

MEDA 116-01 Graphic Design I

Catalog Description

In this introductory course, students will explore the many ways in which graphic design is used to enhance meaning, add value, and achieve desired outcomes with print and electronic communications. Using professional software applications, students will become conversant in many fundamental principles and techniques in the field of graphic design. This course counts toward Artistic Practice and Creative Processes (APCP) 4 credits.

Course Overview

Graphic Design 1 is your introduction to visual thinking and design foundations. This course teaches you to see, interpret, and understand the visual world—developing visual literacy that enables you to structure and communicate meaning through form. You will learn to read aesthetic choices critically, distinguish between effective and manipulative visual communication, and recognize the markers of AI-generated imagery and visual misinformation. Unlike courses that start with software tutorials, we begin with your eyes and hands—learning to observe visual relationships, understand how perception works, and build compositional intuition through physical making. This analog-first approach is intentional. Working with paper, scissors, glue, collage materials, and hand-drawn grids develops design thinking that software cannot teach. Physical materials force you to slow down, experiment without fear of ‘undo,’ and discover solutions through tactile exploration. You’ll spend the first half of each project working by hand—cutting shapes, arranging compositions, sketching symbols, creating physical collages—before translating your understanding to digital tools. This method produces designers who understand form at a fundamental level, not just those who know software. It also trains your eye to recognize the difference between human-made and algorithmically-generated visuals—a critical skill in an era of widespread AI imagery.

Objectives

- Apply elements and principles of design through physical composition
- Use Gestalt principles to organize space
- Demonstrate visual hierarchy through scale, contrast, and alignment
- Translate abstract concepts into simplified visual forms
- Develop system thinking (consistency and cohesion)
- Construct meaning through image juxtaposition
- Apply typographic hierarchy and grid systems
- Practice ethical image sourcing and representation
- Engage in an iterative process and thoughtful critique
- Document and reflect on creative growth

Design Process

Work during and outside designated class hours will be required to achieve knowledge of typography as well as develop creative solutions to class projects. Each project requires a well-organized notebook of your process, to be handed in with your project on the due date. Each notebook will contain visual, written, and material research such as thumbnails, pencil and marker sketches, in-process printouts, critique notes and comments that led to your solutions. You will need all of this material for your process book at the end of the semester.

Required Materials

Storage Media; secondary regular backups are critical, make a devoted practice of using them, as lost files will not be a valid excuse.

Adobe Creative Cloud
(Illustrator & InDesign)
Sketchbook
Graph paper
pencils & erasers
micron pens (or similar)
Ruler

Recommended Textbooks

Thinking with Type
Author: Ellen Lupton

Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out
How Type Works
Author: Erik Spiekermann

Making and Breaking the Grid: A Graphic
Design Layout Workshop
Author: Timothy Samara

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Apply elements and principles of design through physical composition
- Use Gestalt principles to organize space
- Demonstrate visual hierarchy through scale, contrast, and alignment
- Translate abstract concepts into simplified visual forms
- Develop system thinking (consistency and cohesion)
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- Practice ethical image sourcing and representation
- Engage in an iterative process and thoughtful critique
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Artistic Practice and Creative Process Requirements

The Artistic Practice and Creative Process requirement provides students with the opportunity to study and practice the ways that creativity, imagination, and personal expression are important ways to engage with the world and empower oneself. Courses satisfying this requirement will develop students' understanding of creative expression through the practices of making art in a variety of modes.

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

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
2. Convey meaning through the presentation of their own artistic work
3. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
4. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences

Graphic Design Learning Outcomes

This course supports the following Graphic Design Program Learning Outcomes:

1. **Visual communication proficiency**
Demonstrate proficiency in visually communicating ideas and narratives through fundamental design principles, typography, color theory, and layout skills
2. **Audience-centered design**
Produce effective visual communication solutions tailored to specific audiences and contexts, informed by an understanding of the human elements influencing design.
3. **Iterative design process**
Demonstrate iterative design processes to solve visual communication problems creatively throughout the ideation process.
4. **Multi-faceted design approach**
Demonstrate a multifaceted design approach that integrates design history, theory, and criticism through diverse viewpoints, recognizing design's societal and cultural implications.
5. **Professional tools & standards**
Effectively employ appropriate tools and technologies to create and distribute visual messages in alignment with industry standards and practices

Policies

Attendance policy

Attendance is expected to learn the course material and will be taken daily. Please arrive on time and plan to stay, unless notified otherwise. Late arrival and leaving early will count as an absence. More than three absences will automatically lower the final grade. Studio time is built into our class meetings. This is an opportunity to obtain feedback during work process.

