2209 F/G: Visual Information Packaging: Document Design
Fall 2017/Winter 2018

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Time/Room: Online   **Office: Rm. 3270 Lawson Hall**
Instructor: Patrick M. Kennedy

Course Description and Objectives

The personal computer has revolutionized the production and dissemination of information making it possible for a single individual to perform all the functional roles (writer, editor, graphic artist, designer, printer, publisher) previously performed by skilled and experienced specialists. This course examines information production and document design as an amalgam of skills and tools intended to communicate information clearly and effectively whether the information is presented on the printed page or in a digital screen. We will examine the elements that constitute the packaging of effective visual communication, the goal being to develop good visual language skills to create information products that are meaningful and useful to the reader, accomplish their information and/or persuasive purpose(s), and appropriately consider the context in which the reader/user encounters the information.

More generally, the course aims to contribute to your development of an " ... ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences." (Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents' statement on 'University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations' 24 October 2005).

This course will equip you with resources to solve communication/information problems, develop your critical skills in evaluating communication products, and enable you to create documents that are textually and visually effective in communicating with the reader.

Required Texts
• Course Pack (Western Bookstore Product Number 10494) available from The Bookstore at Western http://www.bookstore.uwo.ca/

• Kostelnick, Charles and David D. Roberts. *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators.* 2nd ed. Longman.

Recommended (but nor required)
Lupton, Ellen. *Thinking with Type: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Editors, & Students.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010.

Consult the bibliography in *Thinking with Type* for several excellent references to material discussing grids. Also visit *<www.ThinkingWithType.com>* for links to online sources.

Course Requirements

Tests	10%
Forums (Discussion)	10%
Assignment #1 – Idea File Analysis	15

Assignment #2 – Reformatted Idea File Analysis	20%
Assignment #3 – Digital Document Project Essay	20%
Assignment #4 – Reformatted Digital Document Project	25%

Assignments/Assignment Format

All assignments are to be typed and double-spaced, and must have your name, course name, section number, and instructor's name on the first page. Do not use a cover page. When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA citation practice.

Submitting Assignments/Due dates/late submission penalties etc.

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Late papers **will be penalized at 2.5% per day unless** I have permitted an extension of the due date. You must contact me ahead of time for an extension and provide a suitable reason (*see also the section 'Medical Accommodation Policy' below*). Our class 'week' runs from Monday to Friday, so assignments for a particular week are due by Friday (midnight), *unless otherwise stated*. ***Important: you are responsible for keeping a copy of all assignments you submit.***

Procedure for Assignment Submission

Under policies adopted by Writing Studies, final drafts of all assignments in 2200-level writing courses must be submitted through Turnitin.com (see **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism** below). Consequently, you will find Turnitin submission links for Assignments 1 and 3 (Assignments 2 and 4 are designed documents and not suitable for submission to Turnitin).You will upload your final version of Assignments 1 and 3 through its link, *__as a single Word (.doc or .docx extension) file__,* ***** titled to identify you as author. Your graded assignment, with comments, will be returned to you through Sakai.

*Note: ***__Pdf or other 'read only' formats, and compressed/zipped files are not acceptable. Please note also that Turnitin will not accept more than a single file submission. In other words, do not try to submit an assignment twice, or in parts as two or more files. Also note that I access your original uploaded Word file; typically any formatting errors etc. which show in the Turnitin 'preview' function will not appear on your uploaded file.__***

Attendance/Participation (Please *note* posting requirements)

Obviously, we do not meet formally as a 'class' in a Distance Studies course. Therefore, 'attendance' and participation on the Discussion Board are intertwined. While Distance Studies classes are generally asynchronous, they are not correspondence or self-paced. You must attend class (defined as logging into our Sakai section) and participate by introducing yourself, and posting questions and thoughts during the first week, and by posting (by participating in a given week's set discussion topic) in subsequent weeks where there is a Discussion topic as indicated on this syllabus. This means at least three separate posts during each of those weeks (a week is defined *for this purpose* as running from Monday to Sunday), **at least one of which must be a reply/response to another student and at least one of which must be a 'new' post.** Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the Sakai classroom for more than five consecutive days, must be coordinated with the instructor.

