Description

This course provides a general introduction to document design theory, with special attention to the traditional print genres of technical and marketing communication (brochures, proposals, flyers, newsletters, catalogs, etc.). It also covers usability, rhetorical theory, cognitive psychology, and visual rhetoric, to the extent that these subjects intersect with issues in document design. In this course, you will discuss, evaluate, and test document design theories and concepts in a series of exercises, workshops, and assignments that require you to design, redesign, and evaluate documents in a number of genres.

This course is organized as both a graduate seminar and a series of workshops. Discussion will be our primary in-class activity during the first half of the course, and thus the success of the course will be our collective responsibility. You are expected to read and prepare for class diligently, participate actively and thoughtfully in class discussions, and assume the role of discussion leader when appropriate. You can expect me to come to class prepared, ready to engage the readings and the issues raised in them. During the second half of the course, you will participate in a series of workshops intended to give you hands-on experience in applying the concepts and principles discussed in the first half of the course. During the workshops, you will be expected to assume a variety of roles, including workshop leader on a rotating basis. You will also be expected during the workshops to collaborate with classmates, share your work, evaluate the work of others, and work independently as needed.

By the end of the course, you should be able to 1) identify and discuss principles of print-based design, 2) understand the contributions of rhetorical theory, visual rhetoric, graphic design, cognitive psychology, and reading comprehension to the field of document design, and 3) apply document design theory and concepts to the computer-aided design and evaluation of your own professional print documents.

Required texts

Purchase the required texts from the campus bookstore or another local bookseller. You may also want to order some of the texts online. Just make sure you receive them before we are scheduled to discuss them.


4. **Recommended:** McClelland, Deke (2004) *Adobe InDesign CS One-on-One.* Beijing: Deke Press/O’Reilly. ISBN: 0596007361. We will be following the lessons in this book to structure the workshops in the second half of the course. The book will also serve as a reference guide and a source of sample documents (included on the accompanying CD).

**Course materials online**

This document, the course schedule, class notes, and other materials are available online: [http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/zdenek/courses/5375/spring05/](http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/zdenek/courses/5375/spring05/). If changes need to be made to the course schedule, you will find an updated copy online.

**Grading**

Your final course grade will be calculated according to the table below, using the standard curve of 90-100% = A; 80-89.9% = B; 70-79.9% = C; 60-69.9% = D; 0-59.9% = F. Under no circumstances will grades be rounded up or down.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Course artifacts</td>
<td>See below</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of typography</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usability test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redesign I</td>
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<td>Redesign II</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Design project (with proposal)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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**Assignments**

**Course artifacts**

At the beginning of the term, you will choose 3-5 print documents (e.g. brochures, flyers, newsletters, etc.) and use them throughout the semester to ground our discussion of the readings. These artifacts will serve as discussion pieces in class and also help us apply concepts to real examples. Thus, the artifacts will give us an opportunity to ground theory in the analysis of real documents. Your course artifacts can be good or bad examples of document design and can be simple or complex. You should, however, choose artifacts from at least three of the following genres: flyer, newsletter, brochure, letterhead, catalog, guidebook, user's manual, postcard, newspaper ad, and employee handbook. All of your course artifacts should be print-based (as opposed to web-based documents). Be prepared to share your artifacts in class with others on a regular basis. Your course artifacts will also play a role in your reading review (see below).
Analysis of typography
For the typography analysis, you will choose a document (possibly one of your course artifacts) and evaluate its use of typography. Your evaluation should take the form of a 1000 word essay, be addressed to the authoring organization, and cover such topics as: typeface, typesize, type style, upper and lower case letters, leading, line length, alignment, positive or negative image, and letter and word spacing. Assess the quality of the document and offer recommendations. Submit a copy of the document you are analyzing.

