

Boston University Venice Summer

CFA AR 522 Graphic Design

Instructor Name:
Course Time & Location:
Contact Information:
Office Hours: 1 hour per week by appointment
Course Credits: 4

Course Description

The issues creative thinkers and practitioners are given the possibility to respond to are manifold. Often it includes a certain degree of social responsibility that we need to address in our daily work. To think critically, develop research skills and a working methodology is an essential part of our job. The learning process is never ending, but rather always in the making. Nevertheless, we can experiment with different design and thinking methods, which will guide us in approaching projects and eventually in solving design problems. The 2022 Summer Graphic Design course is grounded in developing conceptual and practical design skills to support critical thinking and the investigation of contemporary design and visual communication issues. Based on a peer learning method, the course mixes critical analysis with graphic design practice. Participants are invited to develop their personal creative voice as well as design thinking skills. The current cultural and social debate on a global scale will be one of the guiding principles on which the course is structured around –this includes diversity, identity politics, environment, and ecology among others. Concurrently, the city of Venice, in which the course takes place, will also inform part of the daily teaching sessions. The recently opened Venice Art Biennale, in particular, will offer important material to research, investigate and discuss about, which will inspire some of the weekly projects and assignments. Besides presentations and workshops in the classroom, the course includes visits to exhibitions and/or design studios as well as guest lecturers invited to talk about their practice and working experience. Participants will engage in projects/assignments designed to advance their research skills, challenge pre-existing knowledge, form personal and original ideas, and open up to the possibility of experimenting with new design vocabularies and critical perspectives. Assignments are designed to develop communication strategies and a personal design methodology for approaching projects –on different levels of complexity and aiming at different audiences. This course requires you to be open-minded, adaptable, flexible and willing to question the cultural landscape, which surrounds us. Ultimately, you will be given the chance to learn to deliver design solutions to a varied range of topics, in a way that is meaningful, strategic, effective and more notably valuable and important to you as a creative mind.

Program Learning Outcomes

BU Global Programs/study abroad learning outcomes for BU Venice Studio Arts Program
<https://www.bu.edu/provost/planning-assessment/program-learning-outcomes-assessment/learning-outcomes-by-program-2/global-programs-study-abroad/>

- To demonstrate increased proficiency in Italian language.
- To articulate an individual artistic voice and methodology and express how this has been influenced by Venice.
- To 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.
- To develop an awareness of cultural difference and an understanding of culture's role in shaping beliefs and practices.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

Graphic Design is a studio-based course in graphic design. This course supports and replicates industry-standard methodologies for creating creative communication design work. Active design professionals currently practicing in the design industry teach this course and will utilize the following approaches to learning:

Project-based learning

Project-based learning involves students designing, developing, and constructing hands-on solutions to a problem. The educational value of PBL is that it aims to build students' creative capacity to work through challenging or ill-structured problems.

Active learning

Active learning strategies promote students' active participation in knowledge construction processes. Such strategies may include hands-on activities, brief writing, and discussion assignments, problem-solving tasks, information gathering and synthesis, question generation, and reflection-based activities, among others. Together, these approaches seek to engage learners' higher-order thinking skills through the production and articulation of knowledge, as opposed to through the passive transmission of facts and ideas.

Active learning strategies are built upon constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the importance of building connections between one's prior knowledge and new experiences and concepts. As such, active learning tasks are designed to tease out learners' current understanding, make that understanding explicit, and then create opportunities for learners to integrate new knowledge into their understanding.

Discussion

Discussions, at their best, challenge students to develop critical thinking skills: to weigh evidence, test propositions, and reach their own conclusions. While being knowledgeable about the topic under discussion is important for leading meaningful discussions, creating an environment in which students feel comfortable engaging with ideas is even more so.

Experiential learning

It is an engaged learning process whereby students "learn by doing" and by reflecting on the experience. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, hands-on laboratory experiments, internships, practicums, field exercises, study abroad, undergraduate research and studio performances.

Well-planned, supervised and assessed experiential learning programs can stimulate academic inquiry by promoting interdisciplinary learning, civic engagement, career development, cultural awareness, leadership, and other professional and intellectual skills.

Evaluation of Learning Outcomes

This course conducts both formative and summative assessment to help a student develop a process of creating design work.

