DOCUMENT DESIGN & VISUAL RHETORIC

ENG 430 | section 001 | MWF 1–1:50pm | Robert Bell 284

Dr. Allison Hitt
(call me Dr. Allison)
she/her/hers

ahhitt@bsu.edu
Zoom office hours: Mondays 10–11am,
Tuesdays 12–2pm, & by appointment

SYLLABUS BREAKDOWN

COURSE DESCRIPTION

from the BSU course catalog

Explores visual rhetoric, particularly focused on theories and best practices for the production of document designs. Familiarizes students with processes and techniques for producing and refining professional document designs.

from Dr. Allison

We often talk in writing courses about composing the content for print and digital texts, but another important part of the composing process is design. Designing information involves considering the **structure** (organizing & chunking information) and the **elements** (color, typeface, images & captions) that help readers understand and make meaning with texts. Document design helps readers use the texts that we *compose.* In ENG 430, we will discuss theories of accessible and usable document design and visual rhetoric and spend time analyzing the visual choices of professional texts. You will use professional design software to compose documents for different contexts and audiences in order to better understand the rhetorical, technical, and ethical dimensions of designing (as well as composing) texts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
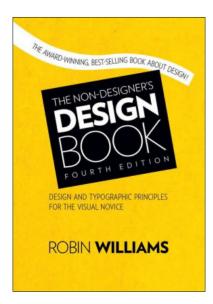
In ENG 430, you will learn to do the following:
- Evaluate and critique theories of document design and visual rhetoric

- Identify and employ strategies to read and analyze the images and visual documents you encounter in everyday life and in professional environments
- Practice the steps involved in the design of documents, including brainstorming, researching, sketching and prototyping, constructive critiquing, and revising
- Use design principles, color, typography, white space, and other visual design elements to clarify content and appeal to audiences
- Create documents using a range of design technology: Microsoft Word, Adobe software, and free design platforms
- Create documents that are accessible and usable to a wide range of audiences
- Reflect on the quality and rhetorical effectiveness of the documents you design

REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. Williams, Robin. **The Non-Designer's Design Book,** 4th ed. Peachpit, 2015. 978-0133966152.
2. a subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud (specifically, access to InDesign and Photoshop)
3. Microsoft Word
4. a Tumblr account

As students, you have free access to both Creative Cloud and Microsoft Office. The classroom computers have this software, but it's important that you can access the core programs we use this semester on your personal computers, too.

I will make additional readings available through Canvas, which you will use regularly to submit work and to access the course calendar, weekly modules, readings, assignment prompts, and class notes. Consider downloading the free smartphone app.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Project 1 Syllabus Redesign (50 pts)**

   For the first project, you will redesign a course syllabus. Your redesign will be informed by readings about design theories and principles, and it will introduce you to accessible page design using Microsoft Word. Deliverables: syllabus (saved as both a .doc and PDF), 1-page reflection. **Due 9/18**

2. **Project 2 Event Flyer (50 pts)**

   For the second project, you will design an event flyer. Your design will be informed by readings about visual rhetoric and grids, and this project will introduce you to page design using Adobe InDesign. Deliverables: flyer, 1-page reflection. **Due 10/2**

3. **Project 3 Résumé (150 pts)**

   For the third project, you will locate a job or internship posting and create two résumés for that position: one using Microsoft Word and one using InDesign. This project will introduce you to tailoring the content and design of professional documents to specific situations, as well as the basics of typography. Deliverables: two résumés, 1-page reflection. **Due 10/30**

4. **Project 4 Print and Digital Zine (200 pts)**

   For the final project, you will create a multi-page zine in two formats on a topic of your choice. Although the content will be the same, you will create a physical version (with paper, photocopied or collaged elements, and hand lettering) and a digital version using InDesign and Photoshop. This module will build on what you've learned about page design and introduce theories of embodied design and typography as rhetorical, expressive, and laden with meaning. We will host a zine fest during finals week for you to distribute your zines. Deliverables: Print zine, digital zine, 1-page reflection. **Due 12/15**

5. **Visual Reading Responses (100 pts)**

   In place of traditional reading responses, you will compose visual responses throughout the semester that synthesize ideas from the readings. You can use free programs like Canva or Venngage to create these responses, or I welcome you to use InDesign for some low-stakes practice with Adobe software. Responses should be brief in terms of text (150–300 words) because I want you to focus on the design. Responses must fit on a single side of legal-sized (8.5x14") sheet of paper. The font sizes cannot be smaller than 10pt and the margins no smaller than 0.5". We will use these responses to guide reading discussions. There are five scheduled throughout the semester, and you need to complete four. Deliverables: four responses

