

GRA6930 DESIGN SEMINAR

DESIGN RESEARCH: CONSTANTS & VARIABLES

SYLLABUS FA24

This is a topical seminar for first- and second-year majors in the Design & Visual Communications MFA degree program at the University of Florida. A rotating topics course retains the flexibility to address contemporary issues relevant to design. These often emerge from conversations with students, program faculty, and others.

Credits: 03 / This course addresses contemporary design and visual communications issues related to the MFA in Design and Visual Communications program. It includes a discussion of literature, the development of research questions, and framing methodologies.

Prerequisite: Design and Visual Communications major student or permission of instructor.

Corequisite: [GRA 6931C](#).

MEETING TIMES

Thursdays, periods 5-7 / 11:45 AM – 2:45 PM

MXD Design Studio, Infinity Hall 110

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that for thousands of years, the area comprising the state of Florida has been and continues to be home to many Native Nations. We further recognize that the main campus of the University of Florida is in the heartland territory of two historically known Native societies: those of the Potano and the Alachua Seminole. The Potano, of Timucua affiliation, lived here in the Alachua region from before European arrival until the destruction of their towns in the early 1700s. The Seminole, also known as the Alachua Seminole, established towns here shortly after but were forced from the land as a result of a series of wars with the United States known as the Seminole Wars (based on the Smathers Libraries land acknowledgment).

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Maria Rogal, MFA (she, her)

Professor, Graphic Design/Design & Visual Communications

e mrogal@ufl.edu

o FAC 313D

OFFICE HOURS & INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Thursdays, 10:15 – 11:15 AM and 3 – 4 PM at Infinity Hall MXD Studio or a quiet space (your choice). A link will also be provided to book appointments. I read and respond to emails Monday – Friday. Outside of class, the fastest and best way to reach me is via UF Teams chat.

TOPICS

- MXD, expectations about what to accomplish at the end of the semester and year
- Overview of Tools
- reading, critical reading, ways of writing, trying these out in reflections, and other writing below.
- what design research is, isn't, could be, and how they fit
- design AND (intersections and connections)
- intersectionality, mindsets

- frameworks, values, selecting methods
- framing questions for research (different types of questions), for projects, with people
- ethics, sharing/reciprocity, IRB
- building on others' work
- learning about different contexts
- annotated bibliography, terminology
- bi-weekly reflections to connect work – cumulative (summary of activities, annotated bibliography, and reflections)
- activities include reading, discovering/finding, visualizations, reflections, summaries, writing questions, responding, building, bibliographies, and collections of materials.

SYLLABUS CHANGES

Please note that the instructors may need to modify the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced quickly through email & Canvas.

CRITICAL DATES

08/22	MXD Introductory Meeting, 1 st Class Meeting
09/19	Visiting Speaker, Time TBD, Attend Lecture at the Harn Museum of Art at 3 PM
10/03	Mid-Term Conversations (Individual Meetings)
10/04	Convivial Conversations, Time TBD
10/24	Independent Research
11/21	Final Class Meeting
TBD	No later than 12/12: Sharing Materials, Deliverables, Feedback; Self-Reflection

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To introduce or reinforce the program's student learning outcomes
- Learn key issues in contemporary design discourse
- Make connections across disciplines to shape one's knowledge--base in design and other disciplines
- Learn to identify, conceptualize, frame, and articulate questions, problems, ideas, and concepts
- Synthesize and articulate complex information in a meaningful manner (verbal, writing, design) and
- Increase understanding of the relationship of design to the economy, culture, and society

This course fosters knowledge-building and skill development in the MXD areas of proficiency, as articulated in the Student Learning Outcomes below. The Seminar is a companion course to GRA 6931C Research & Practice, so students should actively seek connections between these two courses. The current MFA/DVC (or the MXD) Student Learning Outcomes listed here are what you should aspire to. At the end of your final semester, we use this rubric to assess your mastery of program goals, expecting you to meet expectations in all areas.

1. Design: Develop a body of work(s) that includes visual communications artifacts, design systems, and design strategies and reflects original, creative, and innovative contributions.
2. Research: Identify and apply research concepts, methods, and contextual and respectful activities that advance a horizontal and pluriversal framework through codesign. Pursue visual research through process-driven iterations informed by a literature review.
3. Communication: Creates a portfolio that organizes and communicates research, findings, proposals, and work products professionally with their intended audience using visual,

verbal, and written skills. Disseminate research findings in public to further participate in disciplinary discourse.

4. Working with People: Collaborates and works effectively in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams to develop approaches and solutions to complex problems. This may include using materials or content from collaborations.
5. Specialization: Develops expertise in an area of one's choosing to support professional goals (the "and" in "Design and ____").

