



**Boston University Venice**  
**CFA AR 381 Junior Graphic Design**  
Prof. Tommaso Speretta

**Course Credits:** 4  
**Hub Units:** 1 + 1

**Course Description**

Our goal as designers is to be in a place where we have our method, process, or way of thinking. Once established, we can apply this way of thinking to any design problem that comes our way—becoming real design thinkers. Fall Junior Graphic Design Studio is grounded in developing conceptual and practical design skills to support critical thinking and investigation of contemporary design issues. The goal of this course is to develop your design voice and design thinking skills. The projects are designed to advance existing skills, challenge known paradigms, expose you to a range of people and perspectives and help you form opinions and points of view. Throughout these projects, you will develop ways of analyzing and responding through making—your creative process. Guided by theory, lectures, and class discussions, assignments will emphasize form development and communication strategies as a means to solve complex design problems. The creative process will be examined through reading and writing, while conducting research, developing content, forming a point of view, and considering the relation between context and audience. This course will challenge you to be agile and adaptable. Ultimately you will learn to be strategic makers, thinkers, and partners—able to deliver design solutions to a range of users across varied mediums through an array of experiences.

**Hub Learning Outcomes**

**Research and Information Literacy:**

- Students will be able to search for, select, and use a range of publicly available and discipline-specific information sources ethically and strategically to address research questions.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of the overall research process and its component parts and be able to formulate good research questions or hypotheses, gather and analyze information, and critique, interpret, and communicate findings.

**We have further specified the Research and Information Literacy learning outcomes for this course:**

- Students will be able to search, find, debate, and discuss readings within and beyond the design field. They will be able to navigate online visual databases and synthesize findings to form research questions towards a design process.
- Students will create physical (eg., a wall of questions) and digital spaces of shared research questions and findings. Students will share and exchange research resources.
- Students will study forms of scientific, data-based research as well as non-linear processes of inquiry to guide their work. They will practice forming questions and using observations, interviews, surveys, and experimentation with material and content to discover potential solutions to their questioning.
- Students will understand the value of thorough research in a graphic design process by exploring a variety of methods of gathering, collecting, and documenting. Additionally, they will use intensive making as a form of research as a way of developing content and ideas.

### **Teamwork / Collaboration:**

- As a result of explicit training in teamwork and sustained experiences of collaborating with others, students will be able to identify the characteristics of a well-functioning team.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to use the tools and strategies of working successfully with a diverse group, such as assigning roles and responsibilities, giving and receiving feedback, and engaging in meaningful group reflection that inspires collective ownership of results.

### **We have further specified the Teamwork and Collaboration learning outcomes for this course:**

- Students will demonstrate leading an inclusive design process guided by empathy, curiosity, and proven communication skills (oral, written, design) among team members.
- Team dynamic will extend to communication across teams, with the instructor and other stakeholders e.g., external clients for class-based projects.
- Students will practice roles of leadership versus acting as team members and will be held accountable for their contribution as well as the group performance.
- Using a process of critique, students will practice giving and receiving critical and constructive feedback on their ideas and their work. Students will be instructed explicitly on how using questions and insights based on research, discussion, and presentation can help to develop the potential of ideas in a group setting.

### **Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning**

Junior Graphic Design Fall 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**

Experiential learning 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. Semester-end reviews are an assessment of all work completed by an individual student in a semester and are a critique between an individual student and the professor.

### **Grading**

Attendance and participation	10%
Conceptual and visual skills, risk taking, and personal development	10%
Project 01	10%
Project 02	15%
Project 03	20%
Project 04	10%
Project 05 (final)	25%

#### **Attendance and participation (Teamwork / Collaboration) 10%**

Part of a designer’s job is communicating effectively, on a design team, in a studio environment, or with clients. You will be expected to be an active member of the class, particularly during critiques, as all feedback is valuable. Discussion is an essential part of the design process. Lack of active participation will negatively impact your final grade.

##### **Collaboration**

Designers rarely work independently. Similar to industry-standard, this studio course is a collaborative environment. Completed work is almost always the result of a team effort of some sort—whether it be with clients, other designers, developers writers, etc. During the semester, you will interact with people in varied forms of collaboration. You will be asked to work as part of a team. Any setting should be considered a two-way conversation: offer feedback and be open to considering peer suggestions towards ideation, process, and final products. You will be assessed on your contribution to the team along with the final output of the team’s work. Be kind. Be curious. Be honest. Have fun.

