



**"THE QUALITY OF YOUR QUESTION DETERMINES THE UTILITY OF THE RESULTS. ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION IS THE SAME AS DEVELOPING A SOLUTION TO THE WRONG PROBLEM. THEY WILL BOTH GIVE YOU SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT YOU NEED. START WITH YOUR HIGH-PRIORITY QUESTIONS. THESE COME FROM THE ASSUMPTIONS OR AREAS OF IGNORANCE THAT CARRY THE MOST RISK IF YOU'RE WRONG."**

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—ERIKA HALL, MULE DESIGN STUDIO

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## GRA 1113C: DESIGN STUDIES | FALL 2025 | FAC 310 | T/R PERIODS 2-4 (08:30AM-11:30AM)

Pre-requisites: Graphic design major / Co-requisites : None / Credits: 3hrs

### Instructors:

**Jarred Elrod** | jaelrod@ufl.edu | He/Him | I go by Jarred

Drop-in office hours (FAD 239) Tuesdays 11:30-2 pm + scheduled meetings (send email to schedule)

I answer messages M-F, around 8am 4pm & turn off message alerts on evenings and weekends

**TA Alex Hackett** | alex.hackett@ufl.edu | He/Him | I go by Alex

**TA Giselle Galvan** | galvangiselle@ufl.edu | She/Her | I go by Giselle

**TA William Bizotto Dos Santos** | bizottodossant.w@ufl.edu | He/Him | I go by William

See Canvas for Zoom contact hours for all TAs

**NOTE:** By our second class meeting please sign up for a Miro account by using the invitation link that has been sent to your UF email. You must use your UF email to sign up. Next, please complete the "Getting to know you" exercise located on our Canvas home page.

## What /How / Who?

### COURSE SUMMARY

This course asks how design works as a tool in our everyday lives for **(1)** understanding socio-cultural and personal identity, **(2)** shaping individual and shared human experiences, and **(3)** communicating through designed visual information, environments, and experiences. Designed images, objects, environments, and interfaces shape the "facts" of how we perceive each other, navigate public spaces and digital environments, and understand everything from political affiliations to brand preferences. A range of course activities will foster critical discussions, collaborative design thinking activities, and investigative design studio making. The course is organized around three guiding questions:


- **What is design?**
- **How does design work?**
- **Who is design for?**

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- **Identify, describe, explain, and critique 1/ how design is defined across many places and times; 2/ how design works to shape/intersect personal and socio-cultural identities; and 3/ who design is intended for based on how the**

### COURSE OBJECTIVES + OUTCOMES

design process approaches the first two variables. We'll evaluate these skills through collaborative, in-class Design Thinking and Design Studio Making activities, discussions, and Critique Wall posts.

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- Identify and describe via writing & design the key concepts, themes, and disciplinary vocabulary relevant to contemporary design practice. We'll encounter these in connection to specific, global, real-world case study examples of the design process and its role in shaping human experiences. We'll evaluate these skills through online Quizzes, in-class discussions, Design Thinking and Design Studio Making activities, and Collaborative Reflections (designed) at each unit's conclusion.
  - Identify, analyze, and evaluate how designed artifacts and design practices change relative to place, time, and socio-cultural identities. We'll evaluate these skills through Critique Wall posts, guided peer and self analysis, and Design Thinking & Design Studio Making activity outcomes.
  - Identify, analyze, and evaluate how design plays a role in shaping personal experience relative to an individually selected theme: economic class, race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, ability/disability, nationality, or religion/spirituality. We'll evaluate these skills through Critique Board posts and Visual Essays.
  - Develop and present via design critical, personal responses to the diverse examples of design practice encountered throughout the class. We'll evaluate these skills through Critique Board posts, Visual Essays, and the presentation of these results to peers at the semester's conclusion (during the assigned final exam period).
  - Engage design making processes through collaborative, low-risk design making prompts in the weekly, synchronous design studio making sessions. Responses to these prompts will be evaluated in relationship to engaging the design process: research, define, ideate, prototype, test. The aesthetic and functional value of the design is important in a professional context and part of our classroom discussions. It is not an element of evaluative grading in this class.

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Pre-requisites: Graphic design major / Co-requisites : None / Credits: 3hrs



### Class Meeting Structure:

- **Discussion groups** meet 1x/week, F2F, on Tuesdays—attend your assigned section:  
Period 2, 8:30-9:20 / Period 3, 9:35-10:25 / T Period 4, 10:40-11:30
- **Studio sessions** meet 1x/week, F2F, on Thursdays—attend your assigned section:  
R Period 2, 8:30-9:20 / R Period 3, 9:35-10:25 / R Period 4, 10:40-11:30
- **Asynchronous online** content is accessible via Canvas:  
Readings, videos, audio, Critique Wall (due Fridays 11:59pm) and quizzes (due Mondays 11:59pm)

