



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies  
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Georgetown University, MPS PR/CC | Fall 2016

## **MPPR-778-01: Visual Communications (Cross-listed with MPJO-778 & MPMC-878)**

**Class Meets:** Tuesday, 5:20 PM – 7:50 PM

**Class Location:** 640 Mass Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001

**Professor:** Xiaopeng Wang, Ph.D.

**Office Hours:** Arranged by appointment.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course teaches foundational and practical applications of visual communication in the digital environment. Students learn to apply basic typography, color strategies, digital imaging, and design principles to critiquing as well as creating visual content. Students should have basic working knowledge of Adobe InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator to take this course.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to:

- Demonstrate a foundational and practical understanding of visual communication;
- Discuss major contemporary issues relating to the present and future of visual communication;
- Integrate words and visuals effectively into storytelling and communication strategies.

### **ATTENDANCE**

In-class discussion and practice are essential to mastering the content of this course. Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If you are detained from attending a class or arriving before it begins, you are responsible for notifying me via email prior to the start of class. Missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences from classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

### **PREREQUISITE**

This course will explore visual communication principles, skills and strategies via hands-on projects. The course will be a combination of classroom lecture, discussion and design consultation in the Mac lab. Although there is not a pre-requisite for this course, you should have basic working knowledge of Adobe design programs, including InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. To ensure you have the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed, please scan through the following tutorials from [lynda.com](http://lynda.com):

**InDesign CC Essential Training (2015)**

**Illustrator CC Essential Training (2015)**

**Photoshop CC Essential Training (2015)**

## **WORK SUBMITTED**

*Work Format:* All visual projects should be submitted in PDF format. Please refer to the assignment sheets for detailed submission instructions.

*Late Policy:* **No assignment will be accepted** after the announced deadline. You will receive a "0" for missing an assignment.

*Re-Do Opportunity:* After you receive a grade for a visual project, you may have an opportunity to re-do that project and resubmit it within two weeks. The final grade of that project will be the average of its original score and the re-do score. Re-dos are optional.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

Be a responsible "citizen" in this class. Your fellow classmates expect you to participate in discussions, offer ideas and provide assistance when in need.

Silence your cell phones while in class. Social media activities are prohibited unless authorized by the instructor. Penalties may apply to disruptions caused by cell phone and social media uses.

You are responsible for classroom information and instructions, whether you are present in class or not. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain class notes.

I encourage you to ask questions during class. Chances are if you're wondering about something, at least one of your colleagues will be also. Always feel empowered to raise your hand and voice your question. Use each question as an opportunity to apply what we are learning about critical thinking and presentation skills.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

The resources for this course include articles, book excerpts, visual examples and multimedia. The readings are chosen to give you a solid foundation for understanding and internalizing the coursework.

All articles, book excerpts, cases, and multimedia listed on the course schedule will be distributed in advance via Canvas. Readings not included in the initial syllabus will be provided later in the semester, so we can review real-time cases and current events.

### **Recommended Readings**

Airey, D. (2014). *Logo Design Love: A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities*, (2nd Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.

Ayiter, E. (n.d.). [The History of Visual Communication](http://www.citrinitas.com/history_of_viscom). Accessible via [http://www.citrinitas.com/history\\_of\\_viscom](http://www.citrinitas.com/history_of_viscom)

Bergström, B. (2008). *Essentials of Visual Communication*. London: Laurence King.

Berman, D. B. (2008). *Do Good Design: How Design Can Change Our World*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

Elam, K. (2007). *Typographic System of Design*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Elam, K. (2004). *Grid System: Principles of Organizing Type*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Resnick, E. (2003). *Design for Communication: Conceptual Graphic Design Basics*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

**Williams, R. (2014). *The Non-Designer's Design Book* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.**

## **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

The practical nature of this course requires a reliable access to the following visual communication and Internet technologies:

- Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator and Acrobat;
- Portable hard drives or thumb drives (a minimum of 1GB);
- A Box or Dropbox account;
- and Digital photography.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

You are expected to submit work on time and of high quality. Please refer to the course schedule and plan your timetable for completing assignments in advance. I encourage you to actively ask questions prior to submitting any assignment. As long as you submit your assignments for review (with a specific question in mind) at least three business days before the assignment is due, I would be happy to review your specific question and discuss it with you. Feedback on all final assignments will be provided in a timely manner, no more than two weeks after the assignment was turned in. All grading criteria and more detailed project requirements, including page length and essential content, will be distributed in advance and discussed in class.

You will work on five visual projects, one research presentation and a final portfolio throughout this semester. All visual projects aim to implement visual communication fundamentals and skills in real-world scenarios. Your choices of real clients and real projects are encouraged.

*Visual Projects (with Re-Do option):*

Typography-Based Poster (50 points). You will design a poster for an upcoming event. Type is the only visual element you may use for this design. A grayscale version is required. The objective of this project is to demonstrate your understanding of design principles, grid and typography. The preferred program for this project is Adobe InDesign.

Color Strategy (30 points). You are asked to develop an appropriate and effective color strategy for communications. Apply the color strategy in a real communication project (e.g. the typography-based poster). The objective of this project is to demonstrate your understanding of color fundamentals and strategies. The preferred programs for this project are Adobe Photoshop and InDesign.

