Current Curricula

GRAPHIC DESIGN Program

Program Objective

The Graphic Design Program is focused on providing the best possible training in the thinking, art, craft and technology for the design field. The program teaches strategic thinking, collaboration, color theory, typography, layout design, mastery of design software, branding, dimensional and experiential design, and media (both traditional and emerging). The department works closely with the student during his/her tenure at The Circus to develop a portfolio and to offer all possible assistance in helping them secure employment in the best possible position. Upon graduation, a student has developed skills to create a variety of original, compelling brand communications, and they have a portfolio that enables them to compete for and secure a job in the commercial communication arts field.

So, what will you do in these classes?

GRAPHIC DESIGN CURRICULUM by Quarter with Course Description

First Quarter
GE102 Introduction to Creative Thinking 1.65 Credit Hours
Techniques address the daily necessity for original thinking, facing the blank page, creative diversity, productivity and overcoming rejection.
VS101 Typography 1 1.65 Credit Hours
A variety of exercises explore type (on and off the computer) as a method for giving meaning, character and energy to letters and words.
VS102 Introduction to Graphic Design 1.65 Credit Hours
Lots of exercises introduce design elements and principles, research and visual storytelling; students develop a vocabulary for visual thinking and critical observation.
GE101 Strategy 1.65 Credit Hours
Students learn to develop a creative strategy based on business principles, research, budgets, the competition, brand promises, messaging, and focused demographic (or psychographic) analyses.

Second Quarter
DV200 Information Architecture 1.65 Credit Hours
This course teaches principles of Information Architecture and User Experience to help students build processes for the planning and research phases of interactive digital projects. Students focus on usability and user-centered design while learning how to conduct user research, organize and prioritize content and features, define navigation structures and create personas and user flow diagrams.
CG921 Web Design 1 1.65 Credit Hours
This design studio course introduces students to designing for the web. Students learn about web page structure, wireframes, usability and web design best practices, grid layouts, file setup and techniques for communicating interactivity through Photoshop files.
VS201  Typography 2  1.65 Credit Hours
Builds on lessons from Type 1 with projects that address the sentence, the paragraph(s), the page and grids.

VS202  Color Theory  1.65 Credit Hours
This class begins the exploration of color as a foundation of design; exercises and projects apply color theory to specific and diverse creative problems with varied media and dimension.

Third Quarter

DV203  User Experience  1.65 Credit Hours
Incorporates principles from Information Architecture and focuses on how the design and design principles affect the user’s ability to experience interactive content and projects.

VS401  Design Concepts  1.65 Credit Hours
This class addresses the strategy/concept/design process by assigning a variety of creative problems. Strategy, concepting, new media, logos, 3-D, type, color and layout are combined to create a clear, cohesive, communicative, original end product.

DS104  Trademarks  1.65 Credit Hours
Students learn that a logo is a simple visual representation (a symbol!) of a brand and it’s personality – and it’s not as easy as it looks, even in black-and-white. Brands vary, some deadlines are weekly, others longer, but the clarity and development of the idea is most important – not the execution.

VS301  Typography 3  1.65 Credit Hours
Adding to – and repeating – lessons from Type 2, the student addresses typography in a series or campaign, multiple pages, as well as more experimental type treatments (on and off the computer).

Fourth Quarter

CG925  Trends  1.65 Credit Hours
This seminar will expose students to the concepts and technology behind cutting edge, new media in advertising.

DS606  Branding  1.65 Credit Hours
Students create a brand and develop its logo, color palette, type choices, tone and attitude, as well as designing marketing materials, the digital experience, packaging, collateral, etc.

DS403  Package Design  1.65 Credit Hours
Products still come in packages, so students will develop skills to create and design for a variety of 3-D problems.

DV230  Web Ad Studio  1.65 Credit Hours
Students work in teams to concept and design advertising for the web.

Fifth Quarter

DS506  Publication Design  1.65 Credit Hours
Students create and design a publication (print and digital) that speaks about a subject with a clearly defined visual tone and personality. It’s like Creative Thinking and Type 3 had a baby.

DS520  Brand Extension  1.65 Credit Hours
Students from varied disciplines come together as a team to concept and develop an extension of an existing brand in an effort to enhance the client’s opportunities for revenue. The deliverables cross all media and dimension.

DS504  Advanced Trademarks  1.65 Credit Hours
This course continues to develop the student’s skill for symbolic thinking but adds color as well as creating a system of symbols or icons.

ID500  Digital Storytelling  1.65 Credit Hours
Students work in teams while learning to apply the fundamentals of storytelling and user experience to create an engaging interactive digital project.
Sixth Quarter

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<th>Course Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS706B</td>
<td>Cultural Media</td>
<td>1.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>VS302</td>
<td>Advanced Color Theory</td>
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Are corporations evil? Well, a team of students from varied disciplines create a Corporate Social Responsibility campaign using any media necessary to show how a corporation can actually do good in the world.

This class digs deeper into the world of color. In-class exercises prove applicable color theories, and outside assignments implement the principles as they apply to specific, longer-term creative projects.

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<tr>
<td>GE976</td>
<td>Death Match</td>
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Projects are diverse and, as in real life, deadlines are short – usually weekly. So students must learn to think and work quickly. The work is judged weekly, which determines the grades for the class.

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Seventh Quarter

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TM517</td>
<td>Environmental Design</td>
<td>1.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS505</td>
<td>Corporate Identity</td>
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Students will learn how to conceive and design interior and exterior environments and experiences (wayfinding, displays, trade-show booths, store interiors and displays, etc.). Two projects should be expected.

Basically, a student explores and develops the rules and regulations surrounding a brand and its logo. The student will produce a graphic standards manual and various branded deliverables.

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Eighth Quarter

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<tr>
<td>GR801</td>
<td>Graduate Portfolio Review / Job Preparation</td>
<td>1.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>TM310-0</td>
<td>Presenting Your Concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td>GR804</td>
<td>Perfecting The Portfolio</td>
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This class focuses on perfecting projects, with in-depth project critiques, and the presentation of the projects. Application of personal branding through all media is addressed. The job contact, interviewing, salaries, negotiations, working with recruiters, professionalism, and presentation are discussed. There will be some portfolio reviews by guests from the industry. Time management is key. It’s very stressful – the end is near.

All 8th quarter students will learn how to sell work, themselves, and perfect the presentation skills for an interview, a client pitch, or an elevator. There will be in-class and out-of-class exercises. They’ll write a graduation speech.

This class works in tandem with the Graduate Portfolio Review class but will focus almost solely on the projects – two or three brains being better than one. Same with sets of eyeballs. Show work, critique it, improve it, repeat. Quickly.

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