LAI XU

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

COLLEGIATE TEACHING

FALL 2020

Teaching Philosophy

As graphic design is a continuously evolving discipline alongside technology, politics, and culture, it is currently redefining. As such, I believe that graphic design education needs to be diverse. As I come from a multicultural background, my experience taught me the value of inclusion and diversity. By offering an approach to thinking through and making work rooted in historical and contemporary practices and graphic design theories, and contemporary art, my pedagogy is a hybrid space for self-directed research, critique, conversation, cross-pollination, and expansion. I committed to activating that space and inviting students to explore the points of contact between disciplines and media, and creating a learning environment for extended development, exposure, and conversation. To ensure an inclusive, diverse learning environment and studio culture, I will develop and promote a safe and respectful pedagogy. I intend to present materials and activities respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. Students' suggestions and feedback about improving the value of diversity are encouraged and appreciated.

I see myself as a mentor rather than a teacher. That means I give prompts rather than directions. I believe student-led critics and discussions are essential in my class. My teaching is dedicated to exploring, identifying, and implementing meaningful and sustainable design and art education alternatives. Through interconnected programs that include advanced typography workshops, in-depth discussion and critique of participant work and external exhibitions, partnering with local arts organizations, and a supplementary curriculum gleaned from public events and resources, I focus on a rigorous education. It will include identifying exemplary public and online events, courses, screenings, lectures, trips, discussions, and readings involving image, typography, infrastructure, sound, time, space, pedagogy, archives, and language while proposing and implementing supplements where necessary.

Inclusivity Statement

As I come from a multicultural background, I am privileged to work with talented individual ones from diverse backgrounds. As an educator and mentor, my experience taught me the value of inclusion and diversity. To ensure an inclusive learning environment and studio culture, I will develop and promote a safe and respectful atmosphere and teaching pedagogy. I intend to present materials and activities respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. All students are welcome if any student experiences or witnesses discomfort should share this with me. Additionally, I will provide a diverse resource list specifically of BIPOC designers and artists as primary learning sources for my students.

Three Proposed Course Descriptions

Introduction to Graphic Design: In the Making
Open to all major students.
3 credits, 15 students max.
Elective course.

This entry-level class is an introduction to Graphic Design—the making, manipulation, and understanding of the meaning of communication. Typical projects include the design and making both by hand and in digital and physical forms; creating a series of posters, designing a stationary system; and designing a short booklet; making a sound and sequential project. All images, whether photographic, icons, or illustrated, are created by the student. The course emphasizes concept, craft, and clarity of communication. Formulation of ideas and their transition into graphic form by way of the problem—solving techniques; exploration of various media. Emphasis on symbology and typography as significant components of developing graphic design language.

Form Studio
Open to Graphic Design major only.
3 credits, 15 students max.
Major required course.

Form Studio offers students a strong foundation in the making, assessing, and critiquing visual materials and begins a discussion that will reverberate through the rest of their studies. Students learn the use and structure of materials and media and develop a rigorous and disciplined process to create and analyze what they are making. Form studio will examine techniques and explore iterative methodologies for producing work—creating systems, tools, algorithms, and operations. Heavy emphasis will be placed on thinking through making in two and three-dimensional space. Students will use digital and analog tools to create projects that explore, critique, and interrogates the means of form making.

Graphic Design and Media
Open to Graphic Design major only.
3 credits, 12 students max.
Elective course.

In this studio and seminar course, students will explore the ideas of seminar context through making. At some level, the word "information" has become a new overload code of the media. Politicians, ideologies, religions, artists, celebrities, and countries are branded and sold to audiences as commodities. Our analytical goal is to investigate through this visual clutter of logos, slogans, and hidden persuasion to unravel the layered frames that result from the media makers. To access and understand the power, discourse, and financial resources through a history, epistemology, and the political economy of the image and the spectacle's society. Analysis and insights are used to design and make antidotes, parodies, and other alternative constructions. Students will be called upon to use communication and persuasion methods to create projects for socially positive ends.