Branding Design (50 points). You will design or redesign a visual identity for your organization or campaign. The visual identity will be unique and properly integrates your organization's core characters and branding strategy. Your branding design needs to be displayed in product mockups such as stationary, mugs and clothing. The objective of this project is to demonstrate your skills in vector imaging, use of visual languages, and understanding of visual strategy. The preferred programs for this project are Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop.

Web/UI Prototype (50 points). You are invited to draft a prototype for a new or existing website or App. It includes one landing page and another internal page. The design will showcase consistent and appropriate typography, color scheme and visual branding strategy. The objective of this project is to demonstrate your understanding of digital environment and web/mobile audience. The preferred program for this project is Photoshop.

Executive Report incorporating Photographs, Infographics and Branding (80 points). This is a culminating project that not only challenges you on typography, color, branding and interface designs, but also presents you an opportunity to revamp traditional, formal documents with the power of visuals. You will learn and create statistical charts and tables, edit and place photographs, and incorporate branding strategies in your multi-page document (print or digital). The preferred programs for this project are Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign.

*Research Presentation:*

Branding Trend Presentation (30 points). Corporation identity design has seen drastic changes over the past several decades. Choose an industry, business or sector of the civil society and study its current trend of visual branding design. You will analyze and present to the class the color schemes, typography and other visual trends that are noteworthy. An example of this research project can be found at this [blog post](#). The preferred program for this project can be Powerpoint, Keynote, or blog.

*Final Portfolio:*

Portfolio (30 points). The final deliverable for this class is a portfolio of all visual projects, drafts, drawings and personal reflections over the course of the semester. No preferred platform or program for this project. You may use blogs (Medium/Tumblr), Pinterest posts, a website or a PDF. The purpose of this exercise is to reflect on your best practices in visual communications.

**GRADING**

Graduate course grades include A, A--, B+, B, B--, C, and F. There are no grades of C+, C--, or D.

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Visual Projects	260 points
Research Presentation	30 points
Final Portfolio	30 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>320 points</b>

**Grading Metrics:**

Students will have the opportunity to earn a **total of 320 points** this semester. Please reference the below grading scale and assignments:

**Grading Scale (%):**

<b>A</b>	<b>100 - 93</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>89.9 - 88</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>79.9 - 70</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>92.9 - 90</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>87.9 - 83</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>69.9 and below</b>
		<b>B-</b>	<b>82.9 - 80</b>		

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

## UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program  
202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
202-687-6985  
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>
- Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)  
(202) 687-4798  
<https://ideaa.georgetown.edu/>

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

## GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

## PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the

ideas or writings of another.” More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

### SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE/TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 1 Sept 6, 2016 <b>Introduction to Visual Communications</b>	See <a href="http://lynda.com">lynda.com</a> tutorials:  Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator Essentials.		Introductions; Course overview; Introduction to visual communications and visual audience; How people see?  Assignment: Research Presentation: Choose an industry, business or sector of the society for your research target. Due Sept 13, 2016
Class 2 Sept 13, 2016 <b>Type as Image</b>	E-reading: When typography speaks louder than words.	Research Presentation topic due.	Gestalt and Design Principles; Typography I.  Assignments: Typography-Based Poster. Due Oct 4, 2016. Research Presentation. Due Oct 25, 2016.
Class 3 Sept 20, 2016 <b>Typography Elements</b>	E-reading: How you make a grid?		Typography II.  Project critique; Lab time.
Class 4 Sept 27, 2016 <b>Typography and Space</b>			Typography III.  Lab time.
Class 5 Oct 4, 2016 <b>On Color</b>	E-reading: Color matters.	Typography-Based Poster due.	Color fundamentals.  Assignments: Color Strategy. Due Oct 18, 2016

DATE/TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 6 Oct 11, 2016 <b>Color Strategy</b>			Color Strategy.  Lab time.
Class 7 Oct 18, 2016 <b>Signs and Symbols</b>		Color Strategy due.	Semiotics; Signs, symbol and culture. Assignment: Branding Design. Due Nov 1, 2016
Class 8 Oct 25, 2016 <b>On Logos</b>		Research Presentation due.	Branding Trend Presentations; Project critique; Lab time.
Class 9 Nov 1, 2016 <b>Web and UI design</b>	E-reading: Web usability	Branding Design due.	Digital media landscape.  Assignment: Web/UI Design. Due Nov 15, 2016
Class 10 Nov 8, 2016 <b>Usability</b>			Web usability. Project critique; Lab time.
Class 11 Nov 15, 2016 <b>On Photography</b>	E-reading: How to look at photographs	Web/UI Design due.	Digital photography; How to choose photography.  Assignment: Executive Report. Due Dec 13, 2016
Class 12 Nov 22, 2016 <b>Digital Imaging</b>			Digital imaging; How to use photos and images. Project critique; Lab time.
Class 13 Nov 29, 2016 <b>Information graphics</b>	E-reading: Infographic Handbook.		Information graphics;  Project critique; Lab time.
Class 14 Dec 6, 2016 <b>Charts and Tables</b>			Best practices in using charts and tables; Project critique; Lab time.
Class 15 Dec 13, 2016 <b>Wrap up</b>		Executive Report due.	Wrap up; Project critique; Lab time; Portfolio due Dec 16, 2016