Postings on the Discussion Board must have the following characteristics:

- Must contribute something meaningful to the Board;
- Must support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence;
- Must display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not:

- Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language;

- Be excessively long or excessively short;
- Be unrelated to the week's topic;
- Say things that do not contribute anything, e.g. "I agree with you" or "nice comment".

I will track your postings to the Discussion Board on a weekly basis, and assess each week's contribution on a 10-point scale, ultimately arriving at a cumulative grade out of 100 that will constitute your 10% 'Discussion Board Participation' mark.

Note that 'attendance' as defined in this section is **mandatory** in this course. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **three weeks where there is Discussion** *will* result in your final grade in this course being reduced by 10%. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **four or more weeks where there is Discussion** *will* result in your final grade being reduced by 15%.

Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism
The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com)."

Prerequisites
The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101F/G, 2125F/G (or the former 2121F/G), 2111F/G, or 2131F/G, or b) a final grade of 70 or more in one of Writing 1000F/G, 1030F/G, 1031F/G, or c) Special Permission of the department.

Medical Accommodation Policy
For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf
(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): https://studentservices.uwo.ca under the Medical Documentation heading)

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the

Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or Writing Studies, and Writing Studies requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

"Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help."

Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing
Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

Schedule
Remember: A 'Week' in Distance Studies courses begins on Monday and ends on Friday.

Unit /Week 1

Introduction: It's about the reader / user / customer

Objectives:
The purpose of this lesson is to introduce you to some of the practices relative to Document Design/Visual Rhetoric that actually discourage readership. The point here is to recognize that the issues under discussion are important to good mediated communication and they are very relevant in today's over-communicated society.

Read:
"Wanted: A renaissance in print advertising" by David Ogilvy
in the **Course Pack or "Resources" folder**
Chapter 1: "Rhetorical Background" Kostelnick /Roberts. *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators*

FORUM: Is Ogilvy hairsplitting or practical?
This Document Design course is often a student's first encounter with a focused discussion about the technical considerations associated with creating and designing a communication product. Many students report a certain annoyance with Ogilvy's hair-splitting distinctions while others had not previously considered the implications of the topics and elements he identifies.

Some have criticized Ogilvy (notably Thomas Frank in "The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism") as a "leading proponent of managerial rationality in advertising" (45) with a "passion for rule-making" and an "abhorrence of disorder" (46). Based on your reading, how do you respond to this criticism? Can creativity and micro-management work together, or does the tight control of management subvert creativity? Are Ogilvy's ideas practical or extreme? Why do you think so?

Unit/Week 2

Mapping the Future from the Past

Objectives:
In Unit #2 the focus shifts to a more theoretical and academic discussion of Document Design as we consider the changes that have occurred throughout the history of printing and publishing and the impact of the personal computer upon the publishing process.

> **Read:**
> Naomi S. Baron. "From Printshop to Desktop: Evolution of the Written Word" in the Course Pack; Chapter 2: "Perception and Design" Kostelnick/Roberts.

FORUM: Illustrations for the illiterate?
The reading reports "Humanist scholars once viewed pictures . . . as merely a simple way to instruct those who were too ignorant to read the text" (16). Isn't the popularity of today's graphic novel, the multitude of photographs and illustrations that are incorporated into websites, and the almost exclusive use of images in advertising little more than "eye candy" which plays to the lowest common intellectual denominator?

Unit/Week 3

Reading Obstacles—Begin at the End

Objectives:
The objective of this lesson is to raise your level of awareness about fundamental cognitive processes characteristic of humans that must be recognized and respected when designing documents. Familiarity with underlying theories and research about what we do when we read will reinforce intelligent document design decisions.

> **Read:**
> Don. G. Bouwhuis. "Reading as a Goal Driven Behavior" in the Course Pack; Chapter 3: "Visual Analysis" from Kostelnick/Roberts.

> **Assignment #1: Idea File Analysis due midnight Friday Week 3**

FORUM: Are some things better left unchanged?
Bouwhuis references a study (342) on typography that demonstrates that "wide variations in typeface affected reading performance only slightly, while letter size variation, too, produced only minor changes in reading speed," and he concludes (352) that "typographic design" should not be changed "beyond the conditions we know to be optimal." Why do you think such "slight" and "minor" changes are given such weight? Do you agree? Why, or why not? How do you think Ogilvy would respond to this assessment?