Formative assessment refers to assessment for learning, or, gathering feedback to help both students and the instructor improve their teaching and learning context. In general, formative assessments are intended to provide students with opportunities for practice and feedback before they complete a high-stakes assessment. The continual formative assessments throughout the semester are conducted through individual meetings between professor and student, small group

meetings between a small number of students and the professor and class critique which is generally a review of work by the full class of students and mediated by the professor.

Additionally, at the conclusion of each project, and at the semester end summative assessment is used as a way to review and reflect on the impact or outcomes of a student project. This type of assessment is designed to measure student proficiency with respect to specific course content or objectives. Project-end and Semester-end reviews are conducted as summative assessments. Project-end reviews are structured as class critique which is generally a review of work by the full class of students and mediated by the professor.

Books and Other Course Materials

Required Tools

- A Laptop
- A Flash Drive
- A Camera (iPhone camera is fine)
- A Personal Sketchbook (preferably A5 or A4, white pages)
- Ink gel pen (black and/or blue, 0,38mm and/or 0,5mm)
- Set of colored pencils
 - Metal Ruler
 - X-acto Knife And Blades
 - Cutting Mat
 - Rubber Cement, Spray Mount
 - Variety Of Cardstock, Paper, Magazines, Found Materials

Readings (available on the Blackboard site of the course)

- Dackerman, Susan. "Corita Kent and The Language of Pop" in Susan Dackerman. *Corita Kent and The Language of Pop*. Exhibition Catalogue. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museum, 2015, pp.14–33
- Drucker, Johanna. *Diagrammatic Writing*. Banff Art Centre: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013. http://will-luers.com/DTC/dtc354/diagrammatic_writing.pdf.
- Drucker, Johanna and Emily McVarish. *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide*. (2nd edition). Boston: Pearson, 2013
- Jacobs, Karrie and Steven Heller. *Angry Graphics: Protest Posters of the Reagan/Bush Era*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1992
- Hochuli, Jost and Robin Kinros. *Designing Books: Practice and Theory*. London: Hyphen Press, 2003
- Hochuli Jost and John Morgan. *Systematic Book Design?* Paris: Editions B42, 2020
- Lupton, Ellen. *Thinking With Type: A Critical Guide For Designers, Writers, Editors, & Students*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004
- Müller-Brockmann. *Josef. Grid systems in graphic design: A visual communication manual for graphic designers, typographers and three dimensional designers*. Teufen: Verlag Arthur Niggli, 2009
- Shaughnessy, Adrian. *How to Be a Graphic Designer without Losing Your Soul*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2005
- Speretta, Tommaso. *Rebels Rebel. AIDS, Art and Activism in New York, 1979–1989*. Ghent: MER Paper Kunsthalles, 2014

Software + Services

It goes without saying that you will need to have access to [Adobe Creative Cloud](#) if you don't already. I don't expect this to be an issue, but wanted to be sure. You will need to use the BU google drive.

Courseware

We will be using Blackboard to consolidate class communications. You all have access to the course Blackboard site using your Kerberos password. This will act as a central portal for class discussion outside of class as well as a digital library of class resources, such as this syllabus, project briefs, certain readings as well as our class calendar.

Policies

Examinations

All academic commitments must be completed before you leave the site; no incompletes are permitted. Students who do not complete a course on time will be given an F. Students are required to sit their examinations on the dates, at the times, and in the same classroom as the other students in their class. If a student is ill or has another extenuating circumstance which causes the student to be absent from a scheduled examination, he/she must provide appropriate documentation and receive approval from the Director.

Attendance

Students should note that attendance will be taken into account by faculty. Boston University Padua students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, on-site class, internship work appointment, and activity required for the class as indicted in the syllabus. Any student with irregular class attendance may have his/her final grade penalized.

Absences

Unjustified absences from class, and any class related activity, will affect the students' participation grade, which will be lowered by one letter grade for each absence.

Absence for Religious Reasons

According to Chapter 151C of the General Laws, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, any student in an educational or vocational training institution, other than a religious or denominational educational or vocational training institution, who is unable, because of his or her religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement on a particular day, shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up such examination, study, or work requirement that may have been missed because of such absence on any particular day; provided, however, that such makeup examinations or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon such school. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said students such opportunity. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to students because of their availing themselves of the provisions of this section. Students who have questions about practicing their religion while abroad should contact Boston University Study Abroad.

Lateness

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Late Assignments

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Plagiarism

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Disability accommodations

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Interruption of program or early departure

Only in serious cases – mostly related to medical emergencies – the Director will allow a student to take a significant break during the program or to leave before its official conclusion. Official written approval must be received by the Director.

