

INFORMATION DESIGN

in Society

COMM 300 | SUMMER 2013 | COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor:

Classroom:

Schedule:

Office Hours:

Email:

Phone:

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of this four-week class, we will evaluate how visual communication functions within the public spaces we visit throughout our lives. Students will learn about the communication sub-discipline of information design and how it serves to affect the way people act, feel, and otherwise respond to their environments. By the end of the semester, students will have a richer understanding of how wayfinding, typography, color, symbols, maps, and signs affect visceral, behavioral, and reflective reactions to physical spaces; students will be able to more critically analyze the ethics of information design in society and how to adapt their own communications to meet the physical needs of their audiences.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- The Wayfinding Handbook: Information Design for Public Places*, by David Gibson
- Emotional Design: Why We Love (Or Hate) Everyday Things*, by Donald Norman
- Digital camera (cell phone cameras will work if resolution is greater than 5mpx)
- Pen and paper
- Laptop

COSTS

Beyond the cost of textbooks, the final assignment for this course requires that students pay to print physical copies of color images. The assignment description is broad enough that students may create a poster, saddle-stitched booklet, spiral-bound notebook, or some other document, but some cost will be associated with printing and binding. Students can likely expect to spend anywhere from \$5 - \$25, depending on the project.

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ASSIGNMENTS

Over the course of the four-week semester, students will be working on developing a creatively-designed **visual reflective analysis** of the information design used in a specific public space genre. In preparation for this final project, and coinciding the readings throughout the course, students will produce an **information design photo web log** (blog) of the spaces they visit, identifying how the information design in each space seems to be affecting patrons of the location. Once during the semester, students will give short **5-minute presentations** to the class on their blog entries. Students will also be graded on their attendance and participation in in-class activities.

GRADING

Your grade for the semester is calculated strictly on a point-based, percentage system. There are 100 points total for the course—60 points for the blog entries (10 points each), 10 points for your blog presentation, and 30 points for your final project. It is my policy that every student starts at a '0' and then earns his/her grade by accumulating points during the semester.

A = 93% 100 – 93	B+ = 87% 89 – 87	C+ = 77% 79 – 77	D+ = 67% 69 – 67	F = <60% 59 – 0
A- = 90% 92 – 90	B = 83% 86 – 83	C = 73% 76 – 73	D = 63% 66 – 63	
	B- = 80% 82 – 80	C- = 70% 72 – 70	D- = 60% 62 – 60	

LATE WORK

All assignments are due on the due date; late assignments will be docked 30% per day. Extensions (in rare, serious circumstances and for school-excused absences) must be approved PRIOR to the due date.

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ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class period. If you arrive late to class, it is your responsibility to come talk to me after class to be sure that you were not marked absent. Because of brevity of this course, you are allowed to miss only one class period without penalty during the semester. If you miss two class periods, your final grade will be dropped 15 points (one and a half letter grades). If you miss three or more courses (which equals 43% of the class), you will fail the course. Participation will be measured by your attentiveness and participation during discussions and workshops. Reading, sleeping, listening to music, playing video games, etc. during class will result in a reduction of your overall grade.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING A GRADE

Questions Concerning a Grade: If you have any questions concerning a grade on any assignment, I will be happy to talk with you about it. Typically, it is best to wait 24 hours after receiving the grade so that you can mull it over; however, you must wait no longer than 7 days after receiving the grade to talk with me. After 7 days, the grade will be considered final.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating will not be tolerated. As a college student, you are expected to know and understand plagiarism and ethics guidelines concerning copyrights and the borrowing and citing of information. If you have questions about whether or not you are plagiarizing, please come talk with me before you turn in an assignment. Depending on the seriousness of an incident, cheating will result in a reduction of a grade, failure of an assignment, failure of the course, or even expulsion from Westminster College.