Tutorial
For this assignment, you will lead the class in a tutorial on an advanced feature of Microsoft Word. Why MS Word, when there are other software programs for designing documents that are considered more robust? First, you are already familiar with the basic features of MS Word. Second, you may, at some point, work for an organization that may not have the budget (or the desire) to purchase a suite of Adobe or other high-end products for designing documents. In such a case, you may only have access at work to a program such as Word to design quality documents and justify your continued existence to the organization. For your tutorial (20-30 minutes), you will 1) explain the feature to the class and why it is important, 2) provide some examples of how you might use the feature (to improve the quality of your documents, save you time, etc.), 3) lead the class (who have now moved to the computers) through the steps they’ll need to take in order to make use of the feature, and 4) provide them with a short exercise that will allow them to apply the feature to a document supplied by you. Assume that your audience knows a great deal about Word already. The answers to these four prompts should be included in a one page handout that you will give to each member of the class. Advanced features include but are not limited to: style sheets, macros, creating custom templates, watermarks, sharing docs and tracking changes, advanced keyboard shortcuts, using/interpreting readability statistics, working with forms and fields, creating indexes, etc.

Usability test
For this assignment, you will usability test the real document of your choice on three readers who, in your best judgment, are members of the intended audience for the document. (Your readers should not be members of this class, nor should they be document designers.) Because you can’t simply ask readers to tell you what they think about the document, you will have to design a short, informal study around a question or problem that a usability test can help you answer. You may also need to ask readers to do something using the document you’ve selected (e.g. put something together by following the instructions). See Schriver Chs. 3 & 7 for some examples. Submit the results of your usability test in the form of a 1000 word report. See the class notes for more guidelines.

Reading review
The reading review is a 1250-1500 word essay in which you will take stock of the course readings. It is due when we complete the design theory readings (week 9), and will be an opportunity for you to reflect on what you’ve learned. Think of the reading review as both a summary of the major themes in the readings and a critical review. You will also explain briefly in the review how the readings inform your understanding and appreciation of your course artifacts (see above).

Redesigns I & II
The redesign assignments are opportunities for you to apply what you are learning in the design workshops to the real artifacts of your choice. For each redesign assignment, you’ll choose an
appropriate artifact (e.g. a flyer) and redesign it using the desktop publishing software we are learning in class. You'll also submit a short 500-750 word memo that explains how the redesigned document adheres to principles of good document design (as explained in the readings).

Design project
The design project should be a substantive indicator of your document design abilities. The final product should be suitable for inclusion in a professional portfolio that you might show to prospective employers. It should also be designed using the desktop publishing software we have learned in the workshops. By the time you start this project, you will have a solid background in document design theory and a fair amount of practice redesigning and critiquing documents. Before embarking on the project, you will submit a proposal. Along with the document you design from scratch to address a real need for a real client, you will also submit a 1000 word justification of the design choices you made, referring to the readings to do so. (Please note that you do not actually have to work directly with the client, but you should have access to enough information to assess their needs and design a document for them.)

Course policies
- Be prepared for class by doing the assigned reading and writing in advance.
- Submit all required assignments to be eligible for a passing grade.
- Be on time for class.
- Expect to attend every class meeting. The success of the course depends upon your regular attendance. If you are absent more than three (3) times, your final course grade will be reduced 3% for each absence after three. Six or more absences will warrant a failing grade in the course. I do not excuse absences.
- See me during the first two weeks of class to discuss your special needs or ADA accommodations, if any.
- Expect to participate actively in class discussions.
- Respect the views of others.
- Do not plagiarize. Your work must be your own. If you borrow words or ideas from another writer, you need to make it explicit (through proper citation) that the words/ideas in question are not your own. If you use someone else’s paper as your own (e.g. a paper found on the Internet), you are in violation of the University’s policy on academic integrity (p. 49 of the University Catalog). Please keep in mind that the penalty for plagiarism can be severe. See me immediately if you have questions about the University’s policy on plagiarism.
- Submit your work on time. Late work is penalized 10% per day. Assignments more than five days late will not be accepted.
- Feel free to discuss course questions and concerns with me during office hours, by appointment, or via email. I will do my best to respond to your email queries within 24 hours, except during weekends and holidays.