History of Graphic Design (Art 4391/5391)

Term: *Spring*

Professor: Leila Yarian

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Office Hours: If you have any questions, need help, or would like to discuss anything school-related, please email me to set up a time to meet virtually.

Course Dates: Jan 1, 2026 - May 1, 2026

Course Times: M,T,W,Th,F

Classroom: Online/Canvas

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Course Overview

This course emphasizes the application of design thinking to research, develop, and produce an entrepreneurial design project, guiding students from initial research through concept development and final execution. When the course consists exclusively of graphic design students, the focus shifts to the creation and refinement of art and design products. In this context, the course aims to prepare designers for both freelance practice and passive income opportunities.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain major historical movements and key developments in graphic design.
- Identify and contextualize significant works of graphic design across diverse historical periods and cultures.
- Analyze the use and evolution of design elements, including typography, color, composition, and style, over time.
- Compare and contrast graphic design works from similar and differing historical contexts.
- Describe and evaluate major historical periods in graphic design and the contributions of influential designers.
- Critically analyze and assess graphic design examples using appropriate historical and visual analysis terminology.

Required Textbooks and Readings

Primary Textbook: Graphic Design History, by Johanna Drucker, Emily McVarish (2nd edition),

Publisher: Pearson, ISBN-13: 978-0205219469

Special Course Notes:

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance through Canvas Announcements. Please set up email notifications for your devices so that you can stay informed.

Course Structure

This is a fully online course organized into weekly modules. Modules open every Monday at 8:00 AM and each week include PowerPoint lectures, assigned readings, and multiple-choice quizzes. All quizzes are due by Sunday each week at 11:59 PM.

Throughout the semester, you will participate in four discussion boards, complete two individual hands-on creative activities, work on one group creative project, and complete a final research project. You will work both independently and collaboratively, depending on the assignment. Please refer to the Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates in the syllabus for detailed information.

Tips for Success in this Course

1. **Participate.** I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** I get it! Students usually juggle a lot, and I know you've got commitments beyond this class. Still, doing your best often means carving out enough dedicated time for coursework. Try scheduling specific blocks of time and ensure you have enough room to finish assignments, allowing extra space for any tech issues that might pop up.
3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts.
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with the instructor as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.
5. **Use Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable notifications to be sent instantly or daily. ([Canvas Notification Guide]

[Links to an external site.])

6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me and your classmates for support.

Graded Course Requirements Information

Weekly Reading (16 chapters)

- Each week, you will read one chapter from the course textbook. PowerPoint lectures are available through Canvas and are aligned with the weekly modules.

Be sure to review the textbook readings alongside the lecture materials before taking each quiz.

Quizzes (16 quizzes)

- Weekly quizzes (50 multiple-choice questions each) assess your understanding of the assigned textbook readings. Quizzes must be completed individually. Each quiz has a 2-hour time limit and is closed-book. You are allowed one attempt per quiz.

Discussion Board Participation (4 discussions)

Every three weeks, you will participate in one discussion board related to the previous readings. Detailed instructions can be found in the weekly modules and the Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates.

Quality participation requires:

- An initial post of 300–400 words

- Substantive responses to at least two classmates by the following week

Discussions are designed to help you connect theory to practice, share experiences, and build a learning community.

Individual Creative Work (1 Project)

(1 group project)

- You will complete two individual creative projects, each with a four-week timeline. Detailed rubrics and guidelines are available in Week 1 and Week 5 modules on Canvas.

Collaborative Creative Work (1 Project)

- In teams of 2–3 students, you will work on one collaborative creative project over six weeks. Detailed rubrics and guidelines are available in the Week 9 module on Canvas. This project allows you to explore design concepts collaboratively, apply historical knowledge to creative work, and practice teamwork and communication skills.

Research Project

- You will complete a research project over six weeks. Detailed instructions and guidelines are available in the Week 9 module on Canvas. This project allows you to explore a topic in graphic design history in depth, apply research skills, and connect theory to practice.

Final Exam

- There is no final quiz in this course. Your final grade is determined by your overall performance throughout the semester, including weekly quizzes, discussion board participation, individual creative projects, group work, and research projects. All assigned work is averaged to calculate your final course grade.

The goal of these course activities is to help students build a strong understanding of graphic design history through a balance of reading, analysis, discussion, and creative practice. Weekly readings and quizzes are designed to reinforce key concepts, terminology, and historical developments while encouraging consistent engagement with the course material. Discussion boards promote critical thinking, collaboration, and the ability to connect historical theory to contemporary design practice. Individual and collaborative creative projects allow students to apply historical knowledge to visual problem-solving, develop conceptual and technical skills, and practice working

independently and in teams. The research project supports deeper exploration of a specific topic in graphic design history, strengthening research, writing, and analytical skills while connecting theory to practice.

Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Personal Introduction	6%
Weekly Quiz	32%
Discussion Board	12%
Personal Creative Work	20%
Group Creative Work	10%
Total	**100%**

Grading Scale

Grade	Range	Notes
A	90 - 100%	Excellent (superior effort and results above and beyond)
B	80 - 89%	Good (significant effort and hard work)
C	70 - 79%	Average (minimal class requirements met)
D	60 - 69%	Below Average (below class average expectations)
F (Fail)	0 - 59%	Poor (inferior work and attitude)

Grades will be discussed on an individual basis by office appointment only. (virtual meeting)

Late Work and Make-Up Exams:

I understand that life happens and unexpected situations arise. Late assignments are accepted up to 3 days after the due date with a 10% deduction per day (10% off for 1 day late, 20% off for 2 days late, 30% off for 3 days late). After 3 days, assignments receive a zero unless you have communicated with me about extenuating circumstances. Each student has two "grace days" per semester that can be used for any assignment with no penalty, just let me know via email. Discussion board posts cannot be submitted late as they lose their collaborative value. If you experience emergencies or ongoing challenges, please contact me as early as possible so we can develop a plan together. **Makeup quizzes are not offered.**

AI (Artificial Intelligence) Policy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, or similar platforms) may be used only for grammar checking, proofreading, and revising your own writing. AI cannot be used to complete:

- Quizzes or exams

- Discussion board posts

- Individual or group creative projects

- Research projects or papers

All submitted work must reflect your own original ideas and effort. Using AI inappropriately to generate content for graded assignments will be considered academic dishonesty under UT Tyler policies.

If you use AI for writing revision, you must acknowledge it briefly in your work (for example: "AI-assisted grammar and editing used").

Attendance Policy (optional):

As this is an online asynchronous course, traditional attendance is not taken. However, "attendance" is reflected in your consistent engagement with course materials and timely completion of assignments. Logging in regularly (at least 3 times per week) and participating actively in discussions demonstrates your commitment to the course.

University Policies & Student Resources:

University policies and student resources are available on the University website and in Canvas under "Syllabus". (You may copy or print the following information to include in your syllabus or use the links provided below.)

- [University Policy](#)
- [Student Resources](#)

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

The table below provides a summary of course topics and due dates.

Please note that your instructor may update the schedule during the term due to unforeseen circumstances, such as student progress, emergency situations, or university holidays. You will receive the update through the Canvas announcement.

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The table below provides a summary of course topics and due dates.

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When	Date	Topic	Assignments and Due Dates
Week One	(1/12)	• Chapter one: From Prehistory to Early Writing 35,000–500 bce	• Introduction to the first individual creative work • Chapter one quiz
Week Two	(1/19)	• Chapter two: Classical Literacy 700 bce–400 ce	• Chapter two quiz
Week Three	(1/26)	• Chapter three: Medieval Letterforms and Book Formats 400–1450	• Introduction to the first discussion board • Chapter three quiz
Week Four	(2/2)	• Chapter four: Renaissance Design: Standardization and Modularization in Print 1450–1660	• Due date for the discussion board • Chapter four quiz
Week Five	(2/9)	• Chapter five: Modern Typography and the Creation of the Public Sphere 1660–1800	• Due date for the first individual creative work • Introduction to the second individual creative work • Chapter five quiz
Week Six	(2/16)	• Chapter six: The Graphic Effects of Industrial Production 1800–1850	• Chapter six quiz

Week Seven	(2/23)	• Chapter seven: Mass Mediation 1850–1900s	• Introduction to the second discussion board • Chapter seven quiz
Week Eight	(3/2)	• Chapter eight: Formations of the Modern Movement 1880s–1910s	• Due date for the second discussion board • Chapter eight quiz
Week Nine	(3/9)	• Chapter nine: Innovation and Persuasion 1910–1930	• Due date for the second individual creative work • Introduction to the creative group project • Introduction to the individual research project • Chapter nine quiz
Week Ten	(3/16)	• Chapter ten: The Culture of Consumption 1920s–1930s	• Chapter ten quiz
Week Eleven	(3/23)	• Chapter eleven: Public Interest Campaigns and Information Design 1930s–1950s	• Introduction to the third discussion board • Chapter eleven quiz
Week Twelve **Last day to withdraw the course.**	(3/30)	• Chapter twelve: Corporate Identities and International Style 1950s–1970s	• Due date for the third discussion board • Chapter twelve quiz
Week Thirteen	(4/6)	• Chapter thirteen: Pop and Protest 1960s–1970s	• Chapter thirteen quiz

Week Fourteen	(4/13)	• Chapter fourteen: Postmodernism in Design 1970s–1980s and Beyond	• Due date for the creative group project • Chapter fourteen quiz
Week Fifteen	(4/20)	• Chapter Fifteen: Digital Design 1970s–2000s	• Due date for the individual research project • Introduction to the fourth discussion board • Chapter fifteen quiz
Week Sixteen **(Final Class)**	(4/27)	• Chapter sixteen: Graphic Design and Globalization	• Due date for the fourth discussion board • Chapter sixteen quiz

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Note the last date to drop the course is included in the calendar along with the final exam date and time. These are required.

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Unit 1: Theory Y: Learning It				
Week #	*Date*	*Class Topic*	*Readings*	*Assignments Due*
Week 1	M 8/31	Why is ABCD important?	Syllabus	
	Wed 9/2	Module 1: Foundations of Theory Y	Textbook A, chapter 1 Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017), pg. 103	
	F 9/4	Module 1: Foundations of Theory Y	Textbook A, chapter 2	Meet with instructor
Week 2	M 9/7	Labor Day no class		
	W 9/9	Module 2: Testing Theory Y	Textbook A, chapter 3 Textbook B, pages 20-30	**Sept. 10 – last day to drop with W**
Final	**12/14**			**5:00 – 8:00 p.m.**