REQUIRED RESOURCES

- Students studying in the Graphic Design MFA program must have appropriate hardware and software for use in and outside of class time. See [this website](#) for more details regarding hardware, software, specifications, and purchasing options, including discounts for UF students. This includes accessing the Adobe Creative Cloud (Education Discount Available).
- We will use the following software, which offers free education accounts when you sign up with your .edu email (for your account security, never use your UF email and Gatorlink password together outside of UF): Miro, Figma, Notion, Trello, One Drive and more (see instructions on Canvas)
- The instructor will provide you with readings, viewings, and other materials. You are also responsible for identifying and collecting materials.

THE HORIZONTAL DESIGN STUDIO

Horizontality is central to the MXD, meaning students are active participants and agents during the semester. I approach teaching as a conversation where I initially provide leadership and direction, mentor you, and facilitate your learning so that you can further develop as a designer and researcher. You must also plan to work independently, have intellectual curiosity, and have a significant commitment to your work to practice and iterate. Be willing to own your education. If you have concerns or problems or want to discuss the materials or your project in addition to the time we have in class, you will let me know. I understand complexity, contexts, and the critical insight we must have to excel at designing with people in context. You will be asked to contribute actively to shaping aspects of this course. Any revisions or course modifications we agree on and need to make will be documented accordingly and listed as changes

UNDERSTANDING DESIGN IN CONTEXT

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assignments, assigned readings, materials, and subject matter in this course to determine whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

GRADING

The purpose of grading and evaluation is to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of your work. We can only respond to what is observable. You must expect to actively share and document your progress and communicate with others in the MXD program. Remember that graduate students must maintain a B average to remain in good standing. Your semester grade is based on the combination of design research and related activities. This and program SLOs will be used to situate your progress. You are never expected to acquire mastery until your final semester, so remember that **practice is progress**.

Each area below will represent approximately 20% of your total grade. When we review the course materials, I will provide more explanation.

1. Design
2. Research
3. Communication
4. Working with People
5. Design and ____

LTR	Common grading scales Project defined criteria	S/U	C/I	0-5	100% Scale	GPA		
A	Exceeds ALL	S	C	5	95 - 100%	4.0		
A-	Exceeds MOST, Meets ALL				90 - 94%	3.67		
B+	Exceeds SOME, Meets ALL			4	87 - 89%	3.33		
B	Meets ALL				84 - 86%	3.0		
B-	Meets ALMOST ALL			3	80 - 83%	2.67		
C+	Meets MOST				77 - 79%	2.33		
C	Meets SOME			2	74 - 76%	2.0		
C-	Meets LESS THAN SOME				70 - 73%	1.67		
D+	Meets FEW			U	I	1	67 - 69%	1.33
D	Meets VERY FEW						64 - 66%	1.0
D-	Meets HARDLY ANY	0	60 - 63%			.67		
E	Meets NONE		<60%	0				

UF GRADING POLICIES

[Current UF grading policies](#) for assigning grade points. Work produced in this course should demonstrate your potential as a designer. Use all the tools in your toolkit, develop these through practice, and create new tools when needed. All work produced in this course should directly apply to your final graduation portfolio and showcase your tools and interest. Sustained attention is required throughout the semester. Participation, iteration, communication, and radical creativity will be critical to everyone's success.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

While there are different activities throughout the semester, your participation is usually a gauge of your progress. If you have ways you prefer to participate, please see me after the first class meeting to discuss accommodations and options for you to participate fully and benefit. This can accommodate introverts, extroverts, different learning styles, and comfort levels.

ITERATIONS

Both research and design are iterative processes that allow you to build on your ideas. Working consistently, obtaining feedback from instructors and peers, and learning in this environment is good practice. Coming to class prepared and putting maximum sustained effort into your work gives everyone an advantage. We depend on each other for growth and development, critical insight, and feedback, so we get back what we give when we put in this work.

COMMUNICATION

You are responsible for emails sent to your ufl.edu account and messages sent to you via Teams. It is good practice to check both at least once daily between Monday and Friday. I check emails at least once daily, Monday through Friday, and Teams more frequently.

PROGRAM VISIBILITY

Unless otherwise requested, your work may be used to promote the graphic design program at the University of Florida, in faculty teaching portfolios, and as educational examples in academic conferences or journals. We will make every attempt to credit your work to you where appropriate. You retain the copyright of your work.

ATTENDANCE

Being present for class allows you to participate in the codesign community that supports the MXD. If you must miss class without anticipating official documentation, email the instructor beforehand as a record. If you will miss more than one consecutive class meeting, you must submit documentation of this absence or it is not excused. Students observing a religious holy day of their faith must inform the instructor. Other requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course is consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Each unexcused absence will reduce the final course grade by half a letter grade (ex: A to A-, B+ to B). Two late arrivals (5 minutes or more late) or early departures (before class is dismissed) will equal one unexcused absence. Arriving more than 20 minutes after the start of class is no longer considered tardy and will count as an unexcused absence. More than five absences result in automatic course failure unless we've planned time to accommodate ongoing, documented situations.