Assignment policy

Assignment sheets will be handed out for each project, describing the project parameters in detail and providing interim and final due dates. Pay attention to the constraints of the assignment, so that your time and effort are used effectively. Assignments may be resubmitted until accepted. Projects may be reworked for the final portfolio.

Conduct policy

A studio setting is conducive for an informal atmosphere, with student interaction an expected benefit. Please keep the focus on the task at hand too, and be respectful of your classmates and their work. Refrain from unrelated browsing or cell phone usage.

Communication policy

There are times when I'll need to reach the class for special announcements, due date changes, etc. It is required that you maintain and check your email. Changes will take place on Moodle.

Generative AI Prohibited Use

Generative AI tools are not permitted for any aspect of work in this class at any time. If you use these tools, your actions would be considered academically dishonest and a violation of Pacific's Code of Academic Conduct. [Adapted from Bryant University. <https://cte.bryant.edu/sample-syllabus-statements-regarding-ai-and-chat-gpt%E2%99%BC/>].

Attendance/General Notices

Students are expected to attend every class and to be on-time for class. If you miss more than 3 classes, you may reconsider taking this class until you have time. Missing 3 classes will result in a lower letter grade. Students who miss a lecture or studio session are expected to get notes, etc. from another student.

Critique attendance

Critique sessions are an important part of graphic design. Participation will be noted and applied to your grade. *Do not ever miss a critique!* You may continue to work on your projects following the critique.

Course information, assignments, grades and project details will be on Moodle.

Analog Process and Technology in class

This course prioritizes analog, hands-on work. Research shows that physical making develops different cognitive skills than screen-based design, including spatial reasoning, material understanding, and rapid iteration abilities. For this reason, phones and computers will NOT be permitted during most class sessions unless specifically required for an activity.

Technology Rules:

- **Phones:** Must be silenced and put away in bags unless needed for documentation (photography). No texting, social media, or messaging during class. Using your phone during lectures or demonstrations is disrespectful and will affect your participation assessment.
- **Laptops:** NOT permitted during lectures, discussions, or analog work sessions UNLESS specifically instructed. When we transition to digital work (varies by project), you will be told when to open laptops. Laptop use during hands-on sessions defeats the purpose of analog exploration.
- **Video:** No recordings of the class in any fashion without written and signed permission from the instructor and the recording device is visible to everyone in the classroom.
- **Digital work sessions:** When working digitally, stay on-task. No social media, messaging, email, shopping, or homework for other classes. Headphones only during designated work time and only after asking permission.
- **Documentation:** Cameras/phones ARE permitted for documenting your work, process, and physical prototypes. This is encouraged and necessary for portfolio development.
- **Music:** Feel free to listen to music (earbuds) during studio/work time. However, do not use earbuds or listen to music during demonstrations or lectures.

Creative Warm-up attendance

Each class meeting will begin with a short creative warm-up (5-10 minutes)

1. Cognitive priming ("student mode to maker mode") The brain needs a transition. Warm-ups activate hands, eyes, and creative intuition before students can engage meaningfully with lecture content. This is backed by research on cognitive load and state-switching — you can't design well in the same mental mode you use to drive to class.
2. Experiential learning before conceptual instruction Every warm-up connects to that day's lecture topic. Students experience the concept first, then you name and theorize it.
3. Low-stakes risk-taking. Graded on completion only, never quality. This is intentional — it creates permission to fail, experiment, and try strange things without consequence.
4. Building observational skills Many prompts ask students to notice, translate, or abstract physical experience — sounds, textures, sensations, time. Observation is the core skill underneath all of interaction design.
5. Attendance — built into the work. No late submissions, lowest 2 dropped automatically. It's an accountability structure.