6. **Digital Curation (50 pts)**

   All designers need inspiration—an infographic that visualizes data in a persuasive way, a free font to download or template to use, a soothing color palette, a flyer. Throughout the semester, you will add well-designed documents to our course Tumblr: docdesign.tumblr.com/. All posts must include a caption that describes the image and briefly contextualizes it within theories of document design or visual rhetoric. Deliverables: five posts

7. **Process Work (150 pts)**

   Designing, like writing, is a process, and throughout the semester I will ask you to submit drafts and sketches toward major projects, as well as complete in-class workshops to gain experience with different design software.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

For each major project, you will be assessed on a combination of technical skill and rhetorical choices: audience awareness, genre conventions, organization, accessible style, effective delivery, and persuasive rhetorical strategies. All major projects will include specific instructions and evaluation criteria on Canvas. Visual reading responses, Tumblr posts, and process work will be evaluated as complete/incomplete.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93-100%	90-92%	87-89%	83-86%	80-82%	77-79%	73-76%	70-72%	67-69%	63-66%	60-62%	59% & below
697-750	675-696	652-674	622-651	600-621	577-599	547-576	525-546	502-524	472-501	450-471	449 & below

I will provide written feedback on each major assignment that you submit. Please read that feedback carefully prior to emailing me about your grade.

EXPECTATIONS & COURSE POLICIES

Accessibility

I am committed to creating a classroom environment that is respectful of and inclusive to different learning and writing processes—whether that is in person or through Canvas. All the multimodal materials I share will be made accessible: videos will be captioned, audio will have transcripts, and images will be described. If we can work together to make the class more accessible, let me know.

Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Attendance

Writing and designing are social processes, and I invite you to take part in these processes by regularly attending class and completing in-class work. We will spend class time discussing readings, working on major projects, and collaborating on editing exercises. Because we are still operating within a COVID landscape, you will not be penalized for absences this semester. Let me be clear: That does *not* mean that I don't expect you to attend class! Your participation is highly valued, and we all expect you to attend regularly. *If you need to attend a class session by Zoom, please email me by 11am the day of class.*

If you can, let me know about your absence prior to class; otherwise, follow up with me through email: ahhitt@bsu.edu.

Basic Needs Security

I encourage anyone who lacks access to sufficient food to eat or a safe and stable place to live to contact the folks at Student Affairs and/or visit the Basic Needs Security Hub: www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/dean-of-students/basic-needs-hub. This resource offers information about food insecurity, housing support, financial resources, wellness, and homelessness.

COVID-19 Safety & Wellness

The university no longer has a COVID-19 policy, but that doesn't mean that COVID is no longer a risk. Individuals are encouraged to make personal health decisions regarding wearing a well-fitted face mask. I wear a mask for both my and your safety, and I will hold Zoom office hours this semester.

If you are sick—even if you don't think it's COVID—please do not come to class. I am immunocompromised, and I am a part-time caretaker for a sick parent. There is often pressure in higher ed to prioritize your *work* rather than *yourself*, but I recommend prioritizing both your physical and mental health. If you get sick this semester and miss an extended amount of class, we can work together to develop a catch-up plan.

Diversity & Inclusion

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found at www.bsu.edu/campuslife/multicultural-center.

Late Work

Assignments are due by the time specified on Canvas. However, there's a good chance that at some point (or at many points) throughout the semester, you will need some extra help. *You can request a one-week extension for any assignment excluding the final project by emailing me*.

Respect

I ask you to be respectful and remain open to ideas and perspectives that challenge your own. I expect you to be respectful when participating in class discussions, interacting with me in class and through email, and working with your peers. *You do not have to agree with someone to treat them, their ideas, and their work respectfully.*

Technology

Technology is integral to writing and designing, and we will be using different technologies this semester to complete work and communicate. You will need to check Canvas regularly to access weekly modules, assignments, additional readings, discussion boards, and class notes. You will also work with Adobe Creative Cloud programs like InDesign and Photoshop to gain familiarity with professional design software. You do *not* need familiarity with these programs coming into this class.

In-Class Technology Usage
I expect you to be responsible with your technology use. You are welcome to bring a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to class for taking notes and completing in-class work. You are welcome to wear headphones during individual work but not during lectures or group work. If you need to take a phone call, please step outside to take the call. If I ask you repeatedly to stop doing something or your technology use becomes distracting to others, you will be asked to put it away.

