**Understanding Design**

First Year Seminar 109, Fall 2016

*All FYS courses work toward actively building and sustaining an inclusive community of learners and contributors. This FYS class fully subscribes to Lafayette College’s commitment to promoting diversity including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation,* religion*, disability, and place of origin.*

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*Office Hours:* M, W 2-3:45 p.m.

T, Th 10:30-11:30 A.M.

and by appointment

*Class times:* 1:10 to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Hugel 117

1:10 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Hugel 117

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*Writing Associate:* Brigid McGill (mcgillb@lafayette.edu)

**Course Description**

In this seminar course, students use observational drawing, journaling, readings, discussion, and focused writing to develop their observational skills and their understanding of basic design concepts. Students study and evaluate the design of products and spaces and individually and collectively explore and reflect on the elements of good design.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

After successfully completing this course you will be able to do the following:

* demonstrate, through the use of writing and sketching, critical thinking strategies related to interpretation and evaluation of product design (a visual text);
* demonstrate through class discussions and your writing the ability to identify and consider your personal assumptions and develop an informed perspective regarding product design; and
* demonstrate an introductory understanding of research skills necessary to support the study of the history of a product’s design.

Through your interactions with me and with the research and instruction librarian for this course, after successfully completing this course you will also be able to do the following:

* identify and use information relevant to a specific purpose or goal;
* employ effective search strategies to locate useful information;
* evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into personal knowledge bases and value systems; and
* access and use information ethically and legally.

Finally, because this course is one of four required writing courses in the Common Course of Study (CCS), the writing assignments for this course have been developed so that after successfully completing this course you will have made progress in achieving two of the outcomes associated with the writing component of the CCS:

* analyze a variety of rhetorical situations, and
* identify and employ a range of strategies for discovering, developing, organizing, revising, and editing ideas.

**Required Readings**

Norman, Don (2013). *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books.

Johnson, S. (2011). *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Lidwell, W., Holden, K., and Butler, J. (2015). *The Pocket Universal Principles of Design*. Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers.

Lunsford, Andrea (2011). *St. Martin’s Handbook*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

PDFs and other materials placed on course Moodle site

**Additional References**

Brown, Tim (2009). *Change by Design*. New York: HarperBusiness

Edwards, Betty (2012). *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. New York: Penguin Books.

Belleville-Van Stone, France (2014). *Sketch: The non-artist’s guide to inspiration, technique, and drawing daily life*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications.

Gregory, Danny (2015). *Art Before Breakfast: A zillion ways to be more creative no matter how busy you are*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books

Mars, R. (Producer). *99% Invisible* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from http://itunes.apple.com

**Journals and Writing**

You will be expected to maintain a journal that includes your practice sketches as well as the sketches, notes, and reflections on the products you are studying. This journal will serve as the foundation for your writing projects in which you will develop and present an analysis of the design of a product in 600 to 800 words. Each of these analysis papers will be peer-reviewed, reviewed by me, and/or reviewed by the writing associate and will be revised and resubmitted. I will also collect, read, and provide feedback on your journal regularly during the semester (approximately three times).

In addition to the design analysis writing described above, during the semester you will be assigned several writing projects including memos describing your response to the reviews of your writing when making your revisions, cover memos for two portfolio submissions, and a research-based essay on the history of the design of a product.

Writing assignments (drafts and revisions) will be submitted through Moodle. Electronic files for all assignments should be formatted as either a .doc or a .pdf. Files submitted to Moodle in the format of a Google Doc or another text format are not acceptable. (Files submitted as Google Docs or other text formats are not readable when downloaded from Moodle.)

**Class Time**

The three-hour meeting on Tuesday of each week will give us time to walk as needed to observe the products we are studying and to use this extended time period for observational drawing. The two-hour meetings on Thursdays will be more flexible and will include time for class discussions and peer review of writing among other activities.