University Policies

Moodle

We will use Moodle as the learning management system this semester. All materials, readings, design briefs, and due dates will be available. Additionally, digital copies of each project will be submitted on Moodle by the due date. NOTE: late assignments will not be accepted.

Academic Misconduct

Pacific University has no tolerance for academic misconduct/cheating. It is university policy that all acts of misconduct and dishonesty be reported to the Dean. Sanctions imposed for such misconduct may include "F" for the assignment, an "F" for the course, and suspension or dismissal from the university. Forms of academic misconduct include but are not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, tampering with grades, forging signatures, and using electronic information resources in violation of acceptable use policies.

Support Services for Students with Learning Differences

Pacific is committed to ensuring equitable access and success for all students with disabilities. The Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA) located in Clark Hall Room 227, coordinates academic adaptations and services for students with disabilities. You can submit accommodation requests through the Student Accommodate portal (pacificu-accommodate.simplicity.com/). Accommodations are not implemented retroactively and students must request accommodations through OAA's Getting Started process as soon as possible. If you have, or believe to have a disability that qualifies for accommodations, please contact OAA at oaapacificu.edu or 503-352-2194 or visit our website OAA for more information.

The Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS)

The Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS), operated by the Pacific University Libraries, offers free peer tutoring to undergraduate, graduate, and professional program students. CLASS provides both individual and group tutoring. Tutoring is available online, and in-person at the Forest Grove and Hillsboro campuses (location is program-dependent). To make an appointment and learn more about how tutoring works, visit the CLASS webpage: pacificu.edu/CLASS.

Unauthorized Recordings

Students are prohibited from making audio and/or visual recordings of lectures or presentations without prior consent of the instructor or presenter.

Class Recordings and Student Privacy Protections
If the format of this class will involve the recording of "live" lectures, reviews, and discussion sections that will be posted for subsequent viewing by students or course instructors, these recordings are for educational purposes only and will be made available only to students enrolled in the course, those who have direct teaching responsibilities within the course, or administrators who may require access to ensure that the course runs smoothly.

To safeguard FERPA protections (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), any class recordings where an active student participant can be identified will be placed in a password protected location where only enrolled students, course instructors, and any persons with an educational role in the course have access (i.e. Box, Moodle). All efforts will be made to limit access to the recordings through limiting the option to download the recording. No distribution of material is acceptable without the written consent of the student(s) recorded, as this violates student privacy rights. This includes, but is not limited to, the downloading and distribution of material outside of those outlined above. Students likewise should respect their peers' privacy rights and refrain from distributing or making available any part of recorded sessions that records participation by students other than themselves.

Media Arts Department Door Access Policy

You are being provided with an access code to the exterior entrance (located on the south side of the building) and the four doors in the department's facilities (Walter Hall rooms B4, B7, B8, B10, and B11). For the time being, the same code is being used for all doors. This code is good until the last day of final exams in the current term.

Important dates

Aug 31: First Day of Class
Sept 7: Labor Day (no courses)
Sept 14: Last day to add/drop courses with no record
Oct 2: Fall Break (no courses)
Oct 5: Advising begins
Nov 6: Last day to withdraw course
Nov 11: Veteran's Day (no courses)
Nov 25-27 Thanksgiving Break
Dec 8: Last day of classes
Dec 15: Final 3:00 to 5:30 pm

Assessment & Grading Policies

MEDA 116
Graphic Design 1

Fall 2026

7:55 AM - 9:30 AM
Tuesday, Thursday
4 credits

Philosophy: Assessment as Reflection

Design learning is not linear. A finished piece is only one moment in a longer process of observation, iteration, failure, and growth — and a number cannot capture that. In this course, assessment tools exist to help you understand where you are and where you are going, not to rank or sort you.

Grading policy

Projects are assessed by the following criteria, each assigned a value between 1 and 4

(1 is low, 4 is high, x 4 for a max of 16).