Canvas and Online Communications
You will use Canvas to submit work, access calendars, download assignment prompts and readings, and contribute to the class notes. I expect you to check your email regularly, just as you will expect me to do. *All email messages to me regarding this class should include the course number in the subject line and should be respectful and professional.* If your message is urgent, please note that in the subject line.

COURSE CALENDAR

In the schedule below, the left column indicates the topic we will discuss in class that day and what is due. The right column indicates what homework you need to complete for the following class. With the many unknowns of this semester, it's possible that our schedule will change. You will receive an updated calendar if that's the case.

WEEK 1	
Mon, 8/21: Introduction to ENG 430 and each other	Purchase the textbook and create a Tumblr account. Let Dr. Allison know the email address associated with the account so you can post to the class Tumblr. Read PDFs "What Is Document Design?" (Kimball & Hawkins) and "What Is Information Design?" (Coates & Ellison).
Wed, 8/23: Introduction to information design & document design	Read PDF "Principles of Design" (Kimball & Hawkins). Compose a visual reading response that synthesizes the ideas from our readings about document design. Post to Canvas and be prepared to share informally in class.
Fri, 8/25: Design principles due today: reading response #1	Read PDF "Theories of Design" (Kimball & Hawkins).
WEEK 2	
Mon, 8/28: Design theories	Read PDF "Understanding Visual Rhetoric" (Cohn) and "What Is Visual Rhetoric?" (Newbold). Compose a visual reading response that synthesizes the ideas from our readings about visual rhetoric. Post to Canvas and be prepared to share informally in class.

Wed, 8/30: Visual rhetoric due today: reading response #2	Imagine that you are creating a back-to-school guide for your Ball State peers. Brainstorm 3–5 pieces of advice.
Fri, 9/1: Visual rhetoric exercise (Canva)	Read Chapters 1–6 in *The Non-Designer's Design Book* (Williams). Identify a visual text that exemplifies one or a combination of the four main design principles outlined by Williams and post it to the class Tumblr.
WEEK 3	
Mon, 9/4: NO CLASS – Labor Day	
Wed, 9/6: C-R-A-P (contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity) due today: example of well-designed document	
Fri, 9/8: Slide design exercise (Google Slides)	
WEEK 4	
Mon, 9/11: Introduction to Project 1 Introduction to Styles in Microsoft Word and Google Docs	Read PDFs "Pages" (Kimball & Hawkins) and "Hierarchy" (Lupton).
Wed, 9/13: Page design	Prepare a draft for feedback during Friday's lab day. Post draft as a Word doc to Canvas.
Fri, 9/15: Working on Project 1; group feedback session due today: draft for feedback	Revise and finalize your syllabus redesign based on the feedback you received. Submit the two versions of your redesign and your 1-page memo to Canvas by the start of class on Monday, September 18th.

WEEK 5	
Mon, 9/18: Introduction to Project 2 Visual rhetorical analysis of flyers **due today: Project 1 Syllabus Redesign**	Read Chapter 7 "Design with Color" and "Flyers" (pp. 125–8). Consider posting an example of effective color use or flyer design to the class Tumblr this week.
Wed, 9/20: Color theory and accessibility	
Fri, 9/22: Flyer design exercise (Canva)	Read PDF "Grid" (Lupton). Sketch (by hand) two different event flyer designs. Post to Canvas.
WEEK 6	
Mon, 9/25: InDesign 101: using grids, creating and formatting text boxes, placing images due today: two sketches	Work on Project 2 flyers.
Wed, 9/27: In-class drafting	Prepare a draft for feedback. Post draft as a PDF to Canvas.
Fri, 9/29: Working on Project 2; group feedback session due today: draft for feedback	Revise and finalize your flyer designs based on the feedback you received. Submit your flyer and 1-page memo to Canvas by the start of class on Monday, October 2nd.
WEEK 7	
Mon, 10/2: Introduction to Project 3 Representing yourself professionally through content and design **due today: Project 2 Event Flyer**	Read Chapter 9 "The Essentials of Typography" and Chapter 10 "Type (& Life)." Identify a professional visual design (e.g., a business card, a logo, a website, an infographic) that effectively uses concordant or contrasting fonts and post to the class Tumblr.

