

MEJO 717 Summer 2018

Information Visualization



MEJO 717 explores the overlap between several disciplines: cognitive science, graphic design, information visualization/architecture, and journalism.

The communication landscape has changed as a consequence of the spread of new means of gathering, organizing and delivering information. You will learn how to express yourself in the language of graphics, create clear and meaningful visualizations, and to communicate data with clarity and creativity. And, how to help your audience comprehend what you're showing them. 717 explores the overlap between several disciplines: cognitive science, design, information visualization/ architecture, and journalism. In this course, you will learn the basic rules of graphic design and information visualization through readings from main authors in each field, discussions on real-world examples and the design of several projects. The goal is not that you become master designers or data crunchers, but that you learn to visually organize information to improve understanding in a thoughtful and purposeful way.

Required materials

Readings

The Functional Art by Alberto Cairo, published September 2012 (<http://www.thefunctionalart.com>). It includes a DVD with 90 minutes of video-lectures, many of which you will be viewing in the beginning weeks. These are also linked in the course files.

The Non-Designer's Design Book by Robin Williams. It's a fast, easy, skimmable read.

Readings of articles, book chapters and other links will be posted in the week-by-week in Course Materials accessed from the main menu of your course Sakai site.

Video lectures

Video lectures are a part of your required viewings. You are encouraged to use them as a resource as we progress through the course. There will also be short videos assigned to introduce a topic or explain a concept or tool.

Adobe Illustrator Software and Training

Adobe Illustrator is required software for this course. UNC Chapel Hill now provides students with a free subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud, of which Illustrator is a part. Directions for this subscription are posted on Sakai course site.

Lynda.com is also required and is free to students. Lynda.com offers software training tutorials and videos. It can be accessed via UNC's onyen login. More details are provided on the Sakai course site.

Course calendar

WEEK 1*Wed. May 16**Sun. May 20*

DESIGN CONCEPTS

Discussion and assignments: See the appropriate Week Instructor Overview in Sakai for each week's assignments, discussions, deadlines, and readings / watchings / tutorials.**WEEK 2***Mon. May 21**Sun. May 27*

USING INFORMATION DESIGN

WEEK 3*Mon. May 28**Sun. June 3*

VISUAL PERCEPTION

WEEK 4*Mon. June 4**Sun. June 10*

VISUALIZING DATA

WEEK 5*Mon. June 11**Sun. June 17*

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

WEEK 6*Mon. June 18**Sun. June 24*

STORYTELLING with THEMATIC MAPS

WEEK 7*Mon. June 25**Sun. July 1*

INTERACTIVE GRAPHICS

WEEK 8*Mon. July 2**Tue. July 8*

ETHICS

WEEK 9*Mon. July 9**Sun. July 15*

FINAL PROJECT

WEEK 10*Mon. July 16**Sat. July 21*

FINAL PROJECT & CRITIQUE

Please note that all deadlines are at 11:55 p.m. ET Sunday night unless otherwise noted.

Assignments and grading

Grading

This course uses the graduate grading scale of H (high pass), P (pass), L (low pass), and F (fail). Your grade will be based on several discussions, papers and exercises.

My Grading Philosophy

The purpose of each assignment is not to follow rules or complete a checklist but to create a professional, informative, well-designed project that demonstrates your knowledge and ability. Your burden is to prove you understand the subject matter so make that clear by executing a quality project. I expect professional, high-quality work and projects must be at a level you would be proud to show a potential employer at a major publication, agency or firm.

Component	% Grade	Criteria	Grade
Discussions	20	Work significantly exceeds expectations	H
Articles	20	Work meets expectations	P
Assignments	30	Work is lower than expectations	L
Final Project	30	Work is unacceptable	F

Components

The main grading components will be two articles, several simple exercises based on the concepts learned in the assigned readings and completed in Illustrator; a final project that consists of a complete information graphic about a news topic chosen in the last three weeks of the course; and your participation in discussions and critiques.

