

INFORMATION DESIGN

WRT400 | FALL 2010

Instructor Information:

Dr. Krista Kennedy

Office: HBC 228

Hours: T 2:30 - 3:30 | W 2:15 - 3:15 | by appt., f2f & online

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I typically return emails within 48 business hours. If you see me online you're welcome to ping me, but after 6 pm I may not respond.

Overview and Objectives:

Information Design (WRT 400/600, F10) is a hybrid course that meets in both a physical classroom and online. Together, we'll explore basic principles of conveying information visually and informing audiences through mixed modes of communication. Since this class fulfills a Histories & Theories requirement within the Writing major, we will spend a fair amount of time considering historical examples and the theoretical elements that make these sorts of documents work. We'll also work individually and collaboratively to create a variety of informational texts. When we finish up in December, you should have gained the following experience and skills:

You'll understand how to re-state and convey information in multiple visual forms and textual genres. You'll be able to conduct rhetorical analysis in order to determine which format is best for the situation you're addressing.

You'll have learned techniques that help you critically analyze audiences and their needs. You'll understand audience factors and how to adjust your delivery to better convey information in a way that is most rhetorically effective for your message. You'll also know how to design basic usability tests that help ensure you're reaching your audience.

You will have strengthened your writing and composition skills. Specifically, you will have gained experience in communicating professional and/or technical topics in ways that involve minimal text and heavy visuals.

You'll have worked with a range of technologies that will help you generate or manipulate visual designs, as well as share them online. We won't do professional-level design work, but you will use a number of tools designed for casual designers and publishers of information. You'll understand what they are, what to do with them, and how they might be

deployed in various projects. Ideally, you'll also have gained the confidence to continue evaluating future technologies as they emerge.

All of you should walk away from this course with a broad vocabulary and understanding of these ideas and with a sense of the way different modes of communication (print, digital, and slide) impact the way we convey information.

Texts and Materials:

Baer, Kim. *Information Design Workbook: Graphic Approaches, Solutions, and Inspiration + 30 Case Studies*. Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2008. ***

Reynolds, Garr. *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery*. Berkeley: New Riders Press, 2008.

Tufte, Edward. *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint: Pitching Out Corrupts Within*. 2nd Ed. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2006.

Tufte, Edward. *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1997.

O'Grady, Jenn & Kenn Visocky. *The Information Design Handbook*. Cincinnati, OH: HOW Books, 2008.

Other materials will be made available online via PDF. You'll need the most recent version of Adobe Reader in order to access these files. It's available for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/reader/>.

Our primary online course space is located at <http://www.kristakennedy.net/infodesignF10/>. Your user name is the prefix of your SU email address and the initial password is writing. (You'll want to change the password at your first log-in.) You will also need to set up free accounts for the following social media applications: ManyEyes, Flickr, Scribd, and SlideShare. We'll talk more about this as we begin to use each one.

***As of the first week of class, this book is not available in the bookstore. You may wish to order it online.

Assignments and Grades:

You will be graded on four major components over the course of the semester.

1. Instructions Set: 200 points
2. Informative Package: 400 points

3. Final Presentation: 200 points

4. Participation: 200 points

Total available points: 1000

Late work: Written assignments are due by the beginning of class or at the time specified for online submission. Major assignments (i.e. not blog posts or weekly assignments) are reduced by one letter grade per *business day*. This means that if you are unable to complete an assignment that is due on a Friday, the points will not be reduced until the following Monday. Tuesday would be the second late day, and so on. If you're going to be late, you might as well take the time to do the best work possible. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

I do not give incompletes except in instances of documented illness or the death of close relatives. If you are in the D or F range at midterm, you and I will schedule a conference. This may be a time for you to withdraw from the class or sign a contract with me stating that we've discussed the matter and you intend to continue the class.

That said, nobody wants you to do well more than I do. If you have questions or run into problems as we go along, let's talk and make sure you're able to stay on track.

Getting Things Done:

Attendance and Online Participation: You should be participating fully and consistently each week. Since this class relies so heavily on in-class discussion and work, it is not possible for you to make up missed work or work ahead.

Let me be very frank: If you are taking this class because a hybrid course seems like less work, you may want to reconsider now. Since much of the participation is written, you will likely do more writing than in many of your other classes. Because we only see each other once each week, you need to be blogging and otherwise consistently contributing in order to make sure the rest of us know you're there and pulling your weight.

