

BOSTON UNIVERSITY VENICE

CFA AR 522 GRAPHIC DESIGN

COURSE MEETS	twice a week
COURSE VALUE	4 credits

Course Description

The questions creative thinkers and practitioners have the potential to respond to are manifold. Often they include a certain degree of social responsibility that we need to address in our daily work. To think critically, to 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 2024 Summer Graphic Design course is grounded in developing conceptual design skills to support critical thinking and the investigation of contemporary design and visual communication. Based on a peer learning method, the course mixes critical analysis with graphic design practice that students will conduct autonomously. 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. 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.

Suggested 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
- 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
- Heller, Steven and Lita Talarico. *Graphic: inside the sketchbooks of the world's great graphic designers*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2010

Further suggested readings

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

- 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 Kunsthalle, 2014
- Vettese, Angela. *The National Pavilions of the Venice Biennale: Spaces for Cultural Diplomacy*. Venezia: Nomos Editions, 2014

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-actor Knife And Blades
- Cutting Mat
- Glue and/or Spray Mount
- Variety Of Cardstock, Paper, Magazines, Found Materials

Software + Services

You must have access to [Adobe Creative Cloud](#).

Grading

Attendance and participation	15%
Class presentation	10%
Project 01	20%
Project 02	25%
Project 03	30%

Attendance and participation

All students must be punctual in class and on-site classes and must carry the material for each class. Students will actively improve their skills by asking questions and clarifications of doubts and by completing the readings assigned. 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.

Project 01: Mood board and self-portrait

Due: tbd for presentation to the class (followed by professor's feedbacks and open discussion) (bring in a printed copy). Upload it on Blackboard by tbd

Two interconnected projects will be addressed in the first assignment: 1) Students will do individual research. You are asked to critically re-think what a self-portrait is, how it is most commonly visualized and to develop a visual mood board around

that; 2) Student can choose the way most suitable to them to construct a self-portrait and return it in the form of a complex artifact.

You are invited 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.... Sketchbooks are used by creative practitioners 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.

Class presentation: Personal Inspiration

Due: tbd for presentation to the class. Upload it on Blackboard by tbd

You are asked to choose one artist, illustrator, graphic designer or any other creative figure, either from the present or the past, whom you feel inspired by. Create a presentation around their work, in which you identify key aspects of their practice that you think are relevant to your own practice and that can be inspirational for your approach to creativity. Make sure to highlight the reasons why the chosen figure is important to you. Be aware that not everyone knows the person you have chosen, hence make sure to situate them historically. You are free to use the format most suitable to you and your skills—video, PowerPoint, Canva presentation, etc...

Project 02: Social Design and Creative Activism

Due: tbd for presentation to the class (followed by professor’s feedbacks and open discussion) (bring in a printed copy if you decide to produce a graphic artwork). Upload mood board and final artifact on Blackboard by tbd

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, this project aims at stimulating critical and personal thinking on specific social issues – diversity, inclusiveness, environment, and ecology. Students are guided to build a solid thought and to freely manifest their feelings with respect to issues relevant to the single individual but shared by the community.

For projects 2 students will be asked to choose a topic and define a critical thought around it; to put together a mood board 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, or a video.

Project 03: Venice at day and night: photography and storytelling

Due: tbd to be uploaded on Blackboard by end on tbd. Please bring in the printed publication if you decide to produce one. Students will present their work to class during the final critique

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 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 24 and 32 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. Students, who do not feel comfortable in designing a publication, can create a presentation in PowerPoint or Canva. Alternatively, they can use any other way they feel is appropriate and/or they are comfortable with, such as for instance an Instagram page. The final outcome must demonstrate a good balance between images and text/typography. This final assignment is considered an ongoing project. I

advise you to collect material for Project 03 since your arrival in Venice.

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 articulate an individual artistic voice and methodology and express how this has been influenced by Venice.
- To gain a deeper understanding of design and visual communication 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 professional-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.

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.

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 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

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.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Field trips and workshops:

- illustrated architecture workshop with Studio Saor
- visit to Venice Art Biennale (Giardini only)
- letterpress printing and binding workshop at Tipoteca

Week ONE

Title: Mood board and self-portrait

In the first lesson professor 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 detail. 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 introduced to their first assignment (Project 01):** they will be asked to design a self-portrait and return it in the form of a complex artifact.