### Coursework Summary:

Assignment	Description	Requirements	Points	Due
<b>Design Critiques via Critique Wall</b> <i>weekly critique wall contribution; a shared, critically annotated image board that we'll review in relationship to design making</i>	For each entry, locate and critically analyze one example of design that shows the relationship between the week's question (e.g., how might design redefine itself?) and your individual research theme from the approved list (e.g., gender).	1 image of <u>your creation</u> and a brief caption: <u>what</u> we're seeing and <u>why</u> it's important + relevant, from your point of view.	<b>250</b> Complete 10 (/12 possible) weekly entries, 25 pts each	Fridays @ 11:59pm
<b>Quizzes</b> <i>weekly, online; no quiz weeks 5, 10, 15</i>	During each unit, you'll take four online, multiple choice quizzes reviewing the week's assigned viewing, listening, and/or reading assignments.	10-12 multiple choice and short answer questions; two chances to take the quiz, 30 minutes to complete once you begin, highest score automatically kept.	<b>220</b> 12 quizzes, 20 pts each max. credit 200 (/220, =1 "free" skipped quiz)	Mondays @ 11:59pm
<b>Design Thinking &amp; Design Studio Making</b> <i>weekly, synchronous, collaborative design and discussion activities</i>	Each week, you'll participate in a design making session and a discussion session. Earn credit through engaged, active participation that's consistently informed, thoughtful, and considerate; there aren't right or wrong answers, any new design skills will be introduced during class as needed.	Active engagement as described in each session's design thinking & making prompt (rubric attached to prompts).	<b>220</b> 24 sessions, 10 pts each, max. credit 220 (/240, this = 2 "free" absences)	T/H, during your assigned section time

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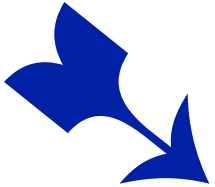
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Assignment	Description	Requirements	Points	Due
<b>Collaborative reflection</b> <i>synchronous critical reflection via design studio making sessions; occurs 3 weeks/semester</i>	Each unit concludes with a collaborative design studio-making activity that asks you to holistically reflect on the unit's guiding question. We'll review problems encountered, challenges overcome, and lessons learned. Your small group will collaboratively produce a designed artifact reflective of your shared experiences.	Self and peer evaluation (rubric attached to assignment).	<b>120</b> 6 sessions, 10pts each, +20pts for each reflection's designed outcome and 10pts	During class; final week of each unit (weeks 5, 10, 15).
<b>Visual essay</b> <i>analytical visual essay reflecting on all three of the course's guiding questions in a holistic way; final project</i>	In an analytical visual essay, contextualize and evaluate the design elements you observed during your visit to a cultural place or public space (can be online). Use the critical and observational skills you developed through your critique wall contributions to analyze the design choices you encountered. Analyze the role of design choices in shaping and/or dialoguing with visitors' identities, particularly your own. Communicate your argument via words and self-designed images.	Analytical visual essay with a minimum of 500 words written content and 5 self-authored images (rubric attached to assignment).	<b>170</b>	Last day of your section's Discussion meeting.
<b>Final presentation</b> <i>presentation of visual essays (during final)</i>	Present and collaboratively evaluate the results of your visual essay. Occurs during each section's assigned final exam period.	Self and peer evaluation (rubric attached to assignment).	<b>30</b>	During your section's final exam period
			<b>1000 (total)</b>	



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**Attendance:** Attendance is recorded promptly when class starts for F2F meetings. You're allowed two "personal days" for the semester, after which each absence that does not meet university criteria for "excused" will result in a 20-point (2%) deduction from your final grade. Some credit-earning activities (worth about 1% of total course grade per activity) happen in class, with no make-up credit unless your absence is officially excused. Participation that's consistent, informed, thoughtful, and considerate is expected through collaborative, in-class design thinking & design studio making activities; rubrics are attached to prompts. If you have personal issues that prohibit you from joining freely in class discussion, such as shyness or language barriers, see the instructor as soon as possible to discuss alternative modes of participation. No pre-existing design skills are expected or required.

**Grading:** Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies; read more about grade point assignment at UF. A grade of C or higher is required for degree progression.

**Grading Scale:**

- A 100-95 | A- 94-90 | B+ 89-87 | B 86-83 | B- 82-80 | C+ 79-77
- C 76-73 | C- 72-70 | D+ 69-67 | D 66-63 | D- 62-60 | E 59 and lower

**Academic Polices and Resources:** To support consistent and accessible communication of university-wide student resources, please visit <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolices> for current information regarding all university wide academic polices and resources / university support services. This includes regularly updated emergency contacts and mental health resources.