Course Syllabus

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Course Goals
- To helps students better understand graphic design as a language.
- To learn how to integrate into the ideas and concepts, and translate the design voice and vocabulary to practical and conceptual projects.
- To focus on a holistic approach to visual communication by developing a comprehensive design system that utilizes print and digital media.
- To synthesize the poetic through research, strategy, conceptual thinking, and expansive form-making.
- To develop presentation skills, cultural/societal awareness, and the continued development of their unique design voice and process.
- To provide students with a greater conceptual and formal toolkit to take forward into their education and careers.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Understand the fundamentals of graphic design, form, typography, message, communication, etc. 20%
2. Development of a sense of authority, mastery, and criticality. Understanding how to do things, but also have the critical skills to question why. 20%
3. Exposure to historical and contemporary graphic design practices and theories. 20%
4. Exposure to different media, formats, and tools. 20%
5. Responsibly for concept, research, content development, and form. Understanding the role of authorship. 20%

Grading Scale
A   Outstanding performance and participation.
B   Good performance and participation.
C   Average performance and participation.
D   Low performance, course must be repeated in order to graduate.
F   Fail, inadequate, course must be repeated in order to graduate.

Presentation & Documentation
It's critical that work is presented in a logical and orderly manner. Consistency of presentation allows us as a class to focus on the work itself, and clearly track the evolution of experiments. All pieces should be clearly labelled with your name, date, and version. This should be true of your file names as well. Take this opportunity to make things easy for yourself and your biographers by instituting a system that allows you to know what's what. At the end of each project I will want some electronic record of the final piece. This can be a PDF, a photo, etc. But it's necessary to be in before the project is considered completed.

Participation
Each person in this class is expected to be both student and teacher. Through discussing our work and that of others, we develop the ability to talk convincingly about our output, a skill that you will rely on heavily throughout your career. This is a major part of your grade, but more importantly, it's the most direct way to prevent this class from being boring: to you, your peers, and, of course, to me. Like process and craft, this is a skill that grows easier through use.

Materials & Supplies
This class will employ a variety of materials in our explorations, and to some degree the only limit is your own imagination. But at the minimum, you will need access to a computer with Adobe Creative Cloud, a camera or phone camera, paper, drawing instruments, etc. For most classes, designs will need to be printed out in a consistent format and hung for presentation.

Resources

Designers	Readings and Websites
April Greiman	http://www.designer-daily.com
Braulio Amado	http://www.idea-mag.com/en/idea_magazine/
Chris Hamamoto	https://abcdinamo.com
Eréndida Mancilla	https://blazetype.eu
Federico Pérez Villoro	https://bold-decisions.biz
Guang Yu	https://boot-boyz.biz
Ikko Tanaka	https://creativecloud.adobe.com
Jessica Walsh	https://draw-down.com
Jon Sueda	https://eyeondesign.aiga.org
Jung Jinyeoul	https://graphicmag.kr
Karel Martens	https://klim.co.nz
Katsumi Asaba	https://medium.com
Laurel Schwulst	https://printedmatterartbookfairs.org
Luis Pinto	https://studio-index.co
Manolo Guerrero	https://thenounproject.com
Mindy Seu	https://walkerart.org/magazine
Minkyoung Kim	https://womenofgraphicdesign.org
Na Kim	https://www.aiga.org
Nod Young	https://www.colophon-foundry.org
Shiraz Gallab	https://www.dezeen.com/design/graphics/
Sophia Yeshi	https://www.grillitype.com
Sulki & Min	https://www.itsnicethat.com
Tadanori Yokoo	https://www.printedmatter.org
The Rodina	https://www.romapublications.org
Zhi-Hong Wang	https://www.wired.com/tag/graphic-design/

Course Plan

Week 1
Introductions and course overview.
In-class exercise prompt: Circle
Introduce Project 1: Form Project (4 weeks)
Choose object, begin object analysis.

Week 2
Project 1—20 compositions due
Group critique
Reading 1—*How to make a booklet?*

Week 3
Reading 1 discussion
Project 1—another 20 compositions due,
Individual desk critique

Week 4
Project 1 final—form booklet due,
Group critique
Reflection on Project 1 (500 words max),
due by the end of the semester.

Emerging Learning Outcomes
• Define what is form making.
• Understand the meaning of making.
• Recognize the importance of form making.

Week 5
Field Trip to a local design museum.
Introduce Project 2: Design History (4 weeks)
Initial research, early ideas.

