

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky

Contact: lbratsl @ilstu .edu when emailing: please add 240 in subject line

Office: Fell 451

Drop-in Office / Lab Times: Tues, 1-2; Wed, 9-10;

For zoom, request link via email \*\* will gladly meet in person or virtually at other times \*\*

## About

240 Course Catalog Description: Introduction to the history, theory, and practice of visual communication including perception, visual literacy, and media design for multiple distribution channels.

**Which means:** No matter the communications-related profession, a solid understanding of visual communication will greatly benefit how you effectively communicate as well as engage within our very media saturated world. As professional communicators, it is vital to develop **both** the technical design and software skills, **and also** the theoretical, sociological, and ethical dimensions about the power of visuals. This course is designed to foster critical awareness of visuals and the context in which these are presented, be it pictures, graphics, moving images, text, and in any combination. We'll focus on theoretical and hands-on techniques to produce visuals. The course will prepare you to be visually literate as both creators of images and as individuals who are constantly consuming images.

## Course Objectives

Students encounter and gain experience in:

Conceptual components of visual communication

- ⇒ The basics of visual perception
- ⇒ Semiotics: how meanings are socially constructed
- ⇒ visual literacy; the ability to "read" or analyze visual media by recognizing contexts of production and interpretation *and also includes* the ability to create visual media
- ⇒ Ethical frameworks about digital manipulations and the use of images

Identify the following components of design

- ⇒ Visual elements
- ⇒ Design principles and laws of gestalt
- ⇒ Terms associated with typography and strategies for achieving visual hierarchy

Demonstrate conceptual and functional knowledge/skills through various lab exercises and design projects

## Instructional Materials

» Required Textbooks are accessible as ebook through Milner Library

Davis, M., & Hunt, J. (2017). *Visual communication design: an introduction to design concepts in everyday experience* (1st ed.). Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

[Link to Milner Library Record for Davis and Hunt book](#)

Hagen, R., & Golombisky, K. (2017). *White space is not your enemy: A beginner's guide to communicating visually through graphic, web & multimedia design* (Third edition.)

[link to Milner Library record for WSINYE](#)

*recommended:* Pater, R. (2016) *The Politics of Design: A (Not so) Global Manual for Visual Communication*. BIS Publisher

» Other required PDFs and videos are posted in Canvas.

## Course Breakdown

**Course is out of 350 pts.** I do not do weigh grades (keeps math simpler).

I add extra credit points to your total, then divide by 350. Will gladly offer support to you to set up a simple grade tracking spreadsheet

Lab Assignments	25%	8 labs, 10 or 15 pts each
Midterm Exam	20%	75 pts
Projects	40%	Variety of design and application projects
Final Portfolio	15%	50 pts

Details about assignments will be explained in class and posted in Canvas

### General Rubric Expectations

I expect the following minimum for 'B' level work across all coursework:

- (1) Use your own unique perspective to complete the assignment

Including – creating + doing YOUR OWN work, not AI generated, unless specified by the assignment

- (2) Demonstrate awareness of specific course concepts
- (3) Complete all the requirements, including proper file names. LASTNAME\_[label]

## About the Assignments

### Lab Assignments

Mix of homework and in-class labs. Accounts for your learning process and engagement **and attendance**. These are **low stakes**: earn full points for full preparation and participation that meets Dr.B's required timelines and expectations for the spirit of these assignments.

### Exam

In-class exam covering the first half of the course in order to evaluate what you've learned so far; a mix of multiple choice and essays.

### Vis Comm Projects

These are design projects apply your visual literacy and design skills to practice. These involve planning and execution. There will be a written component to accompany your design work to explain your process and connect to course material.

### Final Course Portfolio

As the final 'exam', this is a review of your work over the course of the semester.

### Scale

A: 90 – 100% B: 80 – 89.99% C: 70.00 – 79.99% D: 60.00 – 69.99% F: 59.99% and below

**\*\* I reserve the right** to round up when a grade is within a half percentage point (.5%), which may occur when students are active participants throughout the whole semester.

**Likewise**, I reserve the right to **NOT** round up if a student is half a percentage point away from the next grade level.