Academic Advice

The Director serves as the head of the faculty and as academic advisors. The Director is available on an appointment basis to assist students with academic issues. For academic advice regarding students' home institutions' policies and transfer credit information, non-Boston students should also contact their school's academic advisors.

Tutorials

BU faculty are available by appointment for students who may need support in the learning process. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this resource. Students in the past found it very useful to succeed. Students who receive a C on a test must seek support from faculty.

Assignments and Grading

Grading

- 10% Project 01
- 10% Project 02
- 15% Project 03
- 15% Project 04
- 25% Project 05 (final exam assignment)
- 10% Conceptual and visual skills, risk taking, and personal development
- 15% Attendance and participation

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECTS

Project 01: Sketchbook, mood board and self-portrait

Due on: Tuesday, June 7th for presentation in the class

Project Description

In the first lesson the course leader and students will introduce themselves in a spontaneous and personal way. In particular, sharing ideas, feelings as well as expectations is an important exercise to develop a fruitful and safe environment. Concurrently, it is important to identify skills and interests of each participant in order to get to know each other better. In addition, the syllabus will be discussed in details.

Students will be asked to keep, and develop, a personal sketchbook throughout the entire duration of the course, in which to annotate personal reflections, in any forms –drawings, writings, collage, images, etc... This exercise is helpful to build a “library” of personal references, as well as to see, retrospectively, how you have developed your own language, and which direction you have taken. Two interconnected projects will be addressed in the first week: 1) research mood boards are essential parts of the preliminary work of any creative practitioner. Students will be asked to critically re-think what a self-portrait is and how it is most commonly visualized and to develop a visual mood board around that; 2) many artists and designers have historically focused on the representation of the self. By using photography, lettering, and slogans, among other material, artists provide the world with a vision of themselves and their ideals. We will look at several examples, such as Stefan Sagmeister, Anthony Burrill, Salvador Dalí, Cindy Sherman, Daniel Eatock, Frida Kahlo, Tomoko Sawada, just to name a few, to identify different ways they have used to present themselves. Student will be invited to choose the way most congenial to them to construct a self-portrait and return it in the form of a complex artifact.

Project 02: Appropriating Appropriation

Due on: Tuesday, June 14th for presentation in the class

Project Description

Historically, artists have appropriated high culture as well as the vernacular to create their work. In many cases, they have even appropriated other artists' work, often with the aim of moving forward a criticism to the capitalist society we live in and in which everything, art included, is reduced to a commodity. One widely known example, among many others, includes Andy Warhol and the so-called pop art movement. The second week is entirely dedicated to Sister Corita Kent (1918-1986), a seminal and provocative artist, a teacher and sister at the Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, where she directed the art department for several years. Corita encouraged an innovative approach to design and art education, and left behind a conspicuous body of work, mostly silkscreen prints. She also created installations, performances, calligraphy, fanzines, artist's books as well as public art projects, including decorating the giant gas tank along the highway in Boston, the city where she moved after leaving her religious order and where she died in 1986. Kent appropriated the advertising signage and visual vocabulary of the 1950s urban landscape in Los Angeles to create artworks in which she deconstructed images and slogans and paired them with her own handwriting. Students will be introduced to the life and work of Corita Kent, and to her education philosophy as well as design methodology. Getting inspired by her work, students will be asked to re-adapt Kent's methodological approach and create a complex artwork in which they appropriate elements from the city of Venice, seen through the lenses of their personal experience. Following Corita's group visit to the urban landscape of Los Angeles, materials to be used by students in their artworks will be collected collaboratively.

Project 03: Social Design and Creative Activism

Due on: Tuesday, June 21st for presentation in the class

Project Description

Creative Activism and Social Design focuses on the study of art and design as practices that are not only aesthetic but also instruments of criticism and social research to question the world surrounding us. Departing from a general reflection on cultural and social issues on a global scale, the third week revolves around stimulating critical and personal thinking on specific social issues – diversity, inclusiveness, environment, and ecology. The aim is at guiding students to build a solid thought and freely manifest their feelings with respect to issues relevant to the single individual but shared by the community.