Week 6
Project 2—draft/mockup design due,
Group critique
Reading 2—*History of Graphic Design*

Week 7
Reading 2 discussion
Project 2—black/white full-scale design due
Individual desk critique

Week 8
Project 2—color final design due,
Group critique
Reflection on Project 2 (500 words max),
due by the end of the semeter.

Developing Learning Outcomes
• Apply form making to graphic design history context.
• Analyze the topic of choice.
• Criticize the topic of choice.

Week 9
Guest Lecture on conceptual art.
Introduce Project 3: Sentences of Restriction (6 weeks)
Reading 3—*Sentences on Conceptual Art*
Read, choose one sentence from the reading.

Week 10
Project 3—choice of one sentence due
Discuss with your peers—why did you choose
that sentence?
In-class exercise prompt: Triangle

Week 11
Project 3—draft of first design due,
Group critique
Reading 4—*Restrictions*

Week 12
Reading 4 discussion
Project 3—draft of second design due,
Group critique

Week 13
Project 3—black/white design of combining first and
second design due,
Individual desk critique

Week 14
Project 4—black/white full-scale refined design due,
Speed dating format critique with peers
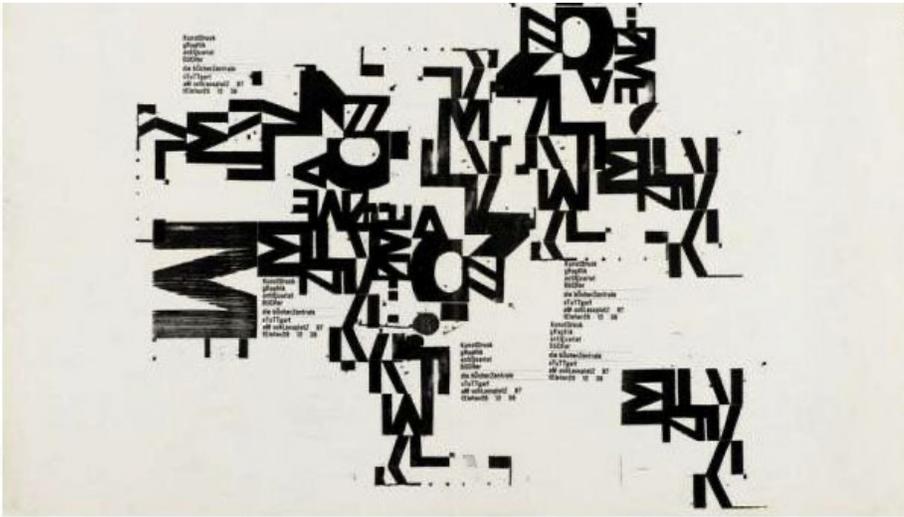
Week 15
Project 4—final presentation, final design due,
Guest critique
Reflection on Project 3 (500 words max),
due by the end of the semeter.

Emerging Learning Outcomes
• Construct a project based on restrictions.
• Synthesize two design ideas into one.
• Interpret the choice of the sentence through design.

Class Project

Sentences of Restriction
6 Weeks

Introduction
Sol LeWitt wrote Sentences on Conceptual Art (1969) at a time when artists were radically expanding notions of what art could be and what artists could do, with proclamations like "Ideas can be works of art" (Sentence #10). To expose this significant text to a larger public, artist John Baldessari improvised melodies to each of the 35 sentences in his 1972 video piece Baldessari Sings LeWitt.

1. *Sentences on Conceptual Art* www.altx.com/vizarts/conceptual.html
2. *Baldessari Sings LeWitt* www.ubu.com/film/baldessari_lewitt.html

Project Description
Inspired by Baldessari's intention to expose LeWitt's work to a larger public, you are asked to create 3 posters focusing on one of LeWitt's sentences. The amount of time for this project necessitates working fast, concentrating on broader conceptual moves rather than focussing on minute formal details. It means that you need to quickly establish certain restrictions for yourself to work within.
•   Should you use only one typeface?
•   Will photography or drawing be your medium?
•   Will you use a grid, or will chance operations determine your layouts?
•   Make note of your decisions and be prepared to discuss them.
•   Take inspiration from your chosen sentence.

Given Restrictions
•   You will make 3 posters.
    Each poster will be 24 x 36 inches, portrait.
•   Each poster will print black and white.
•   One poster will be purely typographic.
•   One poster will be imagery-based, no text.
•   The final poster will be a combination of two.
•   You will use one sentence from Sol Lewitt's Sentences on Conceptual Art as the text for your typographic poster.