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The Westminster College of Undergraduate Academic Catalog (2012) states:

“Westminster College of Salt Lake City operates on the assumption that all academic work is the honest product of each student's own endeavors. The faculty and staff at Westminster expect such integrity from the students, and violations are cause for disciplinary action, including suspension, probation, loss of credit, or expulsion from the college.

“Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and furnishing false or misleading information to any faculty or staff member.

Cheating on written assignments includes plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration with others or submitting the same material for more than one class without authorization of the instructor.

“Plagiarism includes borrowing information or ideas, whether directly quoted or paraphrased, from any source beyond one's first-hand experience and not acknowledging the source. The student must give credit for the material by identifying the source, using one of the generally accepted citation methods.”

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Westminster College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 and the Disabilities Act and Amendments of 2009 (ADA AA) and does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. The college provides equal access in higher education to academically qualified students with physical, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. The

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Disability Services Program works with departments throughout the college to ensure that programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the college community. The college must provide reasonable accommodations to students who, by nature of the disability, are limited in accessing academic opportunities. In order to be eligible to receive services through the program, students need to complete the following steps:

- Disclose the nature of the disability to the program coordinator in the START Center.
- Provide current documentation from a qualified source verifying the impact of the disability. Appropriate documentation is necessary to verify eligibility and support requires for accommodations, academic modifications and/or other aids. Information is kept confidential according to federal guidelines.
- Once eligibility is established, students meet with the program coordinator to determine individualized accommodations. Students must provide reasonable notice to allow time for arrangement of accommodations.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

	IN CLASS	HOMEWORK (DUE NEXT CLASS)
MAY 6 Monday	Welcome & introductions; syllabus; defining information design; creating blogs	-Read WH, Chapter 1 (pages 10 - 29) -Read ED, Prologue (pages 3 - 13) -Post blog entry #1
MAY 8 Monday	Blog presentations #1; discuss blog entry #1; discuss readings; watch <i>Objectified</i> ; discuss film	-Read WH, Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 (30 - 45) -Read ED, Chapter 1 (7 - 33) -Post blog entry #2
MAY 13 Monday	Blog presentations #2; designing and planning; attractive things work better; aesthetic-usability effect; anthropomorphism	-Read WH, 2.3 & 2.4 (46 - 65) -Read ED, Chapter 2 (35 - 60) -Post blog entry #3
MAY 15 Monday	Blog presentations #3; sign categories; sign content; information design and emotion; watch <i>Milton Glaser: To Inform and Delight</i>	-Read WH, Chapters 3.1 and 3.2 (68 - 85) -Read ED, Chapter 3 (63 - 98) -Post blog entry #4
MAY 20 Monday	Blog presentations #4; branding, placemaking; typography; three levels of design; watch <i>Helvetica</i> ; discuss film, branding, and three levels	-Read WH, Chapters 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 (86 - 119) -Read ED, Chapter 4 (99 - 134) -Post blog entry #5
MAY 22 Monday	Blog presentations #5; Color; symbols; forms and media; designing for pleasure; final project description	-Read ED, Chapter 5 (135 - 160) -Post blog entry #6 -Complete Visual Reflective Analysis (Information Design in [Society]) project
MAY 27 Monday	Memorial Day. No class.	
MAY 29 Monday	People places and things; Information Design in [Society] project showcase and presentation	

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PHOTO WEB LOG

Information Design Blog | Task Schedule and Assignment Description

Due: Each week, according to schedule

Deliverable: Blog entry, online

Value: 60 points, 60% of overall grade (10 points each)

Assignment—After each reading during the course, you are expected to complete a task outlined below. Each task requires you to take pictures of some information design element and reflect on the readings in short, but descriptive text in a blog that you create. **Important:** Images must be your own (not taken from internet) and must be of somewhere outside of Westminster's campus.

Blog Entry #1 (May 8)

Post two pictures: 1) of a thing inside your home that you have a particular emotional attachment to, and 2) of a place that you go to often that you feel has good wayfinding design. In roughly 100 words per picture, write about how the thing and the place make you feel and why it is you believe they make you feel that way.

