. Does it fully, thoughtfully, and critically contextualize how/why your example is important to graphic design history, and how it expands our notion of that history, question 3 above? (30pts; half-credit of 15 points is possible for partially addressing this question.)
Finalized text collecting and contextualizing your revised images/writing: 250 points

Your finalized text should include all of the images you wrote about this semester, as well as an introductory overview that contextualizes the subject matter, the images as a group, and your position as a researcher. What drew you to this area of study, what did you learn, and what challenges did you face? What do you think it’s important for designers and design historians to understand about the material you’ve presented? What do you/we realize when all the images are collected into one place? For the overview, you’ll need to write new text of 500-550 words. For the annotations, return to the annotations you posted each week. Make sure that your ideas are expressed clearly; if not, clarify them. Each annotation should discuss how the image usefully expands our concept of graphic design history; if it doesn’t, add this information. Finally, check your writing for spelling and grammar errors, and make sure citations are complete and correctly formatted following the Chicago Manual of Style’s quick guide to the author-date reference list:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Evaluation of final texts:

Form / 50 points
Correct spelling, grammar, syntax, and source citations

Overview / 75 points
Contextualizes the researcher’s position relative to the subject matter
Explains how/why the subject matter usefully expands received definitions of design history

Annotations / 125 points
Offers clear, insightful descriptions for all of the individual examples
Expands received or canonical notions of design, designers, and design’s audiences/users
Makes relevant connections to the broader narratives of graphic design history
Refers to scholarly literature as relevant to contextualize images and/or support arguments

Note:
At mid-term, we’ll discuss the possibility of incorporating visual design into the final project. If we choose this option, annotations will be worth 100/250 points and visual design worth 25/250 points.
Finalized text collecting, contextualizing, and analyzing your revised images/writing: 250 points.

To begin, re-read “Searching for a Black Aesthetic in American Graphic Design” by Sylvia Harris and “Creative Curating: The Digital Archive as Argument” by Joanne Bernardi and Nora Dimmock (2019). For additional background, read the introductory essay in Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design and see the Making Africa website: http://makingafrica.net/exhibition/. See also Nate Pyper’s essay “Dumpster Diving into the Wreck” in Amalgam magazine (August 2019) and browse the Queer Zine Archive Project: http://archive.qzap.org/. Each of these texts approaches critical curating from a particular viewpoint and with particular goals in mind. Consider how each approach might inform your own project. Then, re-read your weekly annotations and reflect on how they suggest an argument through the activity of curating. With the construct of the catalogue essay as your (loose) mental model, your goal for the final text is two-fold:

Curate: Present your curated collection of 12 artifacts from the history of graphic design which expands our received definition(s) of the discipline and the practice relative to a particular area of focus and/or a specific critical lens. Edit your weekly annotations to serve as self-contained, analytical captions for these images/objects. Make sure to contextualize each object fully and critically, point toward relevant scholarly literature for readers who want to learn more, and edit each caption for clarity and form. Provide a properly formatted source citation for each image.

Contextualize: Write a 1500-2000 word essay which introduces your subject matter, positions it relative to the received history of graphic design, and makes an explicit and critically/theoretically grounded argument for how and why your curated collection informs our understanding of the discipline and its history. This essay could be written in the first person and include transparent self-identification; it should at least acknowledge your position relative to the subject matter. The essay should situate your curatorial practice and your image collection within the broader landscape of graphic design, offering both historical and critical context.

Evaluation of final texts:

Form / 50 points
Correct spelling, grammar, syntax, and source citations

Introductory essay / 125 points
Introduces the subject matter and references relevant scholarly literature for context
Explicitly and critically grounds the subject matter within a relevant theoretical context
Identifies the relationship between the subject matter and the “canonical” history of graphic design
Informs and extends the understanding of design history as discipline and graphic design as practice
Situates your curatorial practice and your curated collection within the broader historical landscape

Image captions / 75 points
Offers clear, insightful descriptions for all of the individual examples
Expands received or canonical notions of design, designers, and design’s audiences/users
Makes relevant connections to the broader narratives of graphic design history
Refers to scholarly literature as relevant to contextualize images and/or support arguments