Project Goal
- To helps students recontextualize the language of graphic design.
- To learn how to interpret the ideas and concepts and translate them to conceptual projects.
- To synthesize different design methodologies.
- To learn how to use restrictions and control design language.

Project Learning Outcomes
- Recognize the importance of form making.
- Apply form making to a specific graphic design context.
- Construct a project based on restrictions.
- Synthesize two design ideas into one.
- Interpret the choice of the sentence through design.

Restrictions
by Linda Van Deursen

Someone once said that design is always the product of a lot of restrictions, Charles Eames, I think, or maybe it was Charlie Chaplin—but it's exactly how it is, you can't overstate the role played by restrictions. But not only the ones that come with the job, I mean the given ones, the content, the budget, the time, your own limits, even the expectations of the client or whoever you are working with. They all restrict you. But I think that you then have to introduce a set of extra restrictions based on these, that in a way protect you from them. I think it's here that you in fact find all the decisions you need. The size, the format, whether to use color or only black and white, whether to use images and type or just type.

It's a way of setting up rules to a game you are about to play. Rules that create the game.

And the clearer the rules, the more fun it is in fact to play.
Because it's not about wanting to be dogmatic or something less free, it's the opposite. By knowing what the rules are, or are the limits, you seem to get a better sense of the possibilities. You react more quickly and you make decisions more easily and effectively. You look for all the possibilities for freedom within those restrictions, and you play them out.

It might not be so immediately apparent with our work, but I see a lot of similarities with Lars von Trier's Dogme manifesto, where the game is so clearly defined. Or with Alexander Sokurov's film Russian Ark; again a very clear set of restrictions: to make a feature-length movie with a single take in a single location.

These things really interest me. And to make it work you have to be not only continually inventive, but to keep an incredibly free mind. Restrictions con-tribute to a search for a kind of freedom, an openness, or to responses that are looser or unpredictable, so that a kind of living voice is kept alive in the work, somewhere between what you want to do and what you cannot do.

Sentences on Conceptual Art
by Sol Lewitt

1. Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.
2. Rational judgments repeat rational judgments.
3. Irrational judgments lead to new experience.
4. Formal art is essentially rational.
5. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.
6. If the artist changes his mind midway through the execution of the piece he compromises the re-sult and repeats past results.
7. The artist's will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His wilfulness may only be ego.
8. When words such as painting and sculpture are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a conse-quent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on the artist who would be reluctant to make art that goes beyond the limitations.
9. The concept and idea are differ-ent. The former implies a general direction while the latter is the component. Ideas implement the concept.
10. Ideas can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.
11. Ideas do not necessarily proceed in logical order. They may set one off in unexpected directions, but an idea must necessarily be completed in the mind before the next one is formed. For each work of art that be-comes physical there are many variations that do not.
12. A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewer's. But it may nev-er reach the viewer, or it may never leave the artist's mind.
13. The words of one artist to an-other may induce an idea chain, if they share the same concept.
14. Since no form is intrinsically superior to another, the artist may use any form, from an expression of words (written or spoken) to physi-cal reality, equally.
15. If words are used, and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature; num-bers are not mathematics.
16. All ideas are art if they are con-cerned with art and fall within the conventions of art.
17. One usually understands the art of the past by applying the conven-tion of the present, thus misunder-standing the art of the past.
18. The conventions of art are al-tered by works of art.
19. Successful art changes our un-derstanding of the conventions by altering our perceptions.
20. Perception of ideas leads to new ideas.
21. The artist cannot imagine his art, and cannot perceive it until it is complete.
22. The artist may misperceive
23. (understand it differently from the artist) a work of art but still be set off in his own chain of thought by that misconstrual.
24. Perception is subjective.
25. The artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His percep-tion is neither better nor worse than that of others.
26. An artist may perceive the art of others better than his own.
27. The concept of a work of art may involve the matter of the piece or the process in which it is made.
28. Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. There are many side effects that the artist cannot imagine. These may be used as ideas for new works.
29. The process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.
30. There are many elements involved in a work of art. The most important are the most obvious.
31. If an artist uses the same form in a group of works, and changes the material, one would assume the art-ist's concept involved the material.
32. Banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution.
33. It is difficult to bungle a good idea.
34. When an artist learns his craft too well he makes slick art.
35. These sentences comment on art, but are not art.