These criteria give you a shared language for honest self-assessment and constructive peer feedback.

The rubric is a mirror, not a measure. Your final grade emerges from evidence of growth across the semester: your portfolio, your process, your self-evaluation, and our conversation at the end of term.

T technique (craftsmanship, neatness, exactitude, finesse, technical skills)

L layout (composition, legibility, readability, spatial relationships, use of design principles and elements)

C concept (quality and originality of ideas, appropriateness, creativity)

E effort (research, sketches, process, feedback)

Projects will be graded based on skill mastery. Each of these skills are assessed as emerging (1), developing (2), proficient (3), mastery (4). These are not your grades for the assignment, but are used to determine your progress. *It is mandatory that you attend and participate in feedback critiques* through oral and/or written feedback. When a project is finished, you may continue to work on the project for your final portfolio. Your final grade for the project will be determined by the portfolio representation of the project.

Your minor assignments and exercises will not result in a grade. However, you are expected to fulfill the assignment criteria and seek feedback in the form of postings on Moodle or in class feedback from students and faculty. Submissions will be provided with feedback and o/1 (not received / received). A "o" indicates that more work is necessary, and a "1" indicates that the work is accepted and can move on to the next stage. Your final grade for exercises and assignments will be determined by satisfactory completion (i.e. completing 9/10 would equate 90%).

Final grades will be determined by your effort and growth in the course, your final portfolio and process book, conferences, and self-evaluation. Grades are a reflection of the effort put forth. I look for students who take risks, keep exploring, try new things and go back and improve projects after we review them. I want students to develop a love and a passion for design. Please note: your effort, growth, and experimentation will greatly impact your success.

Final Grading

- Portfolio Projects (including documentation of research, sketches, and growth): 70%
- Exercises and Assignments (completed on time to satisfaction): 10%
- Professionalism (attendance, engagement, effort, and timeliness) 10%
- Final Portfolio (layout, structure, self-reflection): 10%

Late Assignment policy

Design is a professional field with determined deadlines and expectations of professionalism, this course will have similar expectations. If you miss a deadline with a client, you can lose a job or client, here, you will miss points. Consider this training for your future design role. Late work will not be accepted - all work is due at the start of class time unless otherwise specified.

All work is due at the start of class on the specified date, unless otherwise noted. If you know in advance that you will not meet a deadline:

1. Notify the instructor within 48 hours of the due date.
2. An agreed-upon extension of up to seven days will be set.
3. Work submitted after the agreed date will not be accepted.

A Note on Software & Tools

This is not a software technology course. You will be introduced to relevant tools and given demonstrations, but you are responsible for developing technical fluency independently. Design tools change rapidly — the skill that matters most is knowing how to learn a new one.

When you encounter a technique you don't know: look it up. Use helpx.adobe.com, YouTube tutorials, LinkedIn Learning, or office hours. The ability to teach yourself is as important as any design skill you will develop in this program.

Scores

These scores are not your grade. They are a progress map — a starting point for reflection and conversation, not a verdict.

You may continue to develop any project for your final portfolio. Your portfolio grade is based on where the work ends up, not where it started.

Minor assignments and exercises are not graded. They are learning tools — low-stakes opportunities to practice, experiment, and receive feedback before higher-stakes project work.

Communication

Proactive communication is always valued over silence. Life happens — if something significant is going on, reach out before the deadline, not after. Extensions are handled case by case, at the instructor's discretion, and with the expectation of professional communication.