Wed, 10/4: Typography 101 due today: example of concordant or contrasting fonts	
Fri, 10/6: Typography exercises; downloading & installing fonts	Read Chapter 11 "Categories of Type," Chapter 12 "Type Contrasts," and <u>"Times New Roman, Dubbed the Sweatpants of Fonts, is a Bad Choice for Résumés, Typography Experts."</u> Compose a visual reading response that synthesizes the ideas from our readings about typography. Post to Canvas and be prepared to share informally in class.
WEEK 8	
Mon, 10/9: NO CLASS – Fall Break	
Wed, 10/11: Combining type choices for rhetorical effect due today: reading response #3	Read "Résumés" (pp. 145–8) and PDF "Résumés." Bring a working draft of your résumé to Friday's lab day.
Fri, 10/13: Drafting/workshopping résumés	Finalize your résumé, including applying Styles accurately and consistently, and submit for feedback. Post to Canvas.
WEEK 9	
Mon, 10/16: Adapting content and design for different rhetorical contexts due today: résumé for feedback (MS Word)	Revise your résumé based on the feedback you received.
Wed, 10/18: In-class sketching for résumé redesigns	Sketch (by hand or using InDesign) a redesign for your résumé, indicating specific design and typographic elements. Post to Canvas.

Fri, 10/20: Résumé template workshop (InDesign) due today: résumé sketch	

WEEK 10	
Mon, 10/23: In-class drafting/InDesign troubleshooting	
Wed, 10/25: In-class drafting/InDesign troubleshooting	Prepare a draft of your résumé redesign for feedback during Friday's lab day. Post draft as a PDF to Canvas.
Fri, 10/27: Working on Project 3; group feedback session due today: draft for feedback (InDesign)	Revise and finalize your résumés based on the feedback you received. Submit the two versions of your résumé and your 1-page memo to Canvas by the start of class on Monday, October 30th.

WEEK 11	
Mon, 10/30: The social, cultural, and political dimensions of design **due today: Project 3 Résumé Remix**	Read PDF "Type Reveals Culture: A Defense of 'Bad' Type."
Wed, 11/1: Cultural dimensions of typography and design	Read PDF "Degenerate Typography" (Thomas) and watch "How A Typeface Helped Launch Apollo." Compose a visual reading response that synthesizes the ideas from our readings about typography and culture. Post to Canvas and be prepared to share informally in class.
Fri, 11/3: Political dimensions of typography due today: reading response #4	Read PDF: "The Development of Typeface Personas and the Consequences of Perceived Identities" (Turner).

WEEK 12	
Mon, 11/6: Introduction to Project 4 The rise of DIY culture & aesthetic	Read "Nostalgia for Handwriting: The Rhetoric of Comics Lettering" (Kashtan). Compose a visual reading response that synthesizes the ideas from our readings about typography and identity. Post to Canvas and be prepared to share informally in class.
Wed, 11/8: The emotional appeal of handwriting and handmade documents due today: reading response #5	I will provide glue sticks, scissors, markers, and a few magazines for Friday's workshop. Feel free to bring any craft materials you want!
Fri, 11/10: Multimodal craft workshop	Draft the content of your zine.
WEEK 13	
Mon, 11/13: Analysis of print and digital zines	Work on the content/design of your print zines. Bring materials to class with you.
Wed, 11/15: In-class drafting	Prepare a draft of your print zine for feedback during Friday's lab day. Bring to class.
Fri, 11/17: Print zine workshopping due today: draft for feedback	Finalize your print zine for feedback. You can either scan it to create a digital file to upload to Canvas or submit your zine in class on Monday.
WEEK 14	
Mon, 11/20: Translating designs from print to digital due today: print zine (scanned)	This week, think about how you might translate your print zine to a digital format: Sketch (by hand or using InDesign) a multi-page outline of what your zine could look like. Post to Canvas.
Wed, 11/22 & Fri, 11/24: NO CLASS — Thanksgiving Break	

WEEK 15	
Mon, 11/27: Photoshop basics: resizing, cropping, and editing images due today: digital zine sketch	Begin working on your digital zines. Make sure you have access to the most recent copy in class this week.
Wed, 11/29: Zine drafting	
Fri, 12/1: Photoshop and InDesign troubleshooting	

WEEK 16	
Mon, 12/4: Zine drafting	Continue working on your digital zines. Make sure you have access to the most recent copy in class this week.
Wed, 12/6: Zine drafting	Prepare a draft for feedback during Friday's lab day. Post draft as a PDF to Canvas.
Fri, 12/8: Working on Project 4; group feedback session due today: digital zine draft	We will be hosting a zine fest during finals week where you will print a few copies of either your print or digital zine to distribute to your peers. We will decide as a class the date/time of the event.

WEEK 17 — FINALS WEEK	
Mon, 12/11: FAQ for the zine fest/printing troubleshooting	

The final examination period for this class is Friday, December 15th from 12–2pm. **You will submit Project 4 (a scanned copy of your print zine, your digital zine, and a reflection) to Canvas by 12pm.**