#### **Conceptual and visual skills, risk taking, and personal development (Research and Information Literacy ) 10%**

- Concept • the ability to inquire, research and ask questions to define a problem
- Process • exploration of various possibilities
- Synthesis • narrowing multiple options towards a unique solution
- Design Quality • sensitivity to the principles of form, design and typography
- Presentation • technical skills, following directions and quality of presentation
- Professionalism • presenting work on time in a professional manner

## Projects

### Project Execution

All projects should be given your full attention and effort. Each component of your projects will be reviewed. Projects need to be submitted on deadline and should be complete according to project brief. Projects must be completed by the due date. Late work will be penalized. All parts of your projects in this class will be evaluated including process and research documents. You will be given an opportunity to improve upon each project following that project's final critique.

### Project Process

You are expected to document the process of each of your projects throughout the semester. This means, saving all sketches, writings mock ups etc. Your documents will be given the same attention to detail as your design work. The process for each project will make up a portion of your grade.

## **Project 01: The representation of the self: theme and variations**

HUB Outcomes — Research and Information Literacy

Two interconnected projects will be addressed in the first assignment: 1) research mood boards are essential parts of the preliminary work of any creative practitioner. You are asked to critically reflect on what a self-portrait is and to develop a visual mood board around ideas for a self-portrait; 2) you are asked to choose one or more than one motifs or visual elements you feel you can use to create a self-portrait. This does not mean you need to be literal with your self-portrait, and that you have to “put your face” on it. You can experiment and be creative. Think of design tools you can use to create a self-portrait that does not necessarily have to include your face. Once you have designed a self-portrait, you are asked to use the “theme and variations” methodology (a terminology that comes from music) and to design a second self-portrait.

For both self-portraits you are free to use typography, illustration, photography, anything that suits your ideas for a self-portrait.

The on-site class at Tipoteca and the collaborative work during the planned workshop are an integral part of this project. Students will learn about grid construction and its functions. Furthermore, the workshop will help them understand the anatomy of typographic characters and their design process. By the end, students will learn how to bind an A5 booklet. This workshop is essential for Graphic Design Projects 01, 02 and 05.

Info:

- 2 posters
- Size: A3
- **Due: Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup> for presentation to the class.** Bring in a printed copy of the two self-portraits. Printed copies will be used for the final exhibition, therefore pay attention to the paper and quality of the print. Upload both mood board and two self-portraits as single PDF files **on Blackboard by 9am on Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>**

### **Guidelines for final submission of work:**

Submit a digital documentation via Blackboard and Google Drive.

1. Create a main folder first name \_last name
2. Create a folder for each project. Label each folder
3. Move individual projects folders into the main folder
4. Submission deadline: by 9:00am the day in which the project is due.

### **Project 02: Venice is a fish**

HUB Outcomes — Research and Information Literacy

“Venice is a fish” is a worldwide known book by Venice-based writer Tiziano Scarpa. Students are asked to read the book (at least two chapters) and create a mood board around it: collect sources about either what the book means for you or how it has inspired you; either about its title or its content; any aspect of both the book and your experience in Venice you want to focus on. Please focus on one specific aspect only—this will guide you in the construction of your mood board. Afterwards, students will re-design the cover and the back cover for the book. Once you have completed the final design for the book cover and back cover, think of a new (and very personal) title for the book. Design a new cover corresponding to its newly invented title. Focus on the meaning of the book for you (and your experience of Venice) and see how the new title can become a new possible starting point for this book.

The on-site class in the Venetian Lagoon and the collaborative work during the planned workshop are an integral part of this project. Students will learn how to effectively communicate critical environmental and ecological issues to a broader audience, often overlooked by local administrations. They will utilize photographic documentation and insights from research conducted by We Are Here Venice. This will enable them to delve into a specific aspect of Venice, which will be further developed in Graphic Design Projects 02 and 03.

Info:

- 2 book covers (including back cover). Produce two real mock-ups (you can build the structure of the book by using cardboard or any other strong material such as balsawood). Mock-up will be used for the final exhibition, therefore be very precise both with the making of the mock-ups and with the print. Attention to details and the quality of material produced are key aspects for designers. For this reason, it will contribute to the grade.

- Size: 13 x 20cm

- **Due: Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup> for presentation to the class.** Bring in the class the two mock-ups.