Projects

Four distinct learning modules divide the semester, each with a dedicated project and smaller exercises that support the module objectives. These major projects are the primary evidence of learning

1. Seeing and Structuring: composition, balance, tension, and hierarchy through pure abstraction — the relationship between form and space without representation
2. Symbol and Semiotics: reduction, system thinking, and the visual logic of signs — how meaning is carried by the simplest possible form
3. Narrative and Composition: conceptual image-making, ethical sourcing, photographic juxtaposition, and the integration of type and image
4. Type and Hierarchy: editorial design, grid systems, typographic hierarchy, and multi-page layout across a self-directed subject

Projects with Concepts

1. Black Square Studies

- Elements and Principles of Design
- Gestalt Theory
- Figure / Ground
- Positive and Negative Space
- Compositional Hierarchy
- Balance, Tension, and Rhythm
- Analog-First Process

2. Symbol System Series

- Semiotics: Icon, Index, Symbol
- Reduction and Abstraction
- System Logic and Visual Consistency
- Legibility at Scale
- Cultural Legibility
- Vector Precision

3. Imagined Realities Poster

- Visual Narrative and Juxtaposition
- Image Ethics and Attribution
- Photomontage and Compositing
- Emotional Priming
- Type-Image Integration
- Conceptual Development

4. Something You Know — Mini Zine

- Editorial Design
- Grid Systems
- Typographic Hierarchy
- Multi-Page Layout and Pacing
- Text Wrap and Image Integration
- InDesign Production

Required Software

Adobe Illustrator (Projects 1 and 2)
Adobe Photoshop (Project 3)
Adobe InDesign (Project 4 and Process Portfolio)
Required Materials
Black construction paper
X-Acto knife and cutting mat
Ruler and graph paper
Sketchbook (dedicated to this course)
Pencils, micron pens
Storage media — back up constantly

Project 1 Black Square Studies

Before you can design with meaning, you must learn to see. The first act of design is not making—it is looking. How do elements relate to one another? What happens when a single shape moves from the center of a field to its edge? These questions do not have verbal answers. They have visual ones. In this project, you will discover them with your hands

Overview

Using only a black square on a white field, you will compose a series of abstract studies that explore the fundamental principles of visual design: balance, tension, rhythm, scale, and hierarchy. The square is your only element. The composition is your problem.

You will begin by working by hand—cutting shapes from black paper and arranging them on a white ground. Physical making precedes digital work. This is intentional: the method of cutting and physically moving paper will show you nuances in the composition that you may miss on the screen. It also allows you to work quickly and make small changes quickly.

Your final series will consist of six compositions, each exploring a distinct principle. These six must be translated to digital vector format. The series must function as a coherent body of work with consistent scale and presentation.

Objectives

- Develop visual literacy through direct observation and compositional experimentation
- Understand how spatial relationships—proportion, tension, balance, proximity—create meaning without representation
- Build an analogue-first design practice: hand-making as a mode of thinking
- Translate physical compositions to precise digital execution using Adobe Illustrator
- Develop habits of documentation and iterative reflection

Procedure

1. Cut a series of black squares in varying sizes from construction paper. Begin composing on white grounds without a plan—let your eye lead.
2. Produce a minimum of twenty small hand compositions in your sketchbook. Annotate each: what principle does it explore? What is the visual effect?
3. Select six to ten of the strongest studies to develop into finished compositions. Refine their relationships with intention.
4. Photograph your analog work at high resolution. Translate a minimum of six compositions to digital vector using Illustrator. Black only.
5. Mount all final work—analogue and digital—for presentation. Write a 150-word reflection on your process.

Deliverables

- Minimum six finished analogue compositions, mounted for presentation
- Minimum six digital compositions in Adobe Illustrator (vector, black only)
- Process documentation: all twenty+ sketches and annotations in sketchbook
- Digital files: .ai, exported .pdf and .png at 300 dpi
- File naming: firstnamelastname_Project1
- 150-word written reflection and self-assessment

Schedule

Week 1

Tues: Introduction: Seeing & Making
 Thurs: Analog studio: hand compositions

Week 2

Tues: Analog refinement; intro to Illustrator
 Thurs: Digital translation studio

Week 3

Tues: Refinement & mounting
 Thurs: Critique & Due

This schedule is as accurate as possible at the time of writing. The instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time during the semester as dictated by the needs of the class.

Project 2 Symbol System Series

A symbol serves as a visual argument, simplifying complex ideas—such as concepts, systems, or identities—to their core essence. This simplification is a form of precision. The

Overview

You will design a cohesive system of six to twelve icons or symbols united by a consistent visual logic. Your system will be presented as a postage stamp series—a format that provides a fixed frame, demands legibility at small scale, and rewards formal elegance.