**Student Responsibilities**

* ***Attend Class.*** If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for every class missed.
* ***Do the Work.*** Complete all work in a timely manner. Deadlines are firm. You may have one extension, but you must request it at least 24 hours in advance of the time due. If you do not receive an extension, late assignments will be penalized 10% of the grade for every day they are late.
* ***Check E-Mail and Moodle Daily.*** Information about the class including assignment updates and schedule changes will be posted to Moodle and/or sent by e-mail. Not reading your e-mail or checking Moodle will not be accepted as a reason for me to accept a late assignment or your absence in a class activity.

**Communication**

* ***Title.*** My preference is for you to address me as either Professor Roth or Dr. Roth. If you have a preference regarding how you would like to be addressed, please let me know.
* ***Requests.*** If you need to schedule a meeting or have a request of me that will require time outside of class, please be sure to follow up any conversation we might have about the request immediately before, during, or after class with an e-mail to confirm that I have placed the request on my calendar. Because class time can be busy, by the time I return to my office, there is a chance I will have been distracted and I may forget our conversation.
* ***Email.*** Students often worry about how to e-mail a professor. I recommend reading the guidelines at <http://web.wellesley.edu/SocialComputing/Netiquette/netiquetteprofessor.html>. I have attached a copy of those guidelines to this syllabus.

**The College Writing Program and the Writing Associate**

The College Writing Program helps to integrate the practice of writing in all areas of the curriculum; the program trains selected students as Writing Associates (WAs) and makes the WAs available for courses in a wide variety of disciplines. The WA will meet with each of you in conferences to discuss drafts of your written work and to engage you in conversation about your writing so that you can revise it effectively. Each of you will meet with the WA four times this semester during the weeks noted on the course schedule. You will schedule your meeting with the WA at a time that works for both of you. Please know that these are required meetings and the WA is obligated to inform me of any late or missed appointments.

**Grading**

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

Journals: 25% of grade

Portfolio 1: 25% of grade

Portfolio 2: 25% of grade

Design History Essay: 10% of grade

Participation: 15% of grade

I will base my grade for each of the above items using rubrics that I will provide to you during the course. The rubric for participation is included at the end of this syllabus.

If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for every class missed.

There will be no mid-term exam; there will be no final exam. Reading quizzes may be given and will count as part of your participation grade.

**Observational Drawing**

You may feel self-conscious about your drawing – please keep the following in mind (borrowed from Jim Toia’s syllabus for Art 109):

* Nothing is bad.
* Mistakes can be your best friend, learn from them.
* Don’t throw anything out.
* Sign and date everything.
* Something doesn’t have to look “good” to be interesting and useful.
* Your journal/sketchbook is more important than you think.

**Supplies**

For this class I will supply you with a journal/sketchbook, a drawing pencil, and an eraser. (No replacements will be provided.). You may find it useful to purchase a small pencil sharpener and to have a case or container to keep your drawing tools together.

**Technology**

Technology in the classroom should enhance the learning environment for all students.  Use of technology for purposes defined by the College as academic dishonesty is prohibited.  In the event that students receive permission in advance to digitally record a class (audio or video), the material should not be posted to the internet for public access, unless a prior agreement has been made with me.

The use of technology in my classes should reflect two key values:

* ***That we are here for a common purpose – education.*** Use of technology in the classroom by the faculty member and the students should always support student learning.
* ***That the classroom should be a place of mutual respect.*** I, as the teacher, need to respect how students understand and use technology to best support their own learning (though I might engage students in a discussion about the research that shows handwriting is better than typing for taking notes). I also need to be sympathetic to valid reasons students may have that require them to communicate with others during class time. Students need to respect my efforts to create a classroom environment and to organize the course in ways that support the learning of all students. Students also need to respect their fellow classmates and their classmates’ rights not to be distracted from participating fully in the classroom.

**Field Trip**

This class will be taking a full-day field trip on Saturday, November 5th and details regarding the trip will be provided approximately a month before the trip. It is my expectation that everyone in the class will participate in the trip. If for any reason you will be unable to participate in the trip, you will need to meet with me no later than four weeks before the trip is scheduled in order to discuss an alternative activity.