Unit/Week 4

Reducing Cognitive Costs

Objectives:
The objective is to recognize that to design a document is about something more than visual appeal: design must be useful, it must serve the purpose for which the document was created, and it must satisfy the needs of the reader.

Read:
Paul Stiff. "'A Footnote Kicks Him': How Books Make Readers Work" **Online**; Chapter 4: "Text Design" from Kostelnick/Roberts.

FORUM: Books as tools

If books are "'tools to think with' . . . the first standardized and mass-produced interface for mental work" (Stiff 69 - DESIGN COMPROMISES: FEEDBACK FROM AUTHOURS), give an example of a specific book you use as a tool, and explain how it contributes to your "mental work." Does it have any system failures? How could they be improved?

Unit/Week 5

Five Laws of Perception

Objectives:
The objective is to learn to apply John W. Cataldo's five laws of perception to the documents you design to achieve specific rhetorical goals. By creating documents that incorporate a consideration of the nature of human perception and respect its limitations you will be more successful in designing a document that achieves its goal(s).

Read:
Edward Booth-Clibborn and Daniel Boroni. "Psychology and the Graphic Message" in the course Pack; Chapter 6: "Non-Linear Components" from Kostelnick/Roberts.

FORUM:

The Needs of the User - Comment upon Ellen Lupton's statement in *Thinking with Type,* "The dominant subject of our age has become neither reader nor writer but user, a figure conceived as a bundle of needs and impairments—cognitive, physical, emotional. Like a patient or child, the user is a figure to be protected and cared for but also scrutinized and controlled, submitted to research and testing" (73 1st ed., 97 2nd ed.).

Unit/Week 6

Seeing and Perceiving

Objectives:
The objective is to learn how the fundamental psychological need for *equilibrium* (balance) is achieved in documents through the application of the *dominance principle* as expressed through the establishment of visual hierarchy in documents of all types.

> **Read:**
> Jack Fredrick Myers - "Coherence: Visual structure and unity" in the Course Pack.

> **Assignment #2: Reformatted Idea File Analysis due midnight Friday Week 6**

FORUM:

Your Illusions - **Preventing Closure: Causing Tension** - Discuss the following statement from the reading: "If we can somehow obstruct or prevent closure of a split object normally seen as a whole entity, we can create tension at that point in the design or composition. It's a 'foot in the door' technique commonly used in films of suspense" (30). How have you experienced the "tension" described here? Can you imagine an instance in which you might or could apply the dynamics involved in this concept? What are some of the advantages of using this technique?

Unit/Week 7

Text by Design

Objectives:
The objective of this unit is to develop knowledge of the technical aspects of typography and page design as well as an understanding of the kinds of considerations that motivate particular design choices.

> **Read:**
> Peter Worlock. "Text" in the Course Pack; Chapter 5: "Text Fields" from Kostelnick/Roberts.

FORUM:

Is design useless if it does not serve the content?
Throughout this reading there have been references to the notion that "content governs design"; however, it is also the case that technology governs design: for example, the increased popularity of sans serif growing out of the problem of aliasing, the ability--or lack of it--for kerning, and software limitation for hyphenation. These and other idiosyncrasies create problems for the Document Designer. Discuss the notion that the designer is forced to compromise in the process of delivering a product within the limitations of his/her resources. How do you feel about Worlock's statement that "No matter how wonderful the design, it is useless if it doesn't serve the content" (51)?

Unit/Week 8

Design Sensitivity and Creative Problem Solving

Objectives:
The objective of the lesson is to engage you in "an active intention to improve" (Mendell) as a document designer/problem solver by becoming aware of the resources both internal and external that can contribute to your success.

Read:
Mary Mendell. "Educating the Designer's Eye" in *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, July (1997): pp. 208-212. ISSN 1198-9742. Available through UWO Libraries E-Journals.

FORUM:
Book cover designs that influence you - Comment on Mendell's statement "One wants to think about what works, and what does not, which covers attract attention and why." Discuss book cover designs that influence you to make a purchase? Do we make judgments about a book by its cover? Does a book with a plain cover, perhaps only a title in plain text, discourage your interest in the book? If so, why do you think this is the case?