This is because I offer extra credit opportunities throughout the semester and up until the end.

### General Expectations

#### 👉 Notetaking 👉

- Practice hand-written notes using the methods we discuss in the first week
- Keep a record of what you're learning in a **physical notebook** or a **digital method capable of handwriting**, or at the very least, some kind of notation system ! ✍️ ✍️ ✍️

#### 👉 Submission Dates and Times:

- **When I ask you to submit something BEFORE class time, it's so that we can use class time to comment on each others' work.**
- You should always submit what you have – even if it's not done or perfect because that's the point of submitting these assignments before our official class time.
- Missing this deadline means that you miss the opportunity for feedback, which will benefit your final work. Peer review can only be made up with documented excused absence.

🕒 You try. Seriously. This is a class that's at least 'B' for truly sincere effort. Take the time to read, take notes in a new way, take on each small and large task with curiosity and openness. Shortcuts can be fine for vis comm design *when you know what/why/how those templates and tools operate.* 👉

## Schedule

### Books:

Davis and Hunt = *Visual communication design* [VCD ebook](#)

WSINYE = *White Space is Not Your Enemy* 3<sup>rd</sup>. [WSINYE ebook link](#)

All additional reading and links to videos/websites posted in Canvas → Modules → Unit Lesson Pages

Subject to change. Changes will be announced through Canvas Announcements / Emails.

## UNIT 1 – Conceptual + Creative Foundations

Week	Date	TOPIC	TO DO by Class Time	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Week 1	01/13	intro to course	syllabus, intro activities LAB 1 start in class	LAB 1 due allowed to turn in by end by 11:59 pm
Week 1	01/15	intro to vis comm at conceptual and experiential levels	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crowe &amp; Laseau, excerpt about visual notes – PDF</li> <li>○ Davis &amp; Hunt, excerpt from Design and Experience – link to ebook</li> </ul>	BRING NOTES -- -hand written /digital equivalent We will update Lab 1 in class
Week 2	01/20	visual literacies	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Intro chapter in Politics of Design</li> <li>○ Additional links on Canvas</li> </ul>	
Week 2	01/22  ASYNC DAY; Work on Lab 2 for homework / as class session	visual literacies	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Williams and Newton, excerpt from <i>Visual Communication</i> – PDF</li> </ul> WATCH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Select short videos on canvas</li> </ul>	LAB 2 due aim for by end of class allowed to turn in by 11:59 pm
Week 3	01/27	visual ethics	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Messaris and Moriarity, "Visual Literacy Theory" article PDF</li> <li>● Bock – “Visual Media Literacy and Ethics” article link</li> <li>● And links on Canvas page</li> </ul>	
Week 3	01/29  ASYNCHRONOUS DAY; Work on Lab 3 for homework / as class session	visual ethics	Work on Lab 3  Catch up on readings	LAB 3 due aim for by end of class allowed to turn in by end by 11:59 pm

## Unit 2: graphic design crash course

Week	Date	TOPIC	TO DO by Class Time	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Week 4	02/03	Lecture on visual elements; color	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ WSINYE, Ch 4, part of Ch 5, ebook</li> <li>○ Williams and Newton, excerpt from Visual Communication – PDF</li> </ul>	