Blog Entry #2 (May 13)

Using Google Maps to locate a city image, or using an existing map of an organization, post two pictures (one original, and one Photoshopped). Identify how you would map the city (as a connector model, landmarks model, districts model, or streets model). In roughly 100 words, explain why you feel this model best organizes the city or organization. Also, post two pictures of a similar object (like two different computers) and explain in roughly 100 words why you think the more attractive object works better.

Blog Entry #3 (May 15)

Post 12 pictures, 3 of each type of sign: Identification, Directional, Orientation, and Regulatory. In 25 words or less for each image, explain where you found the sign and why it is that type of sign. Also, post one image of an object that is designed in such a way that you experience a great emotion of some kind. In roughly 50 words, explain what that emotion is and why the design evokes it.

Blog Entry #4 (May 20)

Post 3 pictures of wayfinding branding. All three images must be of objects, images, or signs branding the same thing, but are distinct in some way. Explain in 100-ish words why the wayfinding branding is or is not successful. Also, post 3 pictures of different typography. In roughly 50 words for each typography photo, explain why you feel the typography choice is or is not effective for its intended message. Also, post 3 pictures (one per type) that describe each design type: visceral, behavioral, and reflective. In roughly 50 words for each, explain why that object's design fits its type for its user.

Blog Entry #5 (May 22)

Post two pictures in which color is used for wayfinding purposes. Post two pictures in which symbols are used for wayfinding purposes. Post four pictures of 3-dimensional wayfinding objects. Explain in roughly 25 words for each image why the design is or is not effective. Post one picture of an object designed for fun and pleasure. In roughly 50 words, explain what makes the design give pleasure.

Blog Entry #6 (May 29)

In a reflective essay between 300 and 400 words, consider what Norman describes about people places and things. Reflect on the readings from the two books in the course and make an argumentative summary of the value you see in information design in society. Post a picture if you'd like.

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BLOG PRESENTATIONS

Sign Up Sheet | Assignment Description

Due: On assigned date

Deliverable: Presentation, in class

Value: 10 points, 10% of overall grade

Assignment—On a date that you sign up for (see below), you will present to the class the topics of the reading for that class period. In a 5-minute presentation, you will be expected to articulate some of the main points in the reading and show the class the images of information design that you took for your respective blog entry

Blog Presentation #1 (May 8)

Blog Presentation #4 (May 20)

Blog Presentation #2 (May 13)

Blog Presentation #5 (May 22)

Blog Presentation #3 (May 15)



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INFORMATION DESIGN IN [SOCIETY]

Visual Reflective Analysis | Project Assignment Description

Due: May 29, in class

Deliverables: One visual analysis (format optional); presentation

Value: 30 points, 30% of overall grade

Assignment—As a final project to the course, you will identify a public space genre that you are interested in and do a comparison-contrast analysis of two places that fit the genre. You may choose department stores, grocery stores, museums, shopping malls, city centers, hospitals, or any other public space. Following the course readings, you will need to evaluate the following in each location:

- The categories of signs used
- Sign content and locations
- Evidence of branding and placemaking
- The typography and layout of information
- Colors used
- Symbols and maps used
- Forms, materials, and media chosen for communication
- Elements that evoke visceral, behavioral, and reflective reactions to the environments
- Elements used to evoke sentiments of pleasure, play, and fun (if any)

To do this assignment effectively, you will need to take numerous pictures of each design element that you are analyzing. You will then compile the images and your notes and put together your own information design piece, comparing the two locations. You may create a poster, booklet, map, infographic, or something else of your choosing; it just needs to be a physical document (not a Prezi, PowerPoint, or some other digital media—that is for the presentation). On the final day of class, you will give an informal, 5-minute presentation where you show us your pictures and compare and contrast the effectiveness of each location's information design.