Unit/Week 9

Grids as Cognitive Tools for Problem Solving

Objectives:
The objective is to develop knowledge about how grids are used to resolve problems in the visual presentation of information by managing content within a defined space where both text and graphics are a part of the communication process.

Read:
"Grid and Design Philosophy" by Josef Muller-Brockman in the Course Pack; Review pages 166-67 in Kostelnick/Roberts.

Assignment #3: Essay due midnight Friday Week 9

FORUM:
Control: the salvation from chaos
In the online article by Kathy Malchiodi <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-healing-arts/200805/when-trauma-happens-children-draw-part-i>, there is a Youtube video "Smallest Witnesses" in Part 2 which exhibits many of the drawings created by the children of Darfur and the war that they experienced. It could be argued that the images drawn by the children are primitive, that is, they are "primal" in nature because they are drawn by children, and children are often characterized as "pre-conscious" beings since their egos are still under construction and not yet formed. If we compare the Muller-Brockman article with what we observe in the children, what conclusions or observations you can offer about the control/chaos dichotomy.

Unit/Week 10

Transition to Digital

Objectives:
The objective is to identify those qualities and characteristics of paper document design that also function seamlessly with digital document design and those that do not. Comparing and contrasting the rhetorical requirements of the two mediums will identify specific strengths and weaknesses of each as well as some of the adjustments that are required to documents when transitioning content from one medium to the

other.

Read:
"Digital structure, digital design: issues in designing electronic publications" Michael Jensen, *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (Available through UWO Libraries E-Journals); Chapter 7: "Data Displays"
in Kostelnick/Roberts.

FORUM:
Functionists' Perspective - In his introduction, Jensen says, "My hope in this article is to discuss digital design from a functionists' perspective" (14). Discuss what you think he means by "functionists' perspective."

Unit/Week 11

Advantages & Disadvantages of E-editing

Objectives:
The objective is to identify problems others are experiencing with on-screen editing and use their experiences and observations as a mirror to reflect upon our own practices and habits which we may be unaware of and which may be undermining the revision and editing tasks demanded of document designers. In addition, some training suggestions and learning strategies for new editors will be explored that will help students develop their editing skills.

Read:
Anne Dresskell. "Computer-Enhanced Copy Editing: A Survey Report" in Journal of Scholarly Publishing (Available through UWO Libraries E-Journals.); Chapter 8: "Pictures" in Kostelnick/ Roberts.

FORUM:
Let the dataset change you mindset
In the TED video McCandless cites his "master" Hans Rosling as encouraging him to "Let the dataset change your mindset," and because McCandless self-identifies as "a Left leaning person" he talks about what he discovered after applying information and visualization to ideas and concepts creating "a visualization of the [U.S.] political spectrum." Because he "had to honor the perspectives on the right [. . .]" (or risk creating a 'lopsided, biased diagram') he recognized how many of those right wing qualities were actually in himself, "which was very, very annoying and uncomfortable." Discuss.

Unit/Week 12

Introduction to Infographics

Objectives:
The objective of this unit is to recognize what has grown to become a popular and significant method of presenting information—the infographic— and explore how knowledge is being compressed, repackaged, and assembled in a variety of forms to make certain kinds of

information more accessible, more easily understood, and more meaningful for readers/users of all kinds.

Read:

TED Talk YouTube Video - The beauty of data visualization: David McCandless on TED.com Posted August 23, 2010 (The transcript is in "Lecture Notes")
http://blog.ted.com/2010/08/23/the-beauty-of-data-visualization-david- mccandless-on-ted-com/;
Chapter 9: "Supra-Level Elements: Designing for Usability" in Kostelnick/Roberts.

Assignment #4: Reformatted Document is due midnight Wednesday Week 13 (the last day of class for Fall/Winter terms)

FORUM:
Let the dataset change you mindset
In the TED video McCandless cites his "master" Hans Rosling as encouraging him to "Let the dataset change your mindset," and because McCandless self-identifies as "a Left leaning person" he talks about what he discovered after applying information and visualization to ideas and concepts creating "a visualization of the [U.S.] political spectrum." Because he "had to honor the perspectives on the right [. . .]" (or risk creating a 'lopsided, biased diagram') he recognized how many of those right wing qualities were actually in himself, "which was very, very annoying and uncomfortable." Discuss.