**Privacy and Moodle**

Moodle contains student information that is protected by the Family Educational Right To Privacy Act (FERPA) and makes that information visible to other students in the class. Disclosure of this information to unauthorized parties violates federal privacy laws. Please remember that this information is protected by federal laws and must not be shared with anyone outside the class. Questions can be referred to the Registrar’s Office.

**Academic Accommodations**

In compliance with Lafayette College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Requests for academic accommodations need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students must register with the Office of the Dean of Advising and Co-Curricular Programs for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations.

**Academic Integrity**

To maintain the scholarly standards of the College and, equally important, the personal ethical standards of our students, it is essential that written assignments be a student’s own work, just as is expected in examinations and class participation. A student who commits academic dishonesty is subject to a range of penalties, including suspension or expulsion. Finally the underlying principle is one of intellectual honesty. If a person is to have self-respect and the respect of others, all work must be his/her own.

Instances of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Advising and Co-Curricular Programs for appropriate action. By remaining in this class, you affirm two things: first, that you have carefully read and reviewed the “Code of Conduct” and “Academic Honesty” sections of the Lafayette Student Handbook (see studentlife.lafayette.edu/resources) and, second, that you agree to abide by the Code of Conduct and to rigorously practice academic honesty.

**Federal Credit Hour Compliance**

The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. Please see the Registrar’s Office web site (http://registrar.lafayette.edu/files/2013/04/Federal-Credit-Hour-Policy-Web-Statement.doc) for the full policy and practice statement.

**Class Participation Rubric**

(Source: John Immerwahr, 8/15/2008,

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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strong Work** | **Needs Development** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Listening** | Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor | Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others | Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others |
| **Preparation** | Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions | Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation | Exhibits little evidence of having read or thought about assigned material |
| **Quality of Contributions** | Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of: assigned text(s) or assignments; previous remarks of other students; and insights about assigned materials | Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students | Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in seminar |
| **Impact on Class** | Comments frequently help move class conversation forward | Comments sometimes advance the conversation, but sometimes do little to move it forward | Comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it |
| **Frequency of Participation** | Actively participates at appropriate times | Sometimes participates but at other times is “tuned out” | Seldom participates and is generally not engaged |

Class participation deserving of an A grade will be strong in most categories; participation that is strong in some categories but needs development in others will receive a B; a grade of C reflects a need for development in most categories; D work is typically unsatisfactory in several categories; and F work is unsatisfactory in nearly all categories.

**How to E-mail Your Professor**

(http://web.wellesley.edu/SocialComputing/Netiquette/netiquetteprofessor.html)

Students often tell us that they worry about how to address an e-mail message to a professor – especially one whom they don't know. Below are suggestions that answer concerns we've heard not just from students, but from professors. And note: use these tips not just for e-mailing professors, but people who work in college offices, your employers and job supervisors, and your class deans and RDs.

**On addressing your professor**

**E-mail to a professor should be treated like a business letter –** at least until you know that professor's personal preferences very well. Although e-mail is widely regarded as an informal medium, it is in fact used for business purposes in many settings (including Wellesley College). You won't err if you are too formal, but there is the possibility of committing many gaffes if you are too informal.

**The subject header should be informative.** It is not a salutation line, so don't write something like "hey professor" in that line. Instead, write a few words indicating the purpose of your message: "Request for a space in your class," for example.

**Use professors' names when addressing them.** Many professors we queried said that they do not like to be called simply "professor." They prefer "Professor Lee" or "Ms./Mr. Lee"; most tell us that the title itself doesn't matter nearly so much as the fact that you also use their names ("Dr. Lee" does seem to be uncommon at Wellesley, though, just so you know). Some professors will eventually suggest that you call them by their first names, but if you are more comfortable continuing to use a title, that is always fine. Just be sure to use a name. (Note: these comments are true for personal interaction as well as for e-mail).

**Dear, Hi, Hey, or nothing?** To some eyes and ears, "Dear Professor Jones" may be too formal for an e-mail message – but in fact it will do just fine when your purpose is a business-like one. Simply writing "Professor Jones" (followed by a comma) is fine, too. Some faculty are sensitive to the word "Hi" as a salutation, whether alone or with a name (e.g., "Hi, Professor Jones"), but others don't mind it and in fact use it themselves. But avoid "hey" – no one we queried likes that one.