Week 4	02/05	In-class Lab for visual elements; color	<p>PREPARE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Select an album cover</li> <li>o Unfamiliar with Illustrator? <a href="#">See my canvas page with Illustrator tutorials</a>, specifically “Basics” and “Color”</li> </ul>	<p>LAB 4 Visual Elements due</p> <p>aim for by end of class allowed to turn in by 11:59 pm</p>
Week 5	02/10	design principles	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o WNIYE, CH 5</li> <li>o Davis and Hunt, CH 3 – “Getting Attention”</li> <li>o Williams and Newton, CH 11 – PDF</li> </ul>	
Week 5	02/12	design principles	<p>PREPARE for the LAB</p> <p><i>Expectation is to follow the required preparation steps for the Thursday Lab.</i></p>	<p>LAB 5 Design Principles</p> <p>aim for by end of class allowed to turn in by 11:59 pm</p>
Week 6	02/17	Typography	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o WSINYE, CH 7</li> <li>o Davis and Hunt, section selections from Chapters 4,5,6</li> <li>o Links on canvas page</li> </ul>	
Week 6	02/19	Typography + Project Work In Class	<p>PREPARE for the LAB</p> <p><i>See canvas typography readings page + Lab 2.3 Typography Assignment; includes instructions for Quote Project</i></p>	<p>LAB 6 Typography</p> <p>aim for by end of class allowed to turn in by 11:59 pm</p>
Week 7	02/24	Quote Project Work in Class	Software instruction and start quote project	<i>Arrive in class with project preparation completed</i>
Week 7	02/26	Review	<p>Quote Project – Peer Review;</p> <p>And class will include a midterm review session (bring questions, notes)</p>	<p>Due at start of class: Draft of Quote Project for PEER REVIEW</p> <p>Final version for evaluation is due by end of <b>FRIDAY</b>, 11:59 pm</p>
Week 8	03/03	MIDTERM EXAM In-class	MIDTERM EXAM In-class	MIDTERM EXAM In-class
Week 8	03/05	No class; take a breather		All late, make-up and re-do labs due by Thursday, 11:59pm

SPRING BREAK

Week	Date	TOPIC	TO DO by Class Time	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Week	03/17	Semiotics	READ:	

10			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Davis &amp; Hunt, Ch 5 PDF</li> <li>○ Scott McCloud, excerpt from Understanding Comics PDF</li> <li>○ Short vides on canvas page</li> </ul>	
Week 10	03/19	semiotics	Full details on canvas assignment page for Lab 7 Semiotics	LAB 7 Semiotics
Week 11	03/24	Photomontage Semiotics Project Work in Class	<p>READ: Instructions for the Photomontage Semiotics Project in</p> <p>Self-assign how you'll prepare for the in-class Photocollage homework</p>	
Week 11	03/26	Photomontage Semiotics Project Work in Class		Photocollage Due for Peer Review; final version for evaluation
Week 12	03/31	Visual Identity and Branding	READ / WATCH: TBD to be posted on Canvas	
Week 12	04/02	Visual Identity and Branding	PREPARE for the LAB BRANDING – OBSERVE, DISSECT OTHERS” BRAND / STYLE BOOKS for (a) meaning (b) ethics and (c) design elements	LAB 8 Visual Identity
Week 13	04/07	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	<p>READ: Instructions for final project</p> <p>Also READ: Resources posted in the Infographics reaching page</p>	<p>DUE, in class: Project check-in, Phase 1.</p> <p>Must submit initial ideas and interested to the final project form posted on canvas assignment page</p>
Week 13	04/09	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	Project workshopping; how-to demos	
Week 14	04/14	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	Project workshopping; how-to demos	
Week 14	04/16	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	Project workshopping; how-to demos	DUE, in class: Project check-in, Phase 2.
Week 15	04/21	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	Project workshopping; how-to demos	
Week 15	04/23	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	Project workshopping; how-to demos	
Week 16	04/28	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	PEER REVIEW in class	
Week 16	04/30	<i>FINAL PROJECT</i>	PEER REVIEW in class	<p>DUE, in class: Project check-in, Phase 3.</p> <p>Must be in class to showcase your polished draft version for class-wide feedback</p>

## FINAL WEEK

the final for this class involves:

1. The Final Project: Draft for peer review is due the last Thursday of class. The final version -- the one you want me to grade -- is due finals week
2. Course Portfolio: a collection of course assignments and projects, with reflections about strengths and improvements (and opportunity to make those improvements for extra credit)

Date and Time will be determined by University schedule.

## Policies

### Emails

**Please write in the subject line: 240 + Brief Descriptor**

Please be respectful/professional in your communication. This means beginning your email with "Hi Dr. B" or "Hello Professor" or some sort of similar professional salutation.

### Deadlines and Late Work

Labs: If you are absent during class time, it is your responsibility to learn the software and make up the work. If you miss a deadline, you may turn in a lab late for up to 1/2 credit.