The project is organized in two distinct phases: 1) a moment of discussion and reflection to offer the group an historical overview of the entanglements between art, design, communication, activism and the public space. The lecture will present the work of a wide range of artists, designers and other creative practitioners who, through different media as well as actions, have created works to openly position themselves in relation (often against) to society and its contradictions; 2) a practice-based activity will follow in which participants will be asked to choose a topic and define a critical thought around it; to put together a moldboard and translate their thought in images; experiment with different design languages; and finally to produce an artifact, which can either be a banner, a poster, a flag, a video, a performative gesture or even a sculpture. On May 14th Eleonora Sovrani will join the class and deliver a lecture. Sovrani is an artist, graphic designer and activist based in Venice, currently working for the Venice-based NGO We Are Here Venice, for which she initiated and developed a series of graphic interventions to bring attention to critical environmental issues affecting the venetian lagoon, its territory as well as its inhabitants. For further information: www.weareherevenice.org

Project 04: The Venice Biennale

Due on: Tuesday, June 28th for presentation in the class

Project Description

Besides being the oldest Biennale in the world, the Venice Art Biennale is among the most well renowned as well as internationally recognized institution in the city of Venice. It attracts thousands of professionals and visitors worldwide. It includes the widest range of media, from painting to sculptures, drawings, videos and performances. Furthermore, around the Biennale other international institutions organize collateral exhibitions and events in venues, which very often are not open to the public. The Biennale is a complex art event. Given the number of artists involved and the events revolving around it, it requires a diversified and highly organized design approach to better communicate to the audience its complexity, the concept behind it, the artworks exhibited, as well as to offer tools to navigate such a big exhibition. During their stay in Venice, students will be advised to visit several exhibitions, most of which offer a free entrance, and to collect as much material as possible: leaflets, cards, photo of labels and extended labels, posters, etc...

Students will be asked to either pick one exhibition in town, the Biennale itself or another collateral exhibition, or to imagine a new exhibition on any topic they feel relevant and interesting on a personal basis, and to produce graphic material to communicate it, in particular one poster and one invitation card.

On Tuesday, June 21st Enrica Cavarzan and Marco Zavagno from studio Zaven will join the class. Zaven is a multidisciplinary studio based in Venice. Their practice spans from research, communication and design (both graphic design and industrial design). They have worked for a wide range of clients, including the Venice Biennale. For further information: www.zaven.net
On Friday, June 10th students and course leader will visit the Biennale together.

Project 05: Venice at day and night: photography and storytelling

Due on: Monday, July 4th together with Corita's redesigned manifesto

Project Description

Artists and designers have very often given voice to their personal experiences, emotions and thoughts in self-initiated publication projects. They have done so by both creating a storytelling (of any sort, sometimes very conceptually other times very figuratively) which mixes different visual and graphic design elements with a careful choice of materials and design features: paper, inserts, cover, etc...

Venice is a unique city, from the early hours of the morning it is populated with workers and visitors, tourists and students, but most of these people leave the island in the evening. Once night falls, few residents or workers remain and populate it. Venice has two faces: an overwhelmingly chaotic and lively city during the day, a silent and solitary island during the night.

Students will be invited to document –collaboratively as a group– with photos, drawings, sketches, writings, readings, how they experience these two contradicting but intertwined aspects of Venice. They will be asked to give shape to their research and to design a small publication (either a fanzine or a more structured book) of between 32 and 48 pages, in which they share how they have lived in Venice, what they think of the city, which marks it has left in their hearts.

The exercise aims at stimulating students to look at their surroundings, and to pay attention at how emotions and affections can be material for design thinking.

On Friday, June 23rd students will visit Fabrica, a research center on visual design and communication (www.fabrica.it) and Tipoteca, a museum of printing and typography (www.tipoteca.it).

Final exam assignment

Due on Monday July 4th

Project 5 will be your final assignment. This will be the project to be assessed in the final exam. Furthermore, for their final exam, students will be asked to re-design Corita Kent's manifesto and bring it in the day of the final exam. Since the first lesson, students will be introduced to Sister Corita Kent's "10 Rules for Students, Teachers, and Life", a "manifesto" on which the entire course is intellectually grounded. I advise you to start working on these two projects since week one, and ask me feedback and revisions on a weekly basis.

Class and University Policies

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Calendar of activities

Project 1 (Week ONE: May 30th and 31st) Sketchbook, mood board and self portrait

Monday, May 30th

Course starts, presentations and reading syllabus: introduction to the course content, readings, Q&A, and assignments, including final exam assignment: to re-design Corita Kent's manifesto: "10 Rules for Students, Teachers, and Life"

Tuesday, May 31st

Short presentation on ways artists' and designers' have represented themselves

Project 1: Mood board for a self-portrait.

