LMC 6311
SPRING 2018
VISUAL CULTURE
& DESIGN

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Syllabus (Current 1.4.18)

Details:
Class Meetings: Tuesdays / Thursdays, 12:00-12:50pm | TSRB 209
Labs: Fridays 2:10-4:55pm | Skyles 346

Professor: Yanni Loukissas
Office Hours: by appointment
Email: yanni.loukissas@lmc.gatech.edu

OBJECTIVE

To offer a practical and theoretical foundation for students seeking to both create and critique visual representations made using digital media.

OVERVIEW

Visual representations are among our oldest "things to think with." Structured by their own evolving rules and conventions, images (like languages) offer us important ways of describing and defining the world around us. Whether they are handmade, mechanical, or digital in origin (or some combination thereof), images have the power to shape and reshape our conceptions of objects, spaces, events, streetscapes, landscapes, and even cities. In our contemporary society, visual representations are only proliferating in their forms and their reach. Today we are surrounded by technologized surfaces that present representations for politics, science, entertainment, or advertising; each works within complex systems of meaning that transcend simple characterizations as formal, material, social, or ideological.

In this course, students will learn to both create and critique visual representations in digital (and some non-digital) media: drawings, models, infographics, animations, videos and visualizations. Moreover, they will learn to harness these techniques to express ideas at multiple scales, culminating in representations at the level of urban infrastructure. Through a series of hands-on assignments, paired with readings and discussions, students will develop aesthetic sensibilities, technical skills, and critical perspectives on visual representations and the various roles they play within society. At the end of the term, students will synthesize all their accumulated skills in a participatory mapping exercise, focused on the Atlanta Beltline: one of the largest, ongoing infrastructure projects in the city.

The course will consist of two weekly seminars/critiques as well as a weekly lab, during which students will be introduced to a range of tools for visual representation: 2D graphics, 3D modeling, video capture / editing, and geographic information systems.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To understand the practical and theoretical foundations of visual representation.
- To understand how visual representation can be used in design: for exploration, communication, or critical reflection.

- To learn the rules and conventions for creating visual representations with multiple digital and non-digital media, as well as how to break those rules creatively.
- To learn how to critique visual representations from formal as well as social and cultural perspectives.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are two types of assignments in this course:

Readings: These assignments will structure the theoretical portion of the course. Each student should complete readings before class and submit a written response on the T-Square blog. Clear instructions will be given at the time the reading assignment is made. All reading selections listed on the syllabus are tentative. Additional readings may be assigned as supporting material along with projects and written assignments.

Exercises (bi-weekly and final): These are substantial, multi-week efforts meant to develop your capacity to conceptualize and execute creative work. This requires the merger of technical expertise and creative vision. Projects also may demand that you identify and describe a creative goal, so that I can evaluate your work against your stated objective. Attention to detail in execution is appreciated, but rougher-edged well-conceived work is encouraged over very polished, unimaginative work.

GRADING

Grades will be given based on completeness and excellence, distributed as follows:

50% Bi-weekly Exercises
25% Final Exercise
15% Sketchbook
10% Reading Responses

Grades for bi-weekly and final exercises will be distributed A-F with +/- modifiers used sparingly. Submissions that meet only the basic requirements of the assignment will receive a "B". B means "satisfactory." To receive an "A" on assignments (and therefore, in the course), submissions must go above and beyond the basic requirements, showing exceptional care, creativity, and coherence. Submissions that fail to meet the requirements of the assignment or whose execution is incomplete or inadequate will receive a "C" or below. A letter grade will also be issued for your sketchbook at the end

of the term. The sketchbook should illustrate your process for each exercise throughout the term. Grades for reading responses will be pass/fail.