Blogging and Forums: Because online communication is so central to our work, it counts for as much as two of the central assignments do. You should plan on writing at least one substantive post each week. Here is a checklist of aspects to include during the weeks we're responding to readings:

- ✓ It should have a good title. "Good" means descriptive and original. "Week One Post" is not a good title.
- ✓ It should be insightful, articulate, on-topic, and clearly demonstrate an understanding of the readings and/or work of the week, depending on what we're up to.
- ✓ It should substantiate assertions and contain citations as appropriate. Parenthetical citation is fine. Ex: (Brady, 2006, p. 2).
- ✓ It should be at least 250 words long if you are an undergraduate and 400 words long if

- you are a graduate student.
- ✓ *It should be posted by 3pm on Friday.* Late posts will lose two points each day.

On the weeks we are posting things that aren't reading responses, different criteria will apply, and we'll talk about that class.

Regardless of the nature of any given week's blogging, you should plan on making thoughtful comments to at least two of your colleagues' posts. "Thoughtful" means articulate and helpful; comments like "Absolutely!" and "Woo-hoo!" do not count. Comments should be completed by midnight on Monday.

If your contributions meet these basic requirements, you'll receive up to 30 points each week. You can feel free to post more, of course. Extra work (either in posts or comments) means up to three additional points per week. If you see something interesting and pertinent to the course in the news, on YouTube, or elsewhere, post a link and let us know about it!

Policies

Technology and Privacy: All course materials will be posted on or linked from the blog, which serves as our central course hub. All of our online discussions will take place there, and we'll peer review some materials there as well. Your identity will be shielded through the use of pseudonyms, but you should remember that the blog is a public document, and the social media applications we will use are also public. Never forget that *anyone* can read them. If you have any concerns about the role of technology in this course, you should contact me within the first week of the semester. You should also plan to take advantage of email, IM, Twitter, and/or face-to-face appointments for questions that come up along the way.

Professionalism: It goes without saying that in the classroom, we should all adhere to basic standards of politeness and professionalism. This extends to the work you do online. Even if you're working at home in your bunny slippers, you're still at work when you're dealing with this class. Remain professional at all times. Disagreements will inevitably pop up as we talk through our topics, but they should be handled respectfully, as should peer reviews. If your behavior does not meet these guidelines, you and I will have a discussion and your grade will be affected. See the Collaboration Policy further on down the syllabus for more information regarding expected behavior.

Respect works both ways. I do my best to be courteous and fair in all situations and at all costs. If you ever feel that you've been treated otherwise, please come and talk to me about it.

Grade Disputes: If you have a question about your grade, please wait 24 hours before you discuss it with me. Take some time to think about the situation and carefully formulate your argument. When we talk, you should have a specific rationale for why you deserve a higher

grade. Then schedule a time to talk with me and we'll discuss it.

Collaboration: Throughout this class, you'll interact with and develop projects together. As in the workplace, this sort of work means that you will have to find ways to get along. I expect for you to be able to use your social skills to resolve your basic differences on your own. However, if you find a particular collaborative situation to be unreasonable or unresolvable, please notify me so that I can help you resolve it. If you find yourself considering taking this step, use this test: in a real job, would this be an issue worth taking to your boss and soliciting managerial intervention? If so, then it's time to let me know. If not, then find ways to work it out yourselves.

The Writing Center: Experienced consultants at the Writing Center (101 HB Crouse Hall, on the Quad) are available to work one-on-one with you at *any* stage of your writing process and with *any* kind of writing you're creating. Whether you need help understanding an assignment, brainstorming ideas, revising subsequent drafts, or developing editing strategies, face-to-face and online chat appointments are available for 25- or 50-minute sessions throughout the semester. Appointments can be reserved up to six days in advance via their online scheduling program, WOnline. In addition, drop-in appointments are welcome Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and brief concerns, questions, or drafts (max of 5 pages) can be emailed to consultants via their eWC service. For more information on hours, location and services, please visit <http://wc.syr.edu>.

Academic Dishonesty: If you have a question about documentation and/or plagiarism as you complete your work, just ask me. I'll be more than happy to discuss it with you. That said, the SU Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Special Needs and Accommodations: Students who need special consideration because of any sort of documented disability should make an appointment to discuss it with me right away. The information you share with me will remain confidential. You should also contact the Office of Disability Service for information and/or assistance.

