

GRA 6930 · MxD Graduate Seminar · Spring 2026

Tuesdays · 11:45am–2:45pm

Overview

Description

One of the many important aims of the MFA degree is to help students develop a practice that stays relevant after graduation. This involves exploring alternative modes of thinking to navigate and expand approaches to design, and defining how artifacts engage the world.

Over sixteen weeks, this seminar considers contemporary approaches to design and their close relationship to cultural production. Students will explore existing systems of industry and labor as structures to question and adapt to. Along the way, they will build a strong foundation in design practice and experiment with strategies for writing about art and design, presenting through frameworks that connect ideas to material contexts.

Structure

Classes will consist of a series of assignments, lectures, film screenings, readings, discussions, writing exercises, and quick workshops that explore the significance of typographic forms and examine the way it is applied to various surfaces. Students will respond to various contemporary issues in graphic design such as consumerism and environmental ramifications associated with its production.

Open exchange is the core of this course and the classroom should feel like a safe place to share ideas and express opinions. Students are expected to respect each other and hear what others have to say. Everyone will take on an active role in each others' education.

Objectives

Students will explore ideas within the discipline of Graphic Design but are also encouraged to allow interests to cross into other disciplines like art, writing, photography, drawing, performance, etc. Focus as much on conceptual thinking and research as much as the articulation of ideas.

Students will be asked to develop ideas that can be both explained and understood. Share work with peers and present work in a professional manner by articulating ideas in both written and verbal form. Research skills will be strengthened through critique and documentation.

At the end of the course students will have learned to consider audience and context, to generate structure and apply it wherever appropriate, to see given material in new ways, and to discover formats and vehicles that embody a sense of narrative in both physical and digital spaces.

Supplies

Students will need a portable hard drive to store digital work as well as a portfolio to organize handouts, progress, finished assignments...etc. Materials needed may also vary based on students' individual needs.

Expectations

Attendance and Absences

Students should arrive on time and prepared for class. Both prompt and regular attendance is required. Late arrivals or early departures will result in a mark of absence. Students are expected to bring the appropriate tools and materials needed to work on projects during class, and have completed work ready for critique. Participating in critique will help form and mature both visual and verbal skills in a professional capacity.

Students must submit official documentation for any absences to be considered excused. Excused absences will not affect grades adversely if the work is made up. The student is responsible for making these arrangements and completing missed assignments.

Students with more than two unexcused absences during the semester will lose a letter grade for each additional absence, after the first two.

Religious Holidays

Students can be excused from class to observe religious holy days. Excused students will be given time to digest material or make up work for activities covered in their absence. A student who feels unreasonably denied their education due to religious beliefs or practices may seek redress through the student grievance procedure.

Twelve Day Rule

Students who participate in official athletic or scholastic extracurricular activities are permitted twelve scholastic day absences per semester without penalty. In any case, it is the student's responsibility to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

Tardiness

Whenever a student is more than 15 minutes late to class it will be marked as half an absence. Students are responsible for correcting any half marks to a whole mark when arriving after attendance is taken.

Covid-19 Policies

Covid Related Absences

Absences due to Covid follow standard attendance policies – please notify faculty prior to missing class. Students must provide a doctor's note going forward – do not assume Covid related absences are excused.

Face Coverings

Students and employees are welcome to wear face masks for their own and others protection. Vaccinations are not required but highly encouraged; this includes staying current with boosters to minimize related risks.

Expectations

Participation

Students are required to participate in all verbal critiques and class discussions in order to expand communication and presentation skills. Everyone will be graded on in-class participation.

Critique

Critiques are a large component of the design process. Feedback can be both positive and negative – students will learn to share constructive criticism and will train to work with a critical eye.

Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Any and all assignments submitted shall be the students' own work. A student discovered to have plagiarized work will receive disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

Recording

Students may not publish recordings without written consent. Students can record audio • video of class lectures for the following reasons only; all other purposes are prohibited:

¹ for personal • educational uses

² in connection with a complaint to the university

³ as evidence in a criminal or civil proceeding

Important Dates and Course Schedule

Subject to change. Assignment details will be announced in class.

Martin Luther King Jr. holiday • Jan 19

Spring Break • Mar 14–22

Work is due no later than Weds • Apr 22

No classes on reading days • Apr 23–24

Disabilities and Counseling

Students with a disability that require accommodations to complete this course are encouraged to discuss any learning needs with the instructor during the first week of term. Accommodations are provided as needed.

Please visit disability.ufl.edu/students/accommodations for information about accommodations. Counseling and wellness services are also available via phone at 352.392.1575 and/or e-mail at umatter@ufl.edu.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens.

Evaluations

Assessment Criteria

40%	An evaluation of each assignment as well as overall portfolio of work from the class and its cohesiveness
20%	Comprehension of assignments and the ability to define concepts in a clear and professional manner
20%	Participation in activities and thoughtful contribution to class discussions, workshops, and attendance
10%	Attention to detail and presentation; careful consideration of content, context, and format
10%	Growth, performance, and attitude towards learning that is observed throughout the full semester

Grading

Student meets all performance criteria. Work shows exploration, risk-taking, and growth. Projects are finely crafted, conceptually strong, and visually interesting. Fully participates, is receptive to criticism, and has healthy attitude towards learning and the classroom community.

A 90–100 EXCELLENT 4

Student shows better than average conceptual development and meets all of the performance criteria as set forth by the assignment. Work is above average with room for improvement. Participates and shows eagerness to be part of the classroom community.

B 80–89 GOOD 3

Student fulfills the assignment requirements, but lacks understanding of concepts, basic composition, and craftsmanship. Work is average and acceptable. Struggles to complete projects on time.

C 70–79 ACCEPTABLE 2

Student lacks understanding of basic design principles. Concepts and/or craftsmanship does not meet the criteria of assignments. Work is often incomplete and/or late. Attendance and participation is poor.

D 60–69 POOR 1

Notes

Exam Week

Students may opt to use exam week to catch up on late work or to turn in missing assignments for partial credit.

Letter A Grades

'A' grades are given for superior work. C grades are average. Visit catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies for more info on University grades and grading policies.