For further readings: Krauss, Rosalind. *Cindy Sherman 1975-1993*. New York: Rizzoli International, 1993

Project 1: Due on Tuesday June 7th for presentation in class. Upload project as a PDF presentation on blackboard by Monday Jun 6th at 6pm

Project 2 (Week TWO: June 6th and 7th) Appropriating Appropriation

Monday, June 6th

Lecture on Sister Corita Kent. Screening of Baylis Glascock's documentary, "Corita Kent: On Teaching and Celebration"

For further readings: Speretta, Tommaso. "Sister Corita Kent: Give the Gang our Best" in PQ n. 01, 2013

Dackerman, Susan. "Corita Kent and The Language of Pop" in Susan Dackerman. *Corita Kent and The Language of Pop*. Exhibition Catalogue. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museum, 2015, pp.14–33

Tuesday, June 7th

Presentation and revision of project 1

Project 2: Using appropriation methodology to create a complex graphic artwork.

Project 2: Due on Tuesday, June 14th for presentation in class. Upload project on blackboard as a PDF file by Monday Jun 6th at 6pm. Bring into the class a printed version of your artwork for discussion and assessment.

Friday, June 10th

Visit to the Venice Biennale – all students

Project 3 (Week THREE: June 13th and 14th) Social Design and Creative Activism

Monday, June 13th

Lecture on artistic activism: Gran Fury and ACT UP

For further readings: Speretta, Tommaso. *Rebels Rebel. AIDS, Art and Activism in New York, 1979–1989*. Ghent: MER Paper Kunsthalles, 2014

Finkelstein, Avram. "The Pope, the Penis and the Phone" in Frieze Magazine 226, 2022. Available at: <https://www.frieze.com/article/pope-penis-and-phone>

Tuesday, June 14th

Lecture by Eleonora Sovrani – We Are Here Venice

Presentation and revision of project 2

Project 3: Creating an artifact, which reflects a social issue from an activist perspective.

Project 3: Due on Tuesday, June 21st for presentation in class. Upload project on blackboard as a PDF file by Monday Jun 20th at 6pm. Bring into the class a printed version of your artwork for discussion and assessment.

June 17th and 18th

Program trip to Rome

Project 4 (Week FOUR: June 13th and 14th) The Venice Biennale

Monday, June 20th

Group discussion on the Venice Biennale, which students visited on week Two. Each student will present material (photos, printed matter) collected during the visit.

Project 4: Designing communication material for an exhibition.

For further readings: Russeth, Andrew. "The Venice Biennale: Everything You Could Ever Want to Know" in Artnews, 2019. Available at: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/market/the-venice-biennale-everything-you-could-ever-want-to-know-12373/>

Tuesday, June 21st

Presentation and revision of project 3

Lecture by Enrica Cavarzan di studio Zaven (Marco Zavagno ed Enrica Cavarzan)

Project 4: Due on Tuesday, June 28th for presentation in class. Upload project as a PDF file on blackboard by Monday Jun 27th at 6pm. Bring into the class a printed version of your artwork for discussion and assessment.

Thursday June 22nd

Visit Biennale with Professor Luca de Gaetano – all students

Friday, June 23rd

Visit at Fabrica (www.fabrica.it) and Tipoteca (www.tipoteca.it)

Project 5 (Week FIVE: June 27th and 28th)

Venice at day and night: photography and storytelling

Monday, June 27th

Presentation and lecture on artists' and designers's books. Group discussion of the group's experience of Venice and its day and night life

Tuesday, June 28th

Presentation and revision of Project 4.

Individual mentoring session on final exam assignment and project 5.

Project 5: To design a publication. Due on Tuesday, July 5th and/or Wednesday, July 6th

Project 5: Due on Monday, July 4th for presentation to the class and assessment on Tuesday, July 5th. Upload project on blackboard as a PDF file by 6pm. Bring into the class a printed version of your artwork for discussion and assessment.

Friday, July 1st

Program trip to Milano

Visit to several art institutions in Milan, including Triennale di Milano

Final exam assignment

Tuesday, July 5th

Final exam: Project 5 alongside a re-designed original version of Corita Kent's manifesto

Final project due on Monday, July 4th to be uploaded on blackboard as a PDF file by 6pm. Project 5 will be your final assignment, which will be assessed in the final exam. It will be discussed in class on Tuesday, July 5th. It will be required to bring in the printed publication. Furthermore, you'll be asked to bring in a printed copy of your new and original version of Corita Kent's "manifesto".