DEADLINES + MAKEUP WORK

All work is due on the day and time listed. Missed work can be made up in the case of documented emergencies or university-approved reasons such as military/university travel, illness, or religious observances, contact me beforehand to plan. Work may be different from what is originally assigned. You are responsible for asking for make-up work within a week of the absence. If you are absent or late, you must obtain missed information from another student in the class. Read the full university policies regarding attendance, excused absences, and make-up exams at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. Click here to get started with the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students must share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester (or let me know if something is pending). You may also let me know informally if there is something that I can do to support you in this

course – I am aware that official accommodations are often hard to come by, require resources, and are often designed for other kinds of courses.

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 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/>

If you want to use generative technology in your work, ask your instructor in advance, discuss how you will use it, and request approval. Using ideas, images, or word phrases created by another or by generative technology, such as ChatGPT, Claude.ai, and the like, you must identify their source. You may not submit false or fabricated information, use the same academic work for credit in multiple courses, or share instructional content. Students with questions about academic integrity should ask their instructor before submitting work.

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give this feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

M&S FEES

\$50 – this supports the studio learning environment and more.

UF HELP DESK

Reach out to the UF Helpdesk for technical issues with UF communications: [helpdesk website](#) or call 352-392-4357

ACCESS TO LIBRARIES

Students with disabilities have an equal right to use and benefit from resources at the George A. Smathers Libraries, including (but not limited to) Course Reserves materials. To ensure this right, students with disabilities: 1. Have the responsibility to identify themselves as needing appropriate, reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. 2. Have the responsibility for making their needs known promptly. 3. Have the same obligation as any library user to comply with library policies and procedures.”

The George A. Smathers Libraries Course Reserves Unit will work with patrons needing assistance or accommodations to access course reserves materials. Please contact the Course Reserves Unit at 352-273-2520, or email at eres@uflib.ufl.edu for information or assistance. We encourage students to contact and register with the University of Florida Disability Resource Center at 352-392-8565 or accessuf@dso.ufl.edu.

UF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS POLICY

Students, upon prior notification of their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

UF HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal well-being, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

TECHNOLOGY, COURSE FEES, AND EQUIPMENT USE

With questions related to your computer system and technology (network, printers) in the graphic design studio(s), you can contact the program's Senior Teaching Lab Specialist – Michael Christopher (mchristo@ufl.edu). He can help diagnose problems and recommend solutions.

Lab fees are used to supply the printers with ink and paper. Be conservative in your use of these materials not only because they cost money but because they create waste. We care about the environment. Balance what you need to make your work and resource use. Reuse and recycle

whenever possible. Note that your GD lab fees do not cover the printing of materials or use of supplies for other courses, even art-related courses. Printing for non-GD courses or activities (even if your own) must be done elsewhere. Misuse of equipment will result in heavy monitoring of everyone and/or the loss of privileges for those who don't think policies apply to them. Paper is only supplied for the color and black laser printers. Plan to purchase your paper for the Epson inkjet and plotter printers. Toners and ink are covered for all printers.

EXCELLENT PRACTICES

1. Be open and constructive—critique ideas, not people.
2. Be community-minded.
3. Work hard to guarantee that the studios are safe and brave spaces for all.
4. Respect personal differences, elevate uniqueness, and celebrate it.
5. The studio is a creative, professional workplace. It is not your home. Respect and maintain this space.
6. Respect each other by listening to your music on headphones during individual design sessions and keeping your desk, row, and communal areas clean.
7. Recycle paper, bottles, and cans. Reuse other materials.
8. Throw away trash. Do not leave food lying around. We ask that you be attentive to cleaning up and throwing away food remains—preferably in the hallway trash cans.
9. Do not use spray adhesive in the studios or the building. There is a professional and safe spray booth on the 2nd floor.
10. Never use or harm animals or the environment in your projects. Using animals in your design projects is strictly regulated and prohibited unless you have UF approval. Keep in mind I will never authorize this for a design project.
11. When working in the evening or when only a few students are present, keep the studio door closed. Never leave the studio open and unattended.
12. Mobile phones should be turned to vibrate or low ring mode during class. If you must take a phone call, do so in the hallway or production room to minimize disruption. If you have an emergency, you may also use my office.
13. Only those enrolled in the program have access to individual classrooms, laboratories, and studio facilities in FAC and FAD.
14. Dial 911 for emergencies. Let's take care of each other!
15. If you encounter other problems in the classroom or studio, speak with your instructor or the Director of Graduate Studies.