

American University of Beirut  
Faculty of Engineering & Architecture  
Department of Architecture & Design  
Graphic Design Program

**GD 325 GRAPHIC DESIGN HISTORY AND THEORY**

Fall 2006-07 / Prof. Z. Maasri / TTH 4:00 - 5:30 pm

Office: 207, ext: 3669, e-mail: zmo5@aub.edu.lb

Office Hours: Monday 11:00 to 1:00 or upon appointment

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**SYLLABUS**

**'Graphic Design'** as we know it today, has only existed as a discipline since mid 20th century. Programs in Graphic Design education started shortly after world war II, answering the growing demands of a post war consumer culture. Until then, Graphic Design was confused within a larger historical narrative of 'visual communication'. The latter has existed ever since thoughts and language needed to take physical form. This vast narrative relied on specialists trained in different fields varying historically from craftsmen, to printers, typographers, artists, commercial artists, and advertising designers. As we shall see in the course, many combined several of these fields: art, craft, industry, and commerce, their overlap plays a key role in understanding how GD came into being.

The rise of GD as a discipline set forth a gradual emergence of historical inquiries and critical reflections on its practice. That very recent engagement (*starting mainly in the eighties*) in a theoretical discourse around GD shows signs of a maturing discipline, growing more aware of its operation within social and economic conditions and its tight relation to the shifting media of production and diffusion.

**Course description and objectives**

Starting with Gutenberg's 42 line bible as the first specimen of movable type printing, the course will cover a period of time from the 15th century till today. However, the objective is not that of a chronological overview of period styles, the course instead is conceived of thematically with the intention to address the conceptualization of Graphic Design as a critical discipline directed by various interpretative inquiries into the History and Theory of visual communication.

The course is formulated in a way that enables the students to take part in the current debate around GD history and theory. Lectures, assigned readings from diverse resources, discussions and analytical writing should provide the students with a body of knowledge where there is room to raise questions and find answers not just by looking at the work itself but by situating it in a wider socio-economic context and historical narrative.

Last but not least, students should be able to build a bridge between historical/theoretical knowledge and current practice.

### Course structure

The course will be divided thematically into five frames. Each frame consists of a series of lectures, student presentations, assigned readings, a discussion and a short essay (around 1000 words) to be presented at each discussion session. For the last frame, a paper (3000 words) is required instead of a short essay.

The students' **presentations** will address the work of particular contemporary designers in relation to the themes covered in the respective frame.

The **discussion session** will mark the end of one frame, whereby we will have an open debate around the issues addressed in the lectures and readings. You should come well prepared to class: have thoroughly read the assigned readings, noted down questions, arguments and brought examples to be raised and addressed during the discussion. There could be a drop quiz during any discussion session during the semester.

The **short essay** is regarded as a synthesis of the covered frame. It needs to be analytical and critical while addressing a specific question/issue, of your choice, related to the thematic of the frame and supported by the literature covered in the same frame.

The **Final exam**, will test your capacities in the analysis of visual artifacts, based on the knowledge acquired throughout the course.

### Course policies

- Attendance and active class participation is of prime importance.
- **NO LATE SUBMISSION**
- **Plagiarism** is considered unethical and anti-academic.  
Penalty may lead to a zero and a double Dean's warning.

### Grading System

Short paper (x4)	10%
Presentation	10%
Term paper	20%
Final exam	20%
Attendance*	10%

\* includes active involvement in the course, specially during discussion sessions

## COURSE CALENDER

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### 1 The influence of Technology

- 1.1 Tuesday October 3  
**The development of typographic printing (15-18th cent.)**
- 1.2 Thursday October 5  
**Visual communication in the industrial age (19th cent.)**
- 1.3 Tuesday October 10  
**The Arts and Crafts: social and aesthetic reform (19th cent.)**
- 1.4 Thursday October 12  
**Presentations: Emigré; Fuse; Jean-François Porchez**
- 1.5 Tuesday October 17  
*Discussion / Due Essay 1*