Upload both mood board and two books cover (with back cover included) as single PDF files **on Blackboard by 9am on Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>**

### **Guidelines for final submission of work:**

Submit a digital documentation via Blackboard and Google Drive.

1. Create a main folder first name \_last name
2. Create a folder for each project. Label each folder
3. Move individual projects folders into the main folder
4. Submission deadline: by 9:00am the day in which the project is due.

### **Project 03: Venice Venice**

HUB Outcomes — Research and Information Literacy

Venice is a city of multiple layers as well as of many contradictions. The history of Venice is characterized not only by its beauty but also by the overwhelming presence of tourists. If on the one

side mass tourism contributes to the wealth of Venice as well as of its worldwide image of a magical and romantic city, on the other side it risks mining the city's fragile architecture, infrastructure and unique ecosystem. Students are asked to produce a 30x50cm poster about Venice. The poster needs to reflect one critical aspects of Venice: its flooding, mass tourism, the preservation of its hundreds of years old buildings, the low number of residents, the lack of housing for locals, etc... Imagine your poster to be a campaign to communicate a different image of the city, outside the clichés we are used to think of when we think about Venice. The poster needs to make use of either illustration or photography and typography.

The Risograph printing workshop at graphic design studio Bruno will be essential for the completion of this project. This workshop introduces students to cost-effective and high speed Risograph printing process, which mimics offset printing and is widely used by designers for graphic materials like posters and editorials. Historically used for journals and political leaflets and/or placards, it can be used by students to design a poster for Graphic Design Project 03 and/or create a fanzine for Graphic Design Project 05. The workshop also helps students to develop further printing skills for independent use of a Risograph machine available in Boston and for their future career as designers that requires them to know how printing techniques can have an impact on the creative and design process.

Info:

- 1 poster
- Size: 35 x 50 cm
- **Due: Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>** for presentation to the class. Upload your poster as single PDF files **on Blackboard by 9am on Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**. The printed copy will be used for the final exhibition.

#### **Guidelines for final submission of work:**

Submit a digital documentation via Blackboard and Google Drive.

1. Create a main folder first name \_last name
2. Create a folder for each project. Label each folder
3. Move individual projects folders into the main folder
4. Submission deadline: by 9:00am the day in which the project is due.

#### **Project 04: Final Exhibition Design**

HUB Outcomes — Teamwork/Collaboration

Divided in two groups, students will design the exhibition poster and e-vite. Final exhibition opening: December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Students will work collaboratively with each other and the professor on the final exhibition and installation and will thus practice the skills need to work in team, like designers do.

Info:

- 1 poster and 1 e-vite
- Size: Poster: 30x50cm; E-vite: A4 or other formats to be agreed upon with Professor. The poster will be shown at the entrance of the BU headquarter in order to advertise the exhibition.
- Due: Tuesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. Upload poster and invitation card as single PDF files on Blackboard by 9am on Tuesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Guidelines for final submission of work:**

Submit a digital documentation via Blackboard and Google Drive.

1. Create a main folder first name \_last name
2. Create a folder for each project. Label each folder
3. Move individual projects folders into the main folder

4. Submission deadline: by 9:00am the day in which the project is due.

### **Project 05 : We are a band**

HUB Outcomes — Teamwork/Collaboration

Make 3 groups. Imagine you have met in Venice and found out you all are very passionate about music, and each of you play an instrument. Imagine that you decide to start a music band. Decide which music you play and what is your band's name. You can get inspirations by music and/or bands you love and are used to listen to. Imagine that you have been offered the possibility to release your first LP. It will be a vinyl record (a real collectors' item). Decide a title for your first album and how many songs it includes (usually an LP includes only few songs). Each group is asked to design the cover and back cover of your debut album. You can use photography, illustration, typography; anything you think will help to communicate your identity (who you are as a band and what kind of music you do). A vinyl record usually includes an extra booklet (sometimes it can also be a big folded poster) that you have to design, with the list of songs and either illustrations or photos. You are asked to create a real mock-up of your vinyl's record jacket, including the extra inside booklet.

Info:

- 1 mock-up
- Size: 31 x 31cm
- **Due: Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>** for final critique. Bring in the mock up in the class. It will be used for the final exhibition, so I expect that the mock-up to be perfectly done. Upload the record cover and the inside leaflet as single PDF files **on Blackboard by 9am on Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

### **Guidelines for final submission of work:**

Submit a digital documentation via Blackboard and Google Drive.