Choose a subject for your system: an ecological system, a cultural practice, a field of knowledge, a community, an institution. Your symbols must work individually and as a set. The system is as important as any single icon.

This is a black-and-white, vector-only project. No photographs. No gradients. No decorative detail that does not serve clarity. You will work from observation and sketch before any digital work begins.

Objectives

- Apply semiotic thinking: understand the distinction between icon, index, and symbol and use these categories as a design tool
- Develop system logic: define and maintain consistent rules of proportion, stroke weight, corner radius, and form across a set
- Practice reduction: eliminate detail until only the essential form remains, while preserving legibility and cultural legibility
- Design for a defined constraint: the postage stamp format as a discipline for scale and framing
- Build precision in Adobe Illustrator: paths, alignment, optical correction

Procedure

1. Research your chosen subject. Collect visual references. Identify the six to twelve concepts or objects your system will represent.
2. Sketch a minimum of thirty symbols in your sketchbook—at least three per concept. Work from observation. Explore reduction and abstraction.
3. Define your system logic: what rules govern proportion, weight, geometry, and rhythm? Document this in a System Logic Diagram.
4. Develop final symbols in Illustrator. Test at stamp scale (1.5 × 1 inch). Ensure each reads clearly at small size and works in the stamp frame.
5. Design a System Presentation Sheet showing all symbols in the stamp format, with system name and brief rationale.

Constraints

- Black and white only—no color, no gray
- Vector only—all paths, no rasterized elements
- No photographs or photographic texture
- Each symbol must be legible at 1.5 × 1 inch stamp size

Deliverables

- Six to twelve final symbols in postage stamp format
- System Logic Diagram (proportions, stroke, geometry)
- System Presentation Sheet (all stamps together)
- Process documentation: thirty+ sketches and research in sketchbook
- Digital files: .ai, exported .pdf and .png at 300 dpi
- File naming: first-name-lastname_Project2
- Written reflection and self-assessment

Schedule

Week 4

Tues: Project introduction & semiotic lecture
Thurs: Due: Subject selection & first sketches

Week 5

Tues: System development; Illustrator studio
Thurs: Critique & refinement

Week 6

Tues: Studio & presentation prep
Thurs: Due & Final Critique

This schedule is as accurate as possible at the time of writing. The instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time during the semester as dictated by the needs of the class.

Project 3 Imagined Realities Poster

A photograph is never truly neutral; it always conveys an argument about what to show, who to look at, and what is authentic. When images are combined, their meanings multiply—creating something entirely new, not just an addition of the two. In this project, you'll create images that don't exist in the real world as you found them, and you will give them meaning

Overview

You will design a single 18 × 24 inch conceptual photomontage poster—an imagined reality that communicates an emotional truth, a critical position, or a speculative narrative. Your poster must convey a defined concept through the juxtaposition and compositing of photographic imagery, and must integrate typography as a visual and communicative element.

This is your first project to combine image, concept, and type. All three must work together: the imagery carries the emotional and narrative weight; the typography anchors, frames, or counterpoints it. Neither should be decorative.

All images must be sourced ethically: public domain, Creative Commons licensed, or your own original photographs. Image source documentation is required. No AI-generated imagery.

Objectives

- Develop a concept-driven approach to image-making: define a clear conceptual position before compositing begins
- Understand and apply the principles of visual narrative: how images in proximity generate meaning beyond their individual content
- Demonstrate technical competency in Photoshop: masking, compositing, color grading, and tonal cohesion
- Integrate typography with image: type as compositional element, not caption
- Practice ethical image sourcing and attribution

Procedure

1. Develop a concept. Write a one-paragraph statement articulating what your poster is about and what you want viewers to feel or think. This statement drives all subsequent decisions.
2. Collect and curate source images. Source responsibly: document all image credits. Begin physical collage studies—cut, layer, arrange by hand before going digital.
3. Build your composition in Photoshop. Attend to masking quality, color grading for tonal unity, and scale relationships between elements.
4. Introduce typography. Make intentional decisions about typeface, size, placement, and color. Type must interact with imagery, not simply sit on top of it.
5. Print a working proof at reduced scale. Evaluate at a distance. Revise