WRT 400: Schedule of Events (subject to change)

Week One (8/31 - 9/6) HBC 227	What are we up to in here? What is ID? Why should I care?	In class: Introductions, syllabus, schedule Online: Read, post, and comment about O'Grady, 6-51, Baer 8-30. Be sure to tell us the ways you envision using ID in your future plans, either in this class or in your career.
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<p>Week Two (9/7 - 9/13)</p> <p>Eggers 012</p>	<p>First Principles of Communication</p>	<p>In class: Select concepts from <i>Silvae Rhetorica</i> (http://rhetoric.byu.edu/) Online: Read O’Grady, 52-77. Locate a sample information graphic and post it to Flickr in order to embed it on the blog. Tell us why it does/doesn’t appeal to you, what rhetorical appeals it demonstrates, and what cognitive principles it illustrates or fails.</p>
<p>Week Three (9/14 - 9/20)</p> <p>Eggers 012</p>	<p>Basic Principles of Audience</p>	<p>In class: Read O’Grady 78-96. Come prepared to present on your team’s assigned section, complete with Wordle uploaded to our class Flickr account. Online: Examine Nicholas Felton’s various reports available at http://feltron.com/. Create a simple visualization of data that might appear on your personal annual report using ManyEyes.com. Post to the blog and explain why it does or does not demonstrate the principles we’ve covered so far.</p>
<p>Week Four (9/21 - 9/27)</p> <p>HBC 227</p>	<p>Designing Instructions</p>	<p>In class: Tufte, <i>Visual Explanations</i>, 54-71. Intro to Instructions Assignment. Online: Read Anderson 647-674 (PDF). Post 3-paragraph proposal explaining your proposed topic, audience, justification, and form.</p>
<p>Week Five (9/28 - 10/4)</p> <p>HBC 227</p>	<p>Parallelism & Multiples Basic Aesthetic Principles</p>	<p>In class: Tufte, <i>Visual Explanations</i>, 79-119. Online: O’Grady, 96-131, Baer 90-121. Locate an instructions set that you think is particularly successful or a spectacular failure in demonstrating at least two of these principles. Post to the blog along with analysis.</p>
<p>Week Six (10/5 - 10/11)</p> <p>HBC 227</p>	<p>Working with Images, Basic Doc Design</p>	<p>In class: Tufte 73- 77, O’Grady 160-61. Intro to working with photos. Online: Post visual samples of in-progress instructions to blog (via Flickr, YouTube, etc.) Peer review for clarity, usefulness, interest.</p>
<p>Week Seven (10/12 - 10/18)</p> <p>HBC 227</p>	<p>Beginning the Information Package</p>	<p>In class: Read the following case studies: O’Grady 135-137, 164-165, 172-187; Baer 132-135, 148-160, 170 Online: White, “Page Architecture.” (77-99, PDF). Post an example of a page you think demonstrates these architectural principles along with an analysis.</p> <p>Instructions Deadline: 10/18, midnight.</p>
<p>Week Eight (10/19 - 10/25)</p> <p>HBC 227</p>	<p>Discovery & Development</p>	<p>In class: Baer, 32-62 Online: Post “elevator talk” version of your project and preliminary audience analysis.</p>
<p>Week Nine (10/26 - 11/1)</p> <p>HBC 227</p>	<p>Displays of Evidence</p>	<p>In class: Tufte, <i>Visual Explanations</i>, 27-53 Online: Creative Brief due. (PDF format, posted to blog via Scribd.)</p>

Week Ten (11/2 - 11/8) HBC 227	Usability Testing	In class: Anderson, 428-443 (PDF) Online: Design and post usability testing procedures for your final package. (PDF format, posted to blog via Scribd.)
Week Eleven (11/9 - 11/15) HBC 227	Effective Presentations	In class: Tufte, The Cognitive Style of Powerpoint Online: Reynolds, 45-97. Two personas and scenarios due via the blog. Be sure to include presentation factors in your scenarios.
Week Twelve (11/16 - 11/22) HBC 227	Presentation Design & Delivery	In class: Reynolds, 103-164 Online: Reynolds, 183-211. Watch posted TED Talks and post discussions of how they do or don't illustrate these principles. What can you adopt? What's the take-away in terms of ID and presentation skills?
Week Thirteen (11/23 - 11/29)	Thanksgiving Week	Tues: Optional individual conferences
Week Fourteen (11/30 - 12/6) Eggers 012	Presentations	
Week Fifteen (12/7 - 12/13) Eggers 012	Presentations, Final Wrap-Up	Final projects due in my inbox by Dec. 13, 5 p.m.