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**Weekly Course Outline: Read, Watch, Look, Listen, Analyze, Make (schedule subject to change)**

**UNIT 1: What is design?**

*With weekly content assignments, critique wall posts, and quizzes*

**Week 1: How and why is design not neutral, universal, and timeless**

- "Design is Timeless" by Paul Rand
- "Design Q&A" by Eames design studio
- "The Crystal Goblet" by Beatrice Warde
- "Art, Design & Modernity - The Bauhaus & Beyond"

**Week 2: How might design redefine itself?**

*Exploring pluriversal alternatives to Modernist design practices*

- "Design No Harm" by Antoinette Carroll
- "Design Is Storytelling" by Ellen Lupton

**Week 3: How does design approach questions of form?**

*Investigating aesthetic and structural qualities, materials, production methods*

**Typography:**

- History of the Alphabet
- History of Typography
- Wood type in China
- Letterpress type in WE/NA
- From Paper to Screen

**Printing & books:**

- Manuscripts in western Europe
- Manuscripts in the Arab world
- Woodcut printing in western Europe
- Block printing in India
- Books binding in China:

**Image-making:**

- Graphic patterns + images on textiles in south Asia
- Ukiyo-e printing in Japan
- Lithography in WE/NA
- Intaglio in WE/NA
- Daguerreotypes in WE/NA

**Week 4: How might design move beyond form?**

*Investigating how 21st century designers leverage form for positive social innovation*

**Type design:**

- Right to Left
- The Politics of Arabic Type Design

**Comic book design**

- Lighten Up (Black Americans in comics)
- Of God & Heroes (Indigenous Americans in comics)

**Documentary image-making projects:**

- Humanea Project
- Selfie City

**Week 5: Synthesis, aka Gestalt**

*No new content during Synthesis/Gestalt*



## **UNIT 2: How does design work?**

*With weekly content assignments, critique wall posts, and quizzes*

### **Week 6: How does design shape interpersonal and social identity?**

*Brands as problematic vehicles for personal and social identification*

- "The Complete History of Branding in 20 Minutes" by Debbie Millman
- "Ain't Dat a Shame" by Kelly Walters (branding and Black cultures)
- Land 'o' Lakes rebrand (branding and Indigenous cultures)

### **Week 7: How does design shape information access?**

*Data visualization as social and political activism*

- "Disinformation Visualization" by Mushon Zer Aviv
- "What Would Feminist Data Visualization Look Like?" By Catherin D'Ignazio
- W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America, ed. Battle-Baptiste & Rusert

### **Week 8: How does design shape networks of exchange?**

*Scandinavian design & its fans/critics as a global commodities case study*

- "Designpocalypse: Is Design Becoming a Commodity?" by Lulo @ frog design, Mexico City
- "Designing Class: IKEA & Democracy as Furniture" by Kimberly DeFazio
- "Translating Hygge: A Danish Design Myth & Its Appropriation" by Breunig & Kallestrup

### **Week 9: How does design shape (in)equity?**

*Urban design, 'homelessness,' and hostile design as vehicles for (in)equity*

- "Designing Ourselves for Ourselves," directed by Zorrie Petrus
- "Unpleasant Design & Hostile Architecture" on 99% Invisible:
- "The Politics of Perception," interview with Callous Objects author R. Rosenberger

### **Week 10: Synthesis, aka Gestalt**

*No new content during Synthesis/Gestalt*

## **UNIT 3: Who is design for?**

*With weekly content assignments, critique wall posts, and quizzes*

### **Week 11: How might design be functional?**

Problematizing design thinking as a tool for functionality and equity

- "Design Thinking for Social Innovation" by T. Brown and J. Watt
- "Design Thinking Is Fundamentally Conservative" by Natasha Iksander
- "Designing a New Way for People to Vote" IDEO case study
- "How Is Design Driving Ford to Innovate?" IDEO case study



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### **Week 12: How might design be democratic?**

*Investigating how communities and cultures are already "good" designers*

- "By the People: Designing a Better America" by Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum
- "Designing Equitable Cities & Beyond in the USA," interview with Toni Smith
- "The People Are Already Beautiful: Indigenous Design & Planning" by Theodore Jojola

### **Week 13: How might design be universal?**

*Understanding how the Disability community shapes universal design efforts*

- "The Controversial Process of Redesigning the Wheelchair Symbol" by Natasha Frost
- "The Power of Disability" by Liz Jackson
- "Universal Design & Its Discontents" by Rick Godden and Jonathan Hsy
- Comparative review of What Can a Body Do?, Accessible America, and Making Disability Modern by Jo Gooding in Journal of Design History

### **Week 14: How might design be sustainable?**

*Moving sustainability beyond buzzword toward equitable everyday practice*

- "Revitalizing the Rhetoric of Sustainability" by Anneli Bowie & Duncan Reyburn
- "Design Activism within Existing Systems" by design design studio [d]Tale

### **Week 15: Synthesis, aka Gestalt**

*No new content during Synthesis/Gestalt*

### **Final Exam Period:**

*Presentation and collaborative evaluation of visual essay outcomes*

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## **Course Contract:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the syllabus and heard the verbal introduction, understand what is written, intend to abide by these policies, and will earn the appropriate grade according to my work, efforts and attendance for the Fall semester, 2025.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign and return a hard copy to instructor within one week of our first day of class**