Technical Requirements

- Final dimensions: 18 × 24 inches at 300 dpi
- Color mode: CMYK for print, RGB for digital submission
- No AI-generated imagery
- Image credits documented in sketchbook

Deliverables

- Final poster: 18 × 24 inches, print-ready PDF
- Physical collage studies from analogue development phase
- Image source documentation (credits list)
- Process documentation in sketchbook: concept statement, reference images, compositional sketches
- Digital files: .psd source file, exported .pdf and high-res .jpg
- File naming: firstnamelastname_Project3
- Written reflection and self-assessment

Schedule

Week 7

Tues: Project introduction; image ethics lecture
Thurs: Due: Concept statement & reference images

Week 8

Tues: Analog collage studio
Thurs: Photoshop studio; compositing demo

Week 9

Tues: Typography integration
Thurs: Rough Draft Critique

Week 10

Tues: Refinement studio
Thurs: Due & Final Critique

This schedule is as accurate as possible at the time of writing. The instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time during the semester as dictated by the needs of the class.

Project 4 Something You Know — Mini Zine

The zine stands out as the most democratic designed object, accessible to all. Anyone can create one without needing a budget, publisher, or permission. The key requirement is having something to say and the discipline to communicate it clearly across multiple pages in sequence. Every student here knows something others do not, and this project starts with that knowledge.

Overview

You will design a four to six page zine on a subject of your own choosing—something you know, something you have experienced, something you are an authority on. Your subject can be serious or playful, technical or personal, niche or universal. What matters is that you have genuine knowledge to bring to it and something worth communicating to a reader who does not share that knowledge.

The zine is a typographic and editorial design problem. Your task is to organize information clearly and compellingly across multiple pages using a consistent grid, an intentional typographic hierarchy, and the disciplined integration of image and text.

You will work in InDesign. Before any digital work begins, you will construct your grid on paper, plan your layouts by hand, and test your hierarchy through hand-drawn sketches.

Objectives

- Apply a consistent grid system across a multi-page document
- Develop and maintain typographic hierarchy: headline, subhead, body, caption
- Integrate text and image with intention—neither decorating the other
- Make editorial decisions: what to include, what to exclude, how to sequence
- Build competency in InDesign: master pages, paragraph styles, text wrapping, image placement movement, and melody.

Procedure

1. Choose your subject. Write a one-paragraph editorial brief: what is this zine about, who is your reader, what do you want them to understand or feel?
2. Gather and write your content. Collect images (ethically sourced or original photography). Draft body text.
3. Construct your grid on graph paper. Plan your page layouts by hand—sketch each spread before opening InDesign.
4. Build your InDesign document using master pages and consistent paragraph styles. Follow your hand-built grid.
5. Print a proof. Read it. Revise typography, spacing, and flow. Does it read clearly? Does it feel considered?

Specifications

- Page count: four to six pages (not including cover)
- Page size: 5.5 × 8.5 inches (half-letter, portrait)
- Grid: consistent column grid, established before digital production
- Typefaces: maximum two typefaces; selected from approved list or with instructor approval
- Images: minimum three, ethically sourced or original
- Text wrap required on at least one spread

Deliverables

- Final zine: InDesign file and print-ready PDF
- Hand-built grid and layout sketches from planning phase
- Editorial brief (one paragraph)
- Process documentation in sketchbook
- File naming: firstnamelastname_Project4
- Written reflection and self-assessment

Schedule

Week 11

Tues: Project introduction; InDesign demo
 Thurs: Due: Editorial brief & content outline

Week 12

Tues: Grid construction & layout sketches studio
 Thurs: InDesign production studio

Week 13

Tues: Rough draft critique
 Thurs: Refinement studio

Week 14

Tues: Final refinement & printing
 Thurs: Final critique & Due

This schedule is as accurate as possible at the time of writing. The instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time during the semester as dictated by the needs of the class.

