OBJECTIVE
To lay a foundation for understanding and informed criticism of visual and informational artifacts as well as the methods of devising effective communication strategies.

OVERVIEW
Visual design is concerned with the invention of useful and beautiful products that mediate and facilitate communication. At its full potential, it has the ability to teach, to please, and to move. Communication is not a problem newly discovered in our time. However, the understanding of the problems of communication and methods of inquiry for arriving at appropriate solutions have become increasingly important in the contemporary culture. The need for effective communication is evident once we consider the wide presence and impact of digital and non-digital products in our everyday experiences. Examples span a wide range: from road signs to political campaigns, shopping lists to hypermedia applications.

The purpose of this course is to lay a foundation for better understanding communication that’s mediated by visual artifacts as well as the methods of designing effective communication pieces. To this end, we will begin with a brief introduction to the grammar of visual design. We will look at the elements that make up the vocabulary of visual communication such as line, space, color, images, and type. In addition, we will study the principles of composition that bind these elements to create a unified whole. After this study, we will focus on understanding visual communication from a rhetorical perspective. We will seek to understand how communication products relate to the audience who experience them in a specific context and their social and cultural significance. We will also look at human centered design exploring the relationship of communication design and interaction design. We will wrap up with a discussion of what is meant by good design, touching on issues related to the role of design in culture and design ethics.

Learning Outcomes
• Understand basic theoretical foundations of visual design and communication.
• Understand information design artifacts as reasoned and persuasive arguments that are audience specific and situated.
• Use the theories and topics presented in this course to identify the problems and analyze the issues of information artifacts in the respective rhetorical and problematic contexts.
• Create digital artifacts with an awareness of history, audience, and context.

CLASS POLICIES
Evaluation
This course consists of discussions of selected readings, studio/critique sessions, and a set of projects.
Grades will be determined based on the following:

Project Assignments: 70%
Readings: 30%
Extra 10%: active sketchbook; blog posts; and other individual explorations and contributions to class

* Also, see note on attendance

Attendance
Due to a significant amount of in-class material and work, prompt attendance and active participation in class discussions and group critiques is required. Three absences are allowed. After that, your grade will drop by one letter grade with every two absences. You will only earn a failing grade if you are absent for 6 sessions or more.

Projects and Assignments
Be sure to hand in your work in time. If you deliver your project later than the due date, your grade on that project will fall one letter grade. If you deliver your work more than one week after the due date, you will not earn any credit for it.

Readings
As you can see under grading section, I put a great emphasis on your preparation and participation in class. All of you are required to read the assigned papers/book sections and be ready to discuss them in class. In addition, I will be making you in charge of some of the readings in class in which case you will be required to open and lead the class discussion.

Communication
I will use email as means of communication for this course. It is your responsibility to check email often to obtain information related to the course. T-square is also used heavily for communication in class. Make sure to update the settings on your t-square page so you will receive automatic emails about announcements, readings, and assignments. You are responsible for all announcements made in class, via email or t-square.

Office Hours
Mondays 10:00 – 11:00. You can always request a meeting by email.

Information for Students with Disabilities
Please notify the instructor if you have any disabilities with which you need special assistance or consideration. The campus disability assistance program can be contacted through ADAPTS: http://www.adapts.gatech.edu

Honor Code Statement:
Students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code: honor.gatech.edu

READINGS

Required
**Supplementary Readings**

This course is inspired and informed by the following readings. Selections will be distributed in class for discussion.


Dewey, John. *Art as Experience.* (1934)


**SOFTWARE & SUPPLIES**

**Software**

We will be doing most of the early work using paper and pencil as well as Adobe Suite and Flash. Later in the course, we will use mapping and visualization software as appropriate for specific group projects. While most of the software are available at Georgia Tech library, the students are responsible for accessing the software and not the course. It is also important to note that this is not a class on the software. While there will be tutorial sessions, I recommend that you consult the software help files, available books, or online material if you need more help using the software.

