

Digital Communication 1 COM 2449

Fall 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 8-9:15

Instructor: Michael Damm

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Course Description:

Digital Communication is a two-course sequence of hands-on production classes, concentrating on still photography, text, recorded audio, and the moving image as vehicles of public communication. The method is “learn-by-doing” - you learn the tools and techniques that enable digital media production by doing your own media projects (i.e. by producing videos, photographs, audio recordings, etc.). The guided frameworks that underpin each project enable you to explore the creative fusion of sound, image and text regardless of prior experience. Digital COM 1 concentrates on still images and text, while Digital COM 2 concentrates on video and sound.

Course Overview:

We'll draw inspiration from a wide spectrum of visual culture: art, advertising, and photojournalism are the primary touchstones. We'll also look at the very strong work that's been done by previous students. And we'll cover concepts and design basics that will help you communicate more effectively in visual media. The lectures and examples are meant as points of departure, rather than rules or guidelines. The goal is for you to gain a sense of creative agency, and to speak to the issues that matter to you.

Assignments, Projects, and Timeline (these dates might change):

Assignment 1: First Image

Choose a photograph you're interested in, and ask yourself why you like it. What makes it a compelling image for you? Did you choose it mostly for its subject? Does it have personal significance? Is there something about its composition you respond to (like color or the arrangement of objects in the frame)? Be prepared to talk about why you chose this particular image when we meet on Thursday, August 31.

***Due:** Wednesday, August 30 via email*

Send to mdamm@ndnu.edu

Phase 1: The public image

What does it mean for an image to be an act of public communication? How would that differ from something we might call familiar or personal? Do these categories sometimes blur into each other? Has the idea of "public" changed in the digital era? Are there limits to what images are able to say?

Begin keeping a journal of images using your phone or camera. Take a few pictures everyday, and explore as widely as you can with different subjects. Begin to incorporate the ideas about design and composition that we discuss in class.

Assignment 2: Form/Content

Select two images from your journal to present in class. Be prepared to discuss the specific design ideas you've incorporated.

Due: Tuesday, September 12.

Assignment 3: Public/Personal

Collect two images – one that is “public” and one that is “personal.” One way to think about the difference: Is the image intended to be meaningful to people who don't know the photographer or subject? Be prepared to discuss the difference you see between them.

Due: Tuesday, September 19

Assignment 4: Public Image Portfolio

Compile a portfolio of 10 images from your image journal that address subjects that matter to you, and that you think should matter to the general public. Be prepared to discuss the subjects you've chosen, as well as your use of design.

Due: September 28 and October 3

Phase 2: Photo Essay

Tell a story using photographs as the primary means of communication. Think of this as a classic journalistic photo essay - give us as much information about your subject as possible, across a series of ten images. Each image should carry equal weight, and together they should add up to a cohesive statement. Include captions.

Assignment 5: Photo Essay Synopsis

Due: October 12 (one paragraph)

Assignment 6: Finished Photo Essay

Due: October 31, November 2 (a portfolio of ten images, with captions, presented as a .pdf file)

Phase 3: Juxtaposition

Images and text can be combined in multiple ways that extend the capacity of images to convey a message. The work you do in this part of the class will build on everything you've done so far in terms of the synthesis of content and design.

Assignment 6: Text/Image Juxtaposition

Due: November 14

Assignment 7: Multiple Image Juxtaposition

Due: November 28

Assignment 6: Multiple Image Juxtaposition, with Text

Due: December 7

Equipment:

You need a camera. For most people, that means a smart phone, but it can be any digital camera. Make sure you have the necessary peripherals (sdhc card, usb card reader, or transfer cable). You also need an external storage device, because files can't be stored on the computers in the lab. Image files can be large, so a 500 MB USB stick isn't enough for this class. I recommend a 4-8 GB USB stick.

The Internet:

Keep in mind that a project cannot be comprised entirely of material recycled from the internet. You need to come up with your own words and images.

Grades:

Your grade on individual projects is determined by two things: effort and clarity. Projects and assignments will count for 80% of your final grade in the class; the remaining 20% is based on participation in class discussion. Lively participation in group discussions will earn you much love and extra credit!

You Can Almost Always Still Get An A!

As long as you complete a project by the deadline and present it to class, you can always revise and resubmit it for a higher grade. But there are rules:

1. You need to have completed the original project on time, and you need to have presented it to the class for feedback.
2. You need to present your revised project to the class for before/after comparison. Be prepared to discuss the changes you made, and how they improved the project.

Attendance Policy:

Haphazard attendance is the main thing that could prevent you from getting an A in this class. If you miss classes, or are repeatedly late to class, you'll miss out on discussion, information, tutorials and chances to ask questions and get feedback on your work. There's no way around one simple fact: unexcused absences will lower your grade.

Learning Objectives:

This course will enable you to:

1. Understand and apply the conceptual, organizational and technical principles underlying digital communication
2. Develop basic skills in the operation of digital production systems, including cameras, editing systems, graphic creation and presentation software
3. Understand the development of modern digital production conventions and technological standards
4. Cultivate an ability to work as a part of a production team
5. Readily adapt to the shifting digital production platforms used in professional work environments

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Manage a professional digital media project
2. Develop ideas and concepts to meet specific, real-world objectives
3. Produce professional level digital photographs
4. Communicate effectively with colleagues

Average Student Workload Expectations:

Students are expected to engage in 45 hours of coursework for every semester unit earned. In a 3 unit course, this means a total of 135 hours. Class time consists of a little over 35 hours, which means you should expect to perform an additional 100 hours of work independently outside of class (approx. 7 hours per week).

The apportionment of these hours will shift from week to week depending on what you're working on, but the following is a rough guide:

- three to four hours per week in the field, working with your camera and collecting images (45-60 hours total).
- one to two hours per week of research. This includes readings, independent software tutorials and gathering background information for your projects (5-15 hours total).
- two to four hours per week in the computer lab. Some projects will be more software intensive than others, so these hours will fluctuate (30-40 hours total).

Disability Services: If you have a learning disability or other circumstance that requires accommodations in this class, you must bring it to the attention of Disability Services to arrange for possible accommodations. Disability Services has recently become part of Counseling, Health, and Disability Services, located in New Hall E18 and New Hall E19. The main number for Counseling, Health and Disability Services is 650-508-3714. The Disability Services Specialist may be contacted directly at 650-508-3670.

Academic Honesty:

Academic honesty is a cornerstone of our values at NDNU. If any words or ideas used in

an assignment submission do not represent your original words or ideas, you must cite all relevant sources and make clear the extent to which such sources were used. Words or ideas that require citation include, but are not limited to, all hard copy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and all verbal or visual communication when the content of such communication clearly originates from an identifiable source. Consult the NDNU Student Handbook regarding consequences of misrepresenting your work.

Academic Support:

The Academic Success Center and Writing Center are available to support your studies. Please take advantage of these services. Both are located in the Campus Center.

Call To Action Day: Tuesday, October 10: No classes before 3:00pm.