Course starts, students present themselves and we read the syllabus: introduction to the course content, readings, Q&A, and assignments. Students will be given a copy of Corita Kent’s manifesto, “10 Rules for Students, Teachers, and Life.” It serves as the ethical—theoretical underpinning of the course. All three assignments will be discussed in detail.

Professor will give a presentation, focusing on historical, theoretical and visual aspects, on the concept of self-portrait. In particular, students will be introduced to several ways in which artists and designers have historically represented themselves, and the sort of visual artworks they have produced to communicate themselves to the “outside world.” Furthermore, emphasis will be given to the design process that students might eventually follow in order to think of self-representation; namely visual research, sketchbook and how to develop a mood board of ideas. Q&A will follow.

Week TWO

Title: Appropriating Appropriation

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 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.

Professor will give a presentation on the life and work of Sister Corita Kent, a still not fully recognized artist whose entire career have been developed around the use of DYI techniques, such as silkscreen, and the appropriation of advertising signage to create complex graphic artwork. The lecture will be followed by the screening of Baylis Glascock's documentary, "Corita Kent: On Teaching and Celebration." Q&A and single monitoring sessions with professor will follow.

PROJECT 01 is due for presentation to the class (followed by professor's feedback) (bring in a printed copy).

Presentations will last approx. two hours, each student has between 10 and 15 minutes each. The time slot is meant to mirror the pitch presentations that designers do in a professional environment. Please be on time and have all material ready.

Workshop: Students will participate in a workshop about "illustrated architecture" with Venice-based Studio Saor. They will engage in an alternative mapping of the city of Venice, its geography and architecture.

Week THREE

Title: Social Design and Creative Activism

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. Students will be introduced to 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. **Week three is all about preparing students to the second assignment (Project 02).** For Project 02 they will be asked to choose a topic (it must be socially relevant) and define a critical thought around it; to put together a mood board 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, or even a video.

Professor will give an art historical overview, starting from the 1970s to the present time, of how artists, designers and creative professionals more in general have incorporated in their research practice issues of social and cultural activism and transformed ideas into either artistic or design artifacts. One focus will be the AIDS activism of ACT UP, the Coalition to

Unleash Power, a collective of artists, designers and intellectuals which formed in New York City in 1989 with the purpose of using art, design and visual communication to face the political and cultural crisis engendered by the explosion of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Q&A will follow.

The project “Class presentation” is due for presentation to the class (followed by professor’s feedback and open discussion)

Week FOUR

Title: The Venice Biennale

Besides being the oldest Biennale in the world, the Venice Art and Architecture 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...

PROJECT 02 is due for presentation to the class (followed by professor’s feedback) (bring in a printed copy).

In the second part of the class, professor will give a presentation on the history of the Venice Art and Architecture Biennale. Furthermore, it will be discussed in relation to the cultural milieu of Venice and how it is inserted into the city touristic “ecosystem”. The presentation will focus on the history of the graphic artworks that since the early days of the Biennale have given a face to this important event. An open discussion will address the importance of graphic design as a strategic means for both communicating an event and attracting audience.

field trip to the Venice Art Biennale (Giardini only).

Week FIVE

Title: Venice at day and night: photography and storytelling

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. **Week 05 will focus on the third and last assignment (Project 03).** Students will be invited to document 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 24 and 32 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. Those who are not confident with designing a publication are welcome to create either a PowerPoint or a Canva presentation. It is also possible, for instance, to create an Instagram page.

Be aware that this assignment is not about collecting “beautiful” images only, but to create a storytelling, where different elements (images and typography) intertwine in a meaningful and strategic way. The project aims at stimulating students to look at their surroundings, and to pay attention at how emotions and affections can be material for design thinking. **Students are advised to collect material for this assignment since their arrival to Venice. I consider this a continuous exercise, which accompanies you throughout the entire duration of the course and your stay in the lagoon.**

Project 02 is due for presentation to the class (followed by professor’s feedback and open discussion) (bring in a printed copy, if you decide to produce a graphic artwork).

The second part of the class will be dedicated to discussing with students ideas for Project 03. Professor will guide them in the realization of their project. Professor will bring in several examples of artists’ publications and will give a presentation on the different ways artists and designers have approached their personal feelings, emotions and ideas and gave them the shape of a book—of any sort.

letterpress printing and binding workshop at Tipoteca

WEEK 6

Final critique. Project 03 is due. Please bring in the printed publication if you decide to produce one.