Course title CFA AR 386/497 Typography.

“From Aldo Manuzio to a Digital Foundry”

Instructor: Lorenzo Mason
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Class schedule: Thursday 11 am – 13 am

Office hours: after class or by appointment

Course value: 2 credits
COURSE OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The underlying theme of this course is ‘learning from history’. Contextualized within the rich historical framework of Renaissance Venice and its typographic tradition, this course will focus on the use of past as the main point of origin of contemporary typography. Following a surge of interest in inaccessible, undigitalised fonts over the previous decade, this course will focus on digitalising one weight of a relevant typeface.

Starting from a historical research into a typographer or designer of choice, you will gain both the manual and digital skills necessary to create a typeface, as well as fundamental aspects of typographic composition and printing. The course will be complemented by a field trip to “Tipoteca” and regular visits to relevant sites in Venice.

- Objectives – Through this course you will learn about the history of typography and use of historical references as a point of origin rather than appropriation. You will gain manual drawing skills, learn about the elements of a typeface and how to manipulate them to obtain different results while maintaining visibility and visual impact, learn how to transfer manual designs to digital, and how to use the software Fontlab. The final project of the course will see you fully realize a font starting from historical research through to the design of a printed specimen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “The Elements of Typographic Style”, Robert Bringhurst
- “An Essay on Typography”, Eric Gill
- “Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History” Robin Kinross
• “Designing Type”, Karen Cheng
• “The Stroke: Theory of Writing”, Gerrit Noordzij
• “Signs and Symbols: Their Design and Meaning” Adrian Frutiger

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

• List the learning outcomes for the program
• Demonstrate increased proficiency in Italian language.
• Articulate an individual artistic voice and methodology and express how this has been influenced by Venice.
• Gain a deeper understanding of art and aesthetics and generate a body of work which will be evaluated in terms of how it has progressed and matured.
• Develop an awareness of cultural difference and an understanding of culture’s role in shaping beliefs and practices.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

• Ability to investigate and employ form and content meaningfully
• Ability to develop and refine graphic design drawing skills
• Ability to build knowledge and develop core skills related to typography design
• Ability to apply experiment intentionally
• Ability to select and use effective methods in the production of your work
• Ability to examine, present and reflect on your work and its validity within challenging and complex situations
GRADING CRITERIA

- Project 1 10%
- Project 2 15%
- Project 3 15%
- Final project 50%
- Attendance and participation 10%

COURSE PROJECTS

Typography P1 – Brief theoretical research booklet

“If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday” — Pearl Buck

What better way to start learning something new than by looking at the past? You will choose a type designer and carry out a research on his or her work. The research paper shouldn’t be more than 1000 words long and will be designed to take to form of a booklet. Through the use of images and text you will tell the story of the designer, their work in typeface design and their role in history. The only limit: the designer you choose should have designed at least one typeface that hasn’t been digitalized as of yet. This will be the starting point for further exercises over the course of the semester.

- Final presentation P1: Digitally printed booklet, up to 24 pages, A5 size, full color.

Typography P2 – The character of the typeface poster
To better understand the ideas behind the typeface that you have chosen, you will be asked to design a poster that explores the qualities of the design. By starting from the drawing analysis done in class, you can use your newly acquired knowledge to design a
poster that expresses the key characteristics of the typeface. Bold letters, uppercase text or curious glyphs – you can use them all to create a Futurist-like design or you can simply line out all the letters on the poster – the choice is up to you. By looking at the posters your audience should understand what is the ‘character’ of your chosen typeface.

• Final presentation P2: Digitally printed poster, 70 x 100 cm, full color.

Typography P3 – The specimen book
The final project consist in designing the specimen of the typeface that you have worked on digitalizing over the course of the semester. Specimen books are the printed brochures or catalogs of type designers, offered to advertise the range and quality of type available. They have been an essential part of the printing trade since soon after the invention of printing with movable metal type in the 15th century.

The ideal specimen book shows the typefaces in a range of sizes, using short sentences rather than A-Z strings (which are of little use for getting a feel for the type in use). Color is sometimes used, but usually very discreetly, such as a red title. Samples in text sizes (6 to 14 point) typically show a longish block of text to help one judge readability, but would not be shown for decorative and display typefaces. It is quite common not to show a complete character set: foundries have always been concerned about piracy. Instead, a chart might be shown in an appendix where the characters included in all the foundry’s fonts are shown. You will use your knowledge in editorial design as well as knowledge of type-setting to design your own specimen book.

• Final presentation P1: Digitally printed book, up to 48 pages, A5 size, full color.
ASSESSMENT

Conceptual and visual skills; design history and theory; technical proficiency, craftsmanship and execution; risk taking and personal development; motivation and communication with instructor; being prepared to answer questions or present individual work; participation in class and openness to suggestions.

BU POLICY

Attendance. Boston University Padua students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trips required for the class. Students should note that attendance will be taken into account by faculty when determining final grades. Please notice that weekend trips and family visits are not acceptable reasons for either lateness or absence.

Plagiarism. Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another’s work and presenting it as you own. Dictionary definitions of plagiarism frequently include terms such as ‘theft’ or ‘steal’. Plagiarism is, in fact, intellectual theft. It is one of the most serious forms of academic misconduct. Plagiarism committed by a student will certainly result in course failure and may result in suspension or dismissal. For more details please see

Boston University’s Code of Student Responsibilities: http://www.bu.edu/lifebook/university policies/policiescode.html

Religious Holidays. Boston University’s Office of the University Registrar states: “The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled
classes to be rescheduled.” See Chapter 151C of the General Laws, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Disabilities Accomodations. If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 617-353-3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. For more information, please visit: http://www.bu.edu/disability

COURSE CALENDAR

4 February 2016

- Course presentation and introduction
- Theory: Introduction to history of typography
- Practice: P1 handout

5 February 2016

- Program Field Trip

11 February 2016

- Theory: from hand drawing to digital tools
- Practice: P1 Brief presentation of chosen designers

18 February 2016

- Theory: Introduction to Fontlab
- Practice: P1 presentation and review
- P2 handout
25 February 2016

- Theory: Learning more about Fontlab
- Practice: Drawing type by hand
- Practice: working on P2

26 February 2016

- Program Field Trip

3 March 2016

- Practice: From drawing by hand to Fontlab
- Practice: working on P2

4 March 2016

- CFA AR 386: visit to the Tipoteca (workshop)

10 March 2016

- Practice: working in Fontlab
- Practice: working on P2

17 March 2016

- Theory: Learning more about Fontlab
- Practice: P2 presentation and review
- P3 handout

18 March 2016

- Program Field Trip
24 March 2016

- No Class

31 March 2016

- Practice: working on P3

7 April 2016

- Practice: working on P3

12 – 14 April 2016

No Class

15 – 16 April 2016

- Program Field Trip

21 April 2016

- Practice: working on P3

28 April 2016

- Field visit at silkscreen printer Fiorenzo Fallani

5 May 2016

- Final critique

12 May 2016

- Final Exhibition and celebration