Deadlines: All assignments will include submission instructions and a due date. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day. Assignments turned in on the due date, but after the specified deadline will be penalized half a letter grade. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances (i.e. serious illness, family emergency). Failure to complete any of the projects may be grounds for a failing grade.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Students are encouraged to bring their laptops to class. It is important to keep in mind that this class focuses on the principles and processes of visual representation, not on technical skills; it is therefore up to you to develop and/or hone your facility with any tools required to complete assignments.

Attendance: Class attendance and participation is mandatory. Participation in class discussion is imperative because it allows you to explore the texts and themes collaboratively, and in the process, discover meanings and themes that you probably would not discover on your own. In addition, much of this class is based in critiques, which require full participation and cannot be replicated outside of class. Critiques are a central aspect of a studio culture. Most of your creative sensibilities will be learned through critiques. Failing to attend 3 or more classes is grounds for a failing grade.

Readings: These will be distributed electronically via T-Square using the "Resources" folder. Additional materials for projects will be distributed electronically. You will need your own laptop computer (Windows or Mac).

Visual Materials:
Mechanical pencil or "lead" holder (graphite: .5 or greater / HB or softer)
12" Metal ruler
Black ink pens (felt tip or similar)
Sketchbook with blank white pages (5" x 7" or larger)
Large sketch pad with blank white pages (11"x15") (i.e. Strathmore)
Flash drive

Sketchbook: Students will keep a detailed sketchbook throughout the course and submit it at the end of the term for a grade.

Software: Adobe Creative Suite, SketchUp, QGIS, and others to be added throughout the term. Most software platforms will be made available through Georgia Tech. However, students will be responsible for accessing any software not available through the school. It is also important to note that this is not a class on the software. While there will be tutorial sessions, I recommend that you consult the software help files, available books, if you need further guidance.

DEBATE, DIVERSITY, AND RESPECT

In this class, we will present and discuss a diversity of perspectives. Although you may not always agree with others' perspectives, you are required to be respectful of others' values and beliefs. Repeated inappropriate or abusive comments and/or behavior will be cause for disciplinary action. If you feel that your perspectives are being ignored or slighted, or you feel uncomfortable in the classroom for any reason, please make an appointment to talk with me outside of class.

THE COMMUNICATION CENTER

The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons, Suite 447. It is an excellent resource for any student (undergraduate or graduate) who wants help with a communication-related project. You can visit the center for help at any stage of the process for any project in any discipline. The knowledgeable and friendly tutors are available to help you develop and revise your projects. They are not available to "fix" your projects. Please do not ask the tutors to proofread or edit your work. For information on making an appointment please visit http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/makeappointment. If you need assistance with the appointment system, you can call 404-385-3612 or stop by the center. All services are free and confidential.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students should self-report to the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students at: 220 Student Services Building Atlanta, GA 30332-0285 404.894.2564 (voice) or 404.894.1664 (voice/TDD) www.adapts.gatech.edu/guidebook.html

PLAGIARISM WARNING

Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated, and will result in a failing grade for the course. Plagiarism is not only the uncredited copying of text from another's work but also copying ideas or images from other authors. Having said that, students are

encouraged to share and critique each other's' work. You are allowed (and encouraged) to get feedback from other students. Full collaboration, however, is only permitted on group projects. On all other assignments, you are expected to complete and turn in your own work. Students may not submit work on another's behalf. Unauthorized use of any previous semester course materials is prohibited. Violating these terms will be considered a direct violation of academic policy and will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code.

SCHEDULE

Details about forthcoming assignments will be added to this syllabus weekly, so you will need to check it regularly. This schedule is subject to change at any time. Updates and changes will be announced in class or by email to students.