Deadline for any make up lab work is Fri, Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> by 5pm.

Midterm: Can not be made up

Projects: The projects first involve peer review during class. Must be present to participate and earn credit.

Late Project Work Policy: if you email me / turn in a draft of what you have at the time of the assignment deadline (aka incomplete project), along with a plan of action of when / how you will complete the project, I will allow revision of the incomplete project for up to 2/3 credit.

### Absences and Your Responsibilities:

I do not need to be notified about an absence, except (a) when you know ahead of time you have a university-sanctioned absence for an upcoming event

(b) you are too ill to attend class AND ALSO you provide an action plan for how you intend to make up course work and proceed

If you are experiencing any sort of health-related issues that you know will impact your engagement in this course, please use formal channels established by the Dean of Students office

<https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/contact/absence/>

In the event of student bereavement, please see the ISU policy,

<https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-27.shtml>

### Plagiarism: .... don't do it.

Not only is it against the ISU's code of conduct, it is unethical and unprofessional. Plagiarism means anything from presenting someone else's work as your own to failing/forgetting to cite other people's work. THIS INCLUDES THE USE OF AI.

Any evidence of plagiarism will result in an automatic 0 for the assignment and possibly an automatic F for the class as well as a mark on your permanent record. I will report cases for Academic Dishonesty to the Dean of Students Office.

<https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/academic/>

### Accommodation and Access Needs:

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented accessibility need should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 309-438-5853,

<https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/>

Please notify me in the first 2 weeks about any accommodation needs.

### Mental Health and Other Resources

**Note that confidential mental health resources are available.** If you're feeling stressed / anxious about classes, work, and life in general, do not hesitate to contact the professionals at Student Counseling Services, (309)438-3655. More information about this free and confidential resource is available here:

<http://www.counseling.illinoisstate.edu/>

### Notice of Recording:

The following policy comes from:

<https://prodev.illinoisstate.edu/online/privacy/>

"The University wants to make students aware that a course may be recorded by the faculty member for later use. Please understand that each faculty member makes an individual decision on whether recording and/or sharing their class materials is warranted. Any recordings that a faculty member makes available are for use by students enrolled in the class and are for the purpose of individual or group study only. **The recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments.** Please do not independently record the course without prior authorization from the faculty member or an approved accommodation from [Student Access and Accommodations Services](#) office."

**Tech Help** If at any time you have any technical problems, first contact ISU's tech services: 309-438-4357 or website, <https://ithelp.illinoisstate.edu/>.

Adobe Creative Cloud: Our campus has a campus-wide

subscription to all Adobe software. **You need to request access to the subscription.** Please do so in the first few weeks of the semester. Here's the link:  
<https://about.illinoisstate.edu/adobe/>

**Extra Credit:** You have a maximum of 2 chances to do a combo of the following, for up to 20 pts total:

1. Participate in the School's Research Pool:  
<https://sites.google.com/sit/> (.5 research credit =2.5 pts can be done twice for points; counts as 1 chance)
2. Create a flyer / social media graphic for any campus group or community organization + write a 1 page rationale about how you developed the concept using course concepts. The one requirement: you may not

use a template for the design, so, no using an online service (like canva) please. Submit to Canvas → Modules → Course Resources and Extras → Extra Credit. Up to 10 pts.

3. Want to learn more about the wide world of design? I'll recommend some docs throughout the semester. And also - find a documentary or a lecture on youtube (> 45 minutes). First, clear the choice with me (**email subject line: 240 Extra Credit Doc**). Then, watch the doc/lecture and take hand-written notes while watching. Submit photos of your notes + reflection statement about how this doc/lecture connects and what brought you to this particular video. Submit to Canvas → Modules → Course Resources and Extras → Extra Credit. Up to 10 p

In Class Work

**pairs and individuals looked at 2 page magazine spreads, drew sketches to break down the design / elements, and [used this worksheet.](#)**

This exercise was the midterm exam prep.

*(my goal is to scan some of the spreads + worksheets students did in class; but if I'm not able to get to that task, here's a similar exercise from a prior semester: [Past Semester 240 In-Class Page Analysis.pdf](#))*