Discussions

Discussion is an important activity for effective online instruction. It is important that you share ideas, respond to others and stay engaged. Great discussions are enriching.

As the course instructor, my role is to facilitate your discussions with each other. I will ask follow-up questions and provide additional information as needed but I will not step in to direct the discussion. That's your job! Please email me if you have questions.

Feedback will be provided on how you are doing discussion after the first two weeks, so you can address issues on your participation for future conversations.

Articles

The two articles will be graded based on the following criteria:

-Writing style. Articles should be written in an informal and engaging manner; these are not scholarly papers, but articles that could fit the style of publications such as *Editor&Publisher* or a professional blog, such as *Information Aesthetics* or *Poynter*. You must include footnotes and bibliographical references, but avoid overusing jargon.

-Comprehension. Your text will get you a better grade if it proves that you have a good grasp of course materials and that you are able to apply what you have learned to the analysis of visualizations in the

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media. (Both articles are critical reviews of news coverage.) Demonstrating your comprehension and synthesis of course materials is the first component of each article.

-Problem Solving. Proposing alternatives that, if implemented, would greatly improve the graphics and coverages is the second component of the article. You should write about different ways of conveying the same information, discuss what kind of professionals should be involved in the project if the newspaper/magazine had another chance to work on it, etc.

Exercises

The following will be considered in grading the exercises in Illustrator, including the final project:

- How well you apply the principles
- How clear the presentation is. Are the data well displayed? Is the graphic clear?
- How original your proposals are. Do not feel strictly constrained by rules but be able to innovate in an organized manner. That means create something different, but also be able to defend your ideas when the projects are discussed in forums: Why did you decide to use a particular font? Why did you arrange the layout that way? What do those colors mean?

This class is a crash course in Illustrator. None of you will be experts in it by the end of the semester. And that's not the point. So don't get hung up on something in Illustrator that's giving you trouble. Reach out to me, reach out to your classmates.

Missed work

You can miss assignments only in the case of medical and urgent situations. In many cases, you will be given support in making up assignments, but the instructor and administration should be informed as soon as possible of the situation. It is your responsibility to find out what was covered during the time you missed.

Contact information

Elizabeth Shell, instructor
eshell1@email.unc.edu.
gchat: elizabeth.shell@gmail.com
419-508-1483

I will respond to email inquiries in a timely manner and am available by appointment. Please email to schedule a time to meet by phone, Google Hangout or Skype.

Online Course Statement

1. By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the Acceptable Use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy (<http://help.unc.edu/1672>) on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette and privacy protection.
2. As part of this course you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC Chapel Hill Information Security Policies (http://its.unc.edu/ITS/about_its/its_policies/index.htm) when participating in online classes.
3. When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC Chapel Hill, such as Google or Youtube, please note that the Terms and Conditions of these companies and not the University's Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC Chapel Hill.
4. When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.
5. Online courses may at times require Web-based assignments that are public in nature and may be viewed by third parties online. This is especially true in social media and blogging platforms. Be mindful of the information you choose to share publicly as part of your assignments. Under the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and UNC's FERPA regulation (http://registrar.unc.edu/AcademicServices/PoliciesProcedures/StudentRights/CCM1_042762), a student's education records are protected from disclosure to third parties. However, FERPA protection does not extend to material shared publicly by students.

UNC Honor Code

It shall be the responsibility of every student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obey and to support the enforcement of the Honor Code (<http://instrument.unc.edu>), which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student, or academic personnel acting in an official capacity.

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

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Diversity

UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

For the Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm>), Including Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment, Sexual Violence, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking, and the Policy Statement on Nondiscrimination (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/policy-statement-on-non-discrimination>), please see the Web sites.

Special Accommodations

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

Accreditation

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program.

MEJO 717 will specifically address the following competencies:

- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which you work;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which you work, and to understand the digital world.

You can learn more about the full list of ACEJMC values and competencies here: <http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/principles>