### 2 The influence of the Avant-Garde

- 2.1 Thursday October 19  
**Representation and abstraction in early poster design (1900-1930s)**
- 2.2 Tuesday October 24 or Thursday October 26 (Depending on Fitr Holiday)  
**Futurism and Dada: The concept of the Avant Garde movements (1909-1930s)**
- 2.3 Tuesday October 31  
**Constructivism: The social role of the Artist (1917-1930s)**
- 2.4 Thursday November 2  
**Presentations: Grapus/Gérard Paris Clavel; Barbara kruger; Jonathan Barnbrook**
- 2.5 Tuesday November 7  
*Discussion / Due Essay 2*

### 3 Modernism between ideology and style

- 3.1 Thursday November 9  
**Modernism: Functionalism and objectivity (Germany-Switzerland, 1920s-1940s)**
- 3.2 Tuesday November 14  
**An adapted Modernism (Holland and France, 1930s-1950s)**
- 3.3 Thursday November 16  
**An adapted Modernism (The US 1930s-1950s)**
- 3.4 Tuesday November 21  
**Modernism: universality and neutrality (Switzerland and US 1950s-1960s)**
- 3.5 Thursday November 23  
**Presentations: Studio Dumbar; Karel Martens; Meta Design**
- 3.6 Tuesday November 28  
*Discussion / Due essay 3*

## **4 Graphic Design from subculture to mainstream**

- 4.1 Thursday November 30  
**Pop, Op and Psychedelia (1960s-70s)**
- 4.2 Tuesday December 5  
**Punk from subculture to mainstream (1970s-80s)**
- 4.3 Thursday December 7  
**Breaking up with Modernism (1980s)**
- 4.4 Tuesday December 12  
**Presentations: Tibor Kalman/M&Co; Anthon Beeke; Ed Fella**
- 4.5 Thursday December 14  
*Discussion / Due essay 4*

## **5 Graphic Design after the Cultural Turn**

- 5.1 Tuesday December 19  
**Introduction to Poststructuralist theory and method**
- 5.2 Thursday December 21  
**Graphic Design Research and Cultural Theory**

### **X-MAS + NEW YEAR VACATION**

- 5.3 Thursday January 4  
**Deconstruction in Graphic Design Practice (mid 80s)**
- 5.4 Tuesday January 9  
**Presentations: Bruce Mau; Tomato; Lust (NL)**
- 5.5 Thursday January 11  
*Discussion + Final Review*

Tuesday January 23  
**Final Exam**

Thursday January 25  
**Due Term Paper**

## COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## USEFUL WEB LINKS

### **Eye magazine**

Eye website, an index of the quarterly print magazine for everyone involved in graphic design and visual culture  
[www.eyemagazine.com](http://www.eyemagazine.com)

### **Art Directors Club**

International not-for-profit organization of leading creatives in advertising, graphic design, interactive media, broadcast design, typography, packaging, environmental design, photography, illustration, and related disciplines.  
[www.adcny.org](http://www.adcny.org)

### **American Institute of Graphic Arts**

AIGA is the place design professionals turn to first to exchange ideas and information, participate in critical analysis and research and advance education and ethical practice.  
[www.aiga.org](http://www.aiga.org)

### **ATypI**

Founded in 1957, ATypI (Association Typographique Internationale) is the only independent worldwide organisation dedicated to type and typography and provides the structure for communication, information and action amongst the international community through conferences, publications, competitions, discussion lists, country delegates, and other activities.  
[www.atypi.org](http://www.atypi.org)

### **Icograda**

International Council of Graphic Design Associations  
The professional world body for graphic design and visual communication.  
[www.icograda.org](http://www.icograda.org)

### **Amsterdam University Library/Typographical Library**

[www.uba.uva.nl/en/exhibitions/old/typography.html](http://www.uba.uva.nl/en/exhibitions/old/typography.html)

### **designpedagogy**

Interactive learning resource relating to design theory and graphic design.  
[www.designpedagogy.com](http://www.designpedagogy.com)

### **Typotheque.com**

After more than two 'beta' years, Typotheque is now on-line, new and completed, offering exclusive fine-quality fonts, type utilities, type-related essays, interviews and reviews.  
[www.typotheque.com](http://www.typotheque.com)

### **Design Observer**

[www.designobserver.com](http://www.designobserver.com)