**Don't expect an instant response.** Although we have all become accustomed to the instantaneous quality of electronic communication, your professors want you to know that they simply cannot always answer a message quickly. Allow them a day or two, or even more, to respond. You can re-send the message if you haven't heard back in five days or so.

**On e-mail style**

**Don't use smiley faces or other emoticons when e-mailing professors, and don't use all those internet acronyms, abbreviations, and shortened spellings** (e.g., LOL, or "U" for "you"). Similarly, don't confuse email style with txt style. All of that electronic shorthand signals a level of intimacy (and perhaps of age) that is inappropriate for exchanges with your professors.

**Write grammatically, spell correctly, and avoid silly mistakes.** Proofread. Use the spelling checker. Especially double-check for embarrassing errors in your subject header. Show that you care about how you present yourself in writing to your professor.

**Use paragraph breaks** to help organize your message. It's hard to read a long unbroken stream of words on a screen.

**On content**

**Don't use e-mail to rant or whine.** Sometimes the very appearance of a message can signal "rant": very long paragraphs, no capital letters, no sentence breaks. These are not fun to read, and may well elicit the exact opposite response that you intend. Of course, we are all tempted to rant sometimes in e-mail, so what one professor recommends is this: Sure, rant all you want in an e-mail. But don't send it. Hit the delete button, and then write a more measured message. (Many faculty will tell you that they have files full of unsent messages; they have wisely learned that an e-mail written in the first flush of frustration must be re-crafted and sent with care.) On the other hand, an email in which you direct a constructively worded complaint to the person most able to address such complaints is just fine.

**Keep most messages to under a screen in length**; lots of readers will simply defer reading long messages, and then may never come back to them. On the other hand, a very short, terse message may simply be meaningless. Be sure to include enough information so that your reader can understand what you are requesting. Provide a bit of background or context if necessary. State your request clearly.

**Take extra steps to minimize the e-mail exchange**; for example, if you are requesting an appointment, state your purpose and name the times that you could come in in your initial message. Your respondent may then be able to answer you with only one additional message.

**Quote selectively and briefly** from any prior messages to provide context and background. Although sometimes it's good to quote an entire exchange so as to keep a record of what's been said and decided, often that's unnecessary and simply ends up making a message too long and cluttering the screen.

Many professors advise that you **think about *why* you are sending an e-mail message.** Are you asking something that could easily be checked if you took a few extra steps yourself? For example, e-mailing a professor simply to ask when her office hours are can be annoying when the office hours have been clearly announced on the syllabus already. On the other hand, e- mailing for an appointment is just fine. Are you asking a question privately that might be better asked on the course conference, where all the students might usefully see the response? Are you e-mailing to lodge a complaint or to ask for a letter of recommendation or to seek help with a problem set? In these cases, personal contact and an office visit might be much better.

**Be respectful, and think about what kinds of things might sound odd or offensive to your professor.** For example, don't say flippantly that you slept through that professor's class, or talk about your love life, or bash chemistry or math or writing.

Wellesley faculty think very highly of their students, and you will soon find that they will work closely with you and that you'll feel quite comfortable entering an intellectual relationship with your professors. E-mail has often been seen as a democratizing system of communication that flattens hierarchies and that allows people of all sorts to communicate comfortably and freely with each other. We value the ease of communication that e-mail offers us - but we who work a Wellesley have also learned, over time, that we don't quite want our e-mail with students to feel like an instant-message exchange. Most professors are overwhelmed by the vast number of e-mail messages they receive; some have been shocked by the sheer effrontery of some of those messages; many become frustrated if e-mail consumes so much of their time and emotional energy that they can't then spend valuable personal time with you. We hope these tips will help you - and your professors - conserve some of that emotional energy.

**And as for that emotional energy, here's one last tip:**

**Be kind to yourself if you make an electronic faux pas.** All of us – even those who have studied electronic communication for years – have made some pretty monstrous errors. We learn from our mistakes, and we learn to forgive ourselves (and others).