Final Process Book Reference Sheet

A finished piece of design is only one moment in a longer story of observation, failure, iteration, and growth. The process portfolio asks you to tell that and understand the story. The best portfolios are honest; show dead ends, sketch that didn't work, feedback that changed decisions. The process book shows your design thinking.

Format & Specifications

- Software: InDesign (recommended), exported as single PDF
- Pages: 40–80 pages recommended
- Page size: 8.5 × 11" portrait or landscape
- Resolution: 300 dpi minimum, all images embedded
- File name: Lastname_Firstname_GD1_ProcessBook_Spring2026.pdf
- Submission: Upload PDF to LMS by Finals Week deadline

Required Structure

Front Matter

1. Title page — name, course, semester, instructor
2. Table of contents with page numbers

Project Sections (same structure for all 4)

- A. Project Brief Page — restate objectives in your own words
- B. Research & Context — history, references, notes
- C. Analog Exploration — all hand-made work photographed, thumbnails, sketches
- D. Digital Translation — progression from analog to screen
- E. Final Work — full-resolution, large-scale presentation
- F. Concept Statement — analytical reflection (see word counts)

Back Matter

Semester Self-Evaluation & Reflection (2–4 pages)

Page Allocation per project

- Project 1: Black Square Studies — 8–12 pages
- Project 2: Symbol System — 10–15 pages
- Project 3: Imagined Realities Poster — 12–18 pages
- Project 4: Something You Know — 10–15 pages
- movement, and melody.

Concept Statement Word Count

- Project 1: 150–200 words
- Project 2: 200–250 words
- Project 3: 250–300 words
- Project 4: 150–200 words

What to show in each project section

Research & Context

- Written notes from lectures, readings, and visual research
- Historical references with brief analysis (credited)
- Moodboard or reference sheet (10–15 examples)

Analog Process — This is critical, show it fully

- All hand-made work (collages, cut paper, grids, thumbnails, sketches) photographed at high resolution
- Process photos: work-in-progress, multiple arrangements, workspace
- Annotations explaining what each iteration explores and what you learned
- Don't hide failures — they demonstrate iterative thinking

Digital Translation

- Side-by-side comparisons: analog and digital
- Multiple versions showing progressive refinement
- Screenshots of software work-in-progress (optional but valuable)
- Critique responses: what changed, and why

Final Work

- Full-page or full-spread presentation, high resolution
- Clean, professional layout with consistent treatment

Self-evaluation sections (Back Matter)

1. Course Learning Outcomes — rate each 1–5 with specific evidence
2. Greatest Strengths — 200–300 words, cite specific projects
3. Areas for Development — 200–300 words, include next steps
4. Significant Learning Moments — 2–3 breakthroughs, 250–350 words
5. Impact of Analog / process integration — 200–300 words
6. Evolving Design Voice — 200–250 words
7. Future Goals — 200–250 words, short/medium/long term

Design & Presentation Standards

- Grid: Consistent throughout; use InDesign master pages
- Type: 2–3 typefaces max; clear hierarchy via paragraph styles
- Images: 300 dpi min; well-lit, straight-on photos of analogue work
- Writing: Analytical, not descriptive — explain your thinking
- Captions: Insight-driven, not just labels
- Credits: All external images credited: Artist/Source, Year

MEDA 116

Graphic Design 1

Fall 2026

7:55 AM - 9:30 AM

Tuesday, Thursday

4 credits

Schedule

Week 15

Tues: Portfolio working session

Final Exam Period

Dec 15 : Final 3:00 to 5:30 pm

About Process Book

Your process book is a curated narrative of your entire semester: research, sketching, iteration, and reflection across all four projects. It is not a gallery of final work — it is evidence of how you think. You should work on this during the entire semester.

The process book is a professional artifact — not just a course requirement. It demonstrates how you think, how you solve problems, and how you grow.

Strong vs Weak Writing

Weak:

"I made three collages."

Strong:

"Creating three physical collages forced me to test compositional strategies rapidly — revealing that juxtaposition creates meaning more powerfully than individual images alone."