GRA 4165 / graphic design history 1 / syllabus

Meets   Tu 2-3 (8:30-10:25am) and Th 2 (8:30-9:20) in FAC 201
Instructor   Dr Dori Griffin | dgriffin@arts.ufl.edu | FAC 313E
Office hours Th 9:30-10:30 and by appointment
Prerequisites ARH 2050 and ARH 2051, or graduate status, or instructor permission

I regularly check/reply to email in the early morning and late afternoon M-F. I'm happy to make an appointment to meet outside regular office hours; email to work out a time. Likewise, I'm always open to your questions and to helping make this class successful for you. Just communicate!

This course, the TL;DR:
How does visual communication evolve over time and in relation to places and social/cultural contexts? This question guides Design History I. We'll move chronologically and thematically, asking one guiding question each week to help us approach our large question in multiple ways. We'll examine these questions through one or more of three critical lenses—race, class, and/or gender—which have themselves been defined in many different ways, as our case studies demonstrate. Each week, we'll examine a primary text from a so-called canonical designer or movement, a global case study to expand that narrative through a critical lens, and a relevant example of contemporary design practice. History isn't neutral. The questions we ask, and the designed artifacts we examine or admire, inform the stories we tell. Throughout this course, we'll investigate how and why design's narratives shape our individual and shared concepts of "histories of visual communication."

Guiding principles:

We'll collaborate to cultivate curiosity, demonstrate respect, listen actively, and communicate clearly. All assignments and supporting materials will be posted to Canvas.

 Texts & materials:

Required: Links to all required readings and viewings will be posted to Canvas.
Suggested: [Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide](#) by Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish, any edition. Or, if you prefer reading on screens, [A Short Introduction to Graphic Design History](#) is useful.

Catalog description:

GRA 4165: History of Graphic Design I investigates the diverse cultural functions and critical definitions of design across places and over time, until the turn of the twentieth century. 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 relation to specific cultures and (2) how expanded knowledge of global historical contexts might enrich contemporary design practice.

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, through the turn of the twentieth century? Two, how have designers and historians expanded that definition to be more global, inclusive, and participatory? Here, we focus specifically on critical explorations of race, class, and/or gender as they

have been addressed (or not) in design histories. And three, how might we, as individual designers/scholars, contribute to a radically 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 through the turn of the twentieth century; (2) demonstrate familiarity with 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 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:

This course is organized chronologically, with a guiding thematic question for each week. Each week focuses on a specific time period and the conceptual, stylistic, and contextual ideas related to it. Brief readings and/or lectures will 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. In discussion and critical-making sessions, 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. We'll discuss ideas and view examples from an assigned reading that offers a global case study relevant to the week's guiding question. This case study will apply the critical lens(es) of race, class, and/or gender—concepts which have been defined differently over time and across place. Individual research projects will expand and de-center the history of graphic design around a theme of your choice within the three broad areas of race, class, and/or gender.

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 very short quizzes; 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 images which you'll locate and annotate, then share on the People's Graphic Design Archive; regular peer review sessions; a brief audio-visual report to the class during finals; and a finalized text collecting your revised annotated image posts into a cohesive essay with a critical introduction.

Point distribution – 1000 points total:

Individual Research Project = 600 pts — choose a research question to explore

- ☐ Post images + captions to the People's Graphic Design Archive (PGDA) = 400 pts
    - ☐ 40 pts each post
    - ☐ Turn in ¾ posts in Unit 1
    - ☐ Turn in ⅝ posts in Unit 2
    - ☐ Turn in ¾ posts in Unit 3

- [ ] Audio-visual report on your project = 50 pts
- [ ] Written introduction to your collected posts = 150 pts

In-class activities – 300 points maximum

- [ ] Small group activities in class
- [ ] 13 activity sessions = 25 pts each
- [ ] You can skip one activity + one make-up session is available

Weekly reading quizzes = 100 pts max.

- [ ] In-class quizzes covering assigned readings
- [ ] 10 pts per quiz, choose 2 of 3 multiple choice questions to answer
- [ ] Quizzes take place at 8:30 on Tuesdays
- [ ] You can skip 1 quiz per unit

Grading scale:

The grading scale for this course is consistent with the current UF policy for assigning grade points which can be viewed at catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx.

Letter	GPA	Percent	Course points	Letter	GPA	Percent	Course points
A	4.00	100-94%	1000-950 points	C	2.00	76-73%	769-730 points
A-	3.67	93-90%	949-900 points	C-	1.67	72-70%	729-700 points
B+	3.33	89-87%	899-870 points	D+	1.33	69-67%	699-670 points
B	3.00	86-83%	869-830 points	D	1.00	66-63%	669-630 points
B-	2.67	82-80%	829-800 points	D-	0.67	62-60%	629-600 points
C+	2.33	79-77%	799-770 points	F	0.00	59% or below	599 points or less

Course policies:

Attendance: Being present for class allows you to participate in credit-earning, in-class activities and complete required assignments; 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 5/100 points, or half a letter grade. Unless you check in via email **ahead of time** to make specific and mutually agreeable arrangements, 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 results in automatic failure of the course, unless we've made arrangements ahead of time to accommodate ongoing, documented situations.

Students Requiring Accommodation: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/ It's important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. If there's something I/we can do that you know to be helpful and functional for you, feel free to **let me know** informally.

Make-up work: Presentations and in-class activities 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. Read university policies on attendance, excused absences, and make-up exams: 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**. This includes the use of AI text and image generators. Claiming the work of others (including AI) 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: 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. 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 evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

UF in-class recording policy: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor. A class lecture does not include lab/studio sessions, student presentations, academic exercises involving solely student participation, or private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

UF guidance on engaging uncomfortable ideas: People learn best when encouraged to ask questions and express diverse insights on course content which may include images, texts, data, or theories from many fields. This class addresses concepts of race, color, sex, gender, and/or national origin as related to design. We study these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today's complex world. With this in mind, we don't limit access to, or classroom discussion of, ideas and opinions—including those that some may find uncomfortable or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another's ideas. But hostility and disruptive or disrespectful behavior have no place in a classroom, and we will respect one another's full humanity in this course.

Campus resources:

Emergency Contacts
UF Police: Emergency 911, non-emergency 352-392-1111 or http://www.police.ufl.edu/
UF Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575 or http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/
UF 24/7 Crisis Center: 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

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

Academic Services
Library Support, http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask
Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138; http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/