**Supplies**

A sketchbook & pencil
Steel ruler
Portable flash drive
Tracing paper
8.5”x11” paper
Black mounting board
Spray Mount Adhesive
X-acto knife
COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Grammar of Design

Week 1, Jan 5
Course Overview
Project 1: Type and Meaning
Tutorial: Introduction to Adobe Creative Suite

Week 2, Jan 12
Typography
Reading: Thinking with Type
“The Power of Punctuation,” Martin Solomon
Project 1: Type and Meaning
Tutorial: Introduction to Flash
* Viewing: HELVETICA

Week 3, Jan 19
Composition
Official School Holiday
Project 1: Type and Meaning [due, Fri, Jan 24]
Tutorial: Introduction to Flash

* Recommended Readings:
“Emil Ruder: A Future for Design Principles in Screen Typography”, Kenna
“Writing with Complex Type” Lewis & Nadeau

Week 4, Jan 26
Grids
Reading: Thinking with Type
Project 2: Informational Poster
Tutorial: Adobe Creative Suite

Week 5, Feb 2
Design Languages
Reading: TBD
Project 2: Informational Poster* [due, Wednesday, Feb 26]
Tutorial: Adobe Creative Suite

Part II. Rhetoric of Design

Week 6, Feb 9
Visual Design :: Representation
Reading: TBD; Isotypes
Project 2: Informational Poster
Tutorial: TBD
TED talk: “The best stats you’ve ever seen,” Hans Rosling
TED talk: “The big idea my brother inspired,” Jamie Heywood

* Project 2 is in collaboration with MARCUS Autism Center and the Georgia Head Start Association.
Week 7, Feb 16

**Visual Design :: Selection, Organization, and Interpretation**

*Reading*: TBD
*Project 3*: Informational Poster
*Viewing*: Maya Lin, A Strong Clear Version
*Tutorial*: TBD

* Recommended Reading/Viewing: “One Man. One Cat. Multiplied” Blogpost By [Robert Krulwich](https://www.npr.org/); Friday, December 20, 2013 - 06:27 AM

Week 8, Feb 23

**Visual Design :: Selection, Organization, and Interpretation**

*Discussion*: Data
*Project 3*: Informational Poster [DUE]
*Tutorial*: Mapping and Visualization
*Listening*: This American Life; Episode 110: Mapping (SEP 4, 1998)

Week 9, Mar 2

**Visual Design :: Inquiry**

*Readings*: “Affordances of the Digital Medium” from Inventing the Medium (chapter 2), Janet Murray
“The System Diagrams: Shifting Perspectives”, Jun, Kim, Lee
“Models of Models”, Hugh Dubberly
*Project 3*: Interactive Visual Argument
*Tutorial*: Mapping and Visualization

Week 10, Mar 9

**Visual Design :: Rhetoric and Deliberation**

*Readings*: “Rhetoric, Humanism, and Design”, Buchanan
“Shaping Belief: The Role of Audience in Visual Communication,” Ann C. Tyler
*Project 3*: Interactive Visual Argument*
*Tutorial*: Mapping and Visualization

* Recommended Reading: “The Rhetorical Stance,” Wayne Booth
Robin Kinross, “The Rhetoric of Neutrality”

Week 11, Mar 16

SPRING BREAK

Week 12, Mar 23

**Visual Design :: Community and Unity**

*Readings*: TBD
TED talk: “Visualizing ourselves ... with crowd-sourced data,” Aaron Koblin
*Project 3*: Interactive Visual Argument
*Tutorial*: Mapping and Visualization
Week 13, Mar 30

**Project 3**

Critiques

Week 14, Apr 6

**Part III. Summary and Conclusion**

Readings: TBD
Project 3: Interactive Visual Argument

Week 15, Apr 13

**Project 3**

Critiques

Week 16, Apr 20

**Project 3**

Final Presentations