Course Evaluation

Course Goals
- To helps students better understand graphic design as a language.
- To learn how to integrate into the ideas and concepts, and translate the design voice and vocabulary to practical and conceptual projects.
- To focus on a holistic approach to visual communication by developing a comprehensive design system that utilizes print and digital media.
- To synthesize the poetic through research, strategy, conceptual thinking, and expansive form-making.
- To develop presentation skills, cultural/societal awareness, and the continued development of their unique design voice and process.
- To provide students with a greater conceptual and formal toolkit to take forward into their education and careers.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the following questions.

1. The instructor's ability to communicate subject matter.

    (strongly disagree)   1   2   3   4   5   (strongly agree)

2. The clarity of course objectives.

    (strongly disagree)   1   2   3   4   5   (strongly agree)

3. The instructor helps students to generate enthusiasm and curiosity.

    (strongly disagree)   1   2   3   4   5   (strongly agree)

4. Students are encouraged to participate and feel that my opinions are valued.

    (strongly disagree)   1   2   3   4   5   (strongly agree)

5. The instructor encourages the students to participate in critical thinking.

    (strongly disagree)   1   2   3   4   5   (strongly agree)

6. What is the most valued thing you have learned so far?

7. What are some areas of improvement in the instructor's teaching methods?

8. Any additional comments and questions?

Grading Rubric

	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
Concept	Display the evidence of understanding the conceptual ideas and design theories.	Display the evidence of excellent understanding the conceptual ideas and design theories.	Display the evidence of excellent understanding the conceptual ideas and design theories, and go beyond what was explored in the class.
Form	Projects show creative attributes. The student did demonstrate effective critical thinking skills.	Projects show some unique and creative attributes. The student demonstrated weak critical thinking skills.	Projects show unique and creative attributes. The student demonstrated effective critical thinking skills.
Craft	Projects have imperfections that create minor distractions.	Projects may have slight imperfections, but they are not immediately obvious.	Projects have no obvious evident imperfections. Craftmanship is clean and neat.
Participation	Student rarely contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions and/or works on group project only some of the allotted time.	Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and/or asks questions once per class and/or works on group project for most of the allotted time.	Student proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and/or asks questions more than once per class and/or works consistently on group project the entire time.

Critique Statement

Critiques

Critiques can be challenging. It is never easy to hear criticism of our work, and it is a skill to be able to comment on your peers' work clearly and insightfully. Nonetheless, critiques are what push us all to become better designers. This course will encourage you to make your work better up to the last possible minute before it is due. Design is subjective, and so essentially, a project is never really finished or perfect. That is why we have deadlines—so we stop trying in vain to perfect our work and move on.

It is important that you take the time to prepare the presentations of your work. Being able to verbalize why you think your work is valid, effective, or matters is an important skill that is often the deciding factor in getting a client to approve your design ideas.

Furthermore, it is essential that you are able to talk about your peers' work in a constructive, insightful, specific, and—most importantly—honest way. Your peers' work does not improve without your comments. Challenging each other to do better is how you will all become better designers. Think of your feedback not as criticism but as your contribution to everyone's learning in the class.

Please consider the following questions as guidance.
- Why should you critique someone else's work for them?
- Where do you start?
- Know how to give constructive criticism.
- What are some tools you can use?
- Know when to draw the line.

What Do We Critique?
- Content: Does it make sense? Where does the content come from?
- Formal Characteristics: Composition, Imagery, Type/Image relationships, etc.
- The Relationship between Form and Content: Does the form reflect its content visually? Is the form appropri-ate for the subject matter? Does it need to?
- Craft: Is the work beautifully and carefully constructed?
- Process: Did the designer exploit the process enough?
- Cultural Issues: What are the different cultural implications? How does it function within different cultures? What does the piece reveal about the culture?
- Audience: Who are they? Would they go for it? Do we care?
- Ethics: Does the piece raise ethical concerns?
- Engagement: Does the piece actually engage people, make them think, provoke action, instill passion?

Critique Formats We Will Use
- Single critique
- Group critique
- Individual desk critiques
- Guest critic
- Speed dating
- Gossip
- Interview
- Love letter