Introduction

Week 1

January 9 (Tuesday)	Welcome / Overview
In Class Exercise:	[EX 0] *Visual survey*
January 11 (Thursday)	Discussion
Reading:	Lynch, 1960. *Image of the City* (excerpt)
January 12 (Friday)	Lab
	Introduction to technologies of visual representation
In Class Exercise:	[EX 1] *Drawing exercises*

Part I | Analytical Drawings

Week 2

January 16 (Tuesday)	Discussion
Reading: (excerpt)	Sturken and Cartwright, 2001. *Practices of Looking*

Kepes, 1969. *Language of Vision* (excerpt)

January 18 (Thursday)	In Class Exercise
January 19 (Friday)	Lab
	Instruction in Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop

Week 3

January 23 (Tuesday)	In Class Exercise
January 25 (Thursday) *Exercise Due:*	Critique [EX 2] *Object Drawings*
January 26 (Friday)	Lab
	Instruction in Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop

Part 2 | Spatial Models

Week 4

January 30 (Tuesday)	Discussion
Reading:	Ching, 2010. *Design Drawing* (excerpt) Turkle, 2009. *Simulation and its Discontents* (excerpt)
February 1 (Thursday)	In Class Exercise
February 2 (Friday)	Lab
	Instruction in Sketch Up

Week 5

February 6 (Tuesday)	In Class Exercise
February 8 (Thursday)	Critique

Exercise Due:	[EX 3] *Spatial Models*
February 9 (Friday)	Lab
	Instruction in Sketch Up

Part 3 | Information Graphics

Week 6

February 13 (Tuesday)	Discussion
Reading:	Tufte, 1997. *Visual Explanations* (excerpt) Kinross, 1984. "The Rhetoric of Neutrality"
February 15 (Thursday)	In Class Exercise
February 16 (Friday)	Lab
	Instruction in Video and Editing

Week 7

February 20 (Tuesday)	In Class Exercise
February 22 (Thursday)	Critique
Exercise Due:	[EX 4] *Event Infographics*
February 23 (Friday)	Lab
	Instruction in Video and Editing

Part 4 | Moving Images

Week 8

February 27 (Tuesday)	Discussion
Reading:	Manovich, 2002. *Language of New Media* (excerpt)

DeCerteau, 2011. The *Practice of Everyday Life* (excerpt)

March 1 (Thursday)   In Class Exercise

March 2 (Friday)   Lab

                            Instruction in Video and Editing

Week 9

March 6 (Tuesday)   In Class Exercise

March 8 (Thursday)   Critique

   Exercise Due: [EX 5] *Moving Images*

March 9 (Friday)   Lab

                            Instruction in Mapping Technologies

Part 5 | Data Visualizations

Week 10

March 13 (Tuesday)   Discussion

   Reading: Ben Fry, 2008. *Visualizing Data* (excerpt)
                            Loukissas, Forthcoming. *All Data are Local* (excerpt)

March 14: Withdrawal Deadline
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March 15 (Thursday)   In Class Exercise

March 16 (Friday)   Lab

                            Instruction in Mapping Technologies

Week 11   (Spring Break)

March 20 (Tuesday)   No Class

March 22 (Thursday)   No Class

Week 12

March 27 (Tuesday)   In Class Exercise

March 29 (Thursday)   Critique

   Exercise Due: [EX 6] *Urban Mapping*

March 30 (Friday)   Lab

          Instruction in Mapping Technologies

Part 6 | Participatory Actions

Week 13

April 3 (Tuesday)   Discussion
   Reading: PLOTS, 2011. "Grassroots Mapping"
          Ehn, 2008. "Participation in Design Things"

April 5 (Thursday)   In Class Exercise

April 6 (Friday)   Lab

          Technologies of Representation Share

Week 14

April 10 (Tuesday)   Critique

   Exercise Due: [EX 7] *Final Project* (Preliminary)

April 12 (Thursday)   Critique continued

April 13 (Friday)   Lab

          Technologies of Representation Share

Week 15

April 17 (Tuesday)   Working Session

April 19 (Thursday)   Working Session

Part 7 | Wrap Up

April 20 (Friday)   Final Review

      Exercise Due: [EX 7] *Final Project*

Week 16

April 24 (Tuesday)   Course Reflection

      Exercise Due: *Submit Sketchbooks*