1. Create a main folder first name \_last name
2. Create a folder for each project. Label each folder
3. Move individual projects folders into the main folder
4. Submission deadline: by 9:00am the day in which the project is due.

### **Grading scale**

A — You demonstrate an advanced understanding of concepts presented and are able to complete work above and beyond suggested parameters.

B — You exhibit a more than competent understanding of concepts presented and utilizes these concepts in an articulate and noteworthy manner.

C — You demonstrate a basic understanding of the information studied and apply this information to assigned problems meeting basic expectations but not going beyond suggested parameters.

D — You exhibit limited understanding of the concepts and complete work below the level required for satisfactory performance.

F — You demonstrate little or no understanding of course material, shown little desire or motivation to complete the work or turn in incomplete projects.

### **Readings**

• Drucker, Johanna. *Diagrammatic Writing*. Banff Art Centre: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013. [http://will-luers.com/DTC/dtc354/diagrammatic\\_writing.pdf](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

- 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

### **Additional readings**

- 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
- Krauss, Rosalind. *Cindy Sherman 1975-1993*. New York: Rizzoli International, 1993
- Heller, Steven and Lita Talarico. *Graphic: inside the sketchbooks of the world's great graphic designers*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2010
- Speretta, Tommaso. *Rebels Rebel. AIDS, Art and Activism in New York, 1979–1989*. Ghent: MER Paper Kunsthalles, 2014

### **Mandatory design tools**

For the Design Course students are 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) that testify of how ideas have been developed in order to solve the problems and/or challenges posed by each assignment. The sketchbook is also helpful to build a “library” of personal references, as well as to see, retrospectively, how they have developed their own language, and which direction they have taken.

- 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-actor Knife And Blades
- Variety Of Cardstock, Paper, Magazines, Found Materials

### **Software + Services**

You will need to have access to [Adobe Creative Cloud](#) if you don't already.  
You may use your, BU provided, Google Drive

### **Printing instructions**

The course will culminate in a final exhibition. Students are asked to follow the instructions given for each assignment regarding the size and the specs of each artwork. Selected design artworks have to be printed on quality paper as they will be used for the final exhibition. Each student is responsible for storing their artworks in a safe and clean place. Two main printing facilities in Venice are the following: Al Canal ([www.alcanal.it](http://www.alcanal.it)) and Micoud ([www.micoud.it](http://www.micoud.it)). Art and Design supplies can be sourced in the following shops: Arte & Design ([www.artedesignve.it](http://www.artedesignve.it)) and Cartoleria San Trovaso ([https://www.facebook.com/cartoleriasantroverso/?locale=it\\_IT](https://www.facebook.com/cartoleriasantroverso/?locale=it_IT)).

### **Community of Learning: Class and University Policies**

#### **Expectations of Students**

- Students are responsible for arriving on time and preparing for all class sessions.



- Students are responsible for meeting all course requirements, observing all deadlines and other course procedures.
- Students are responsible for seeking help when needed. Feedback is a must have to our creative process. Take advantage of the opportunity to discuss your work
- Students are expected to be attentive during class. The studio is a two-way learning environment: ask questions, offer opinions, share your work, listen to what others have to say about it. Design is a conversation.
- Designers multi-task. At times you will have more than one assignment for our next class. Divide and conquer.
- Get inspired! Constantly explore design through books, magazines, museums and galleries, online resources, tutorials and blogs. Everything can serve inspiration.

## **Program Learning Outcomes**

BU Global Programs/study abroad learning outcomes for BU Venice Studio Arts 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

Furthermore, during the Graphic Design course students are expected to:

- Learn ways to apply aesthetic sensibilities into their works and explore ways to balance between formal theories with practical applications.
- Learn to solve problems by using critical thinking and the methodologies of graphic design and visual communication.
- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the elements of graphic design, that includes to be able to read, understand and communicate in the language of graphic design.

## **Bu Venice Academic 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. Students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, on-site class, internship work appointment, and activity required for the class as indicated 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**

Students arriving more than 10 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Being late three times is equivalent to missing one class.

### **Late Assignments**

Students are expected to turn in all course assignments on time as stated in each course syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted and missed assignments will automatically be awarded an F. Please note that all coursework must be completed by the end of the program.

### **Plagiarism**

Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another's work and presenting it as you own. 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: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/>

### **Disability accommodations**

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>

### **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 is 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.