

San Francisco State University: Liberal Studies
LS426.02 Thought & Image
Spring 2018

Class Meetings: M/W 12:35-1:50

Classroom: HUM 217

Instructor: Nick Sousanis sousanis@sfsu.edu

Office: HUM 581 Phone: 415-338-3166

Office Hours: Monday 2-3, Wednesday 11-12, or by appointment

Humans are highly visual creatures and we live in an increasingly visual culture. In this course, we will explore what visual thinking means, work to become visually literate, and engage with visual culture. We will look, read, analyze, critique – and we will make – draw, design, compose. This will be a highly hands-on experience – with no prior drawing or design experience expected or required. In engaging visually with our visual world, we expect to open new perspectives on the world around us previously outside our experience.

Regular in-class and at home ongoing assignments will be posed as opportunities for serious play – to engage with visual communication as maker, critic, respondent. You will be assessed on your exploring them and putting yourself into the work, rather than your existing skill, craftsmanship. These should be fun even as they are demanding in the ways you push yourself to think and work in ways you aren't accustomed. Ultimately, the course should get you to ask questions about what thinking looks like and prepare you to go on visual explorations of your own devising...

Required Readings (available at SFSU bookstore):

Asterios Polyp by David Mazzucchelli

The Politics of Design by Ruben Pater

Other short readings all supplied by instructor via iLearn

Required Materials: Since we will regularly be sketching, comics-making, designing, and more in this course, you will need to have a few simple and readily available materials on hand. You can of course get more than these if your interest allows, but here are some basics:

- A notebook/journal/sketchbook of some sort
- Drawing tool of your choice (pen, pencil, brush pen, etc.) (Color options are nice too)

Optional Recommended Materials: Construction paper, scissors, glue

Ongoing Activities: The heart of this class will consist of small exercises that we'll be doing regularly in-class and at home that connect to the subject matter at hand. One day you may be drawing, the next you may be visually analyzing the way a comics page is constructed, or considering why a park bench is designed as it is. Though the assignments may vary widely, they are all intended to get you actively thinking about the visual world and ways in which you can engage with it. While I've dreamed up a lot of activities for the term, I welcome suggestions for new things to try from all of you. Student evaluation will be based primarily on *completion not skill*. Emphasis will be placed on inventiveness, curiosity, effort, and willingness to dive in and try with vigor something you haven't – we want to build a portfolio of your explorations that should be rich in its depth. [Please note that prior drawing experience is not necessary, and that every exercise can be done by anyone of any skill level or background in drawing.]

Response Gallery: Each Assignment posted to iLearn

You will be keeping a composition notebook or journal in which to take visual notes, do in-class exercises, sketch out ideas, and conduct the majority of your assignments. You will submit them by first taking a quick, clean digital photo of the work, and subsequently posting each assignment to iLearn before the start of class on the day it is due. For each assignment you will enter your last name

first, followed by your first, then post your image(s), add any reflective text required (I will specify for each assignment the particular requirements), or upload a PDF, PPT, or other composite file. This will serve as a gallery to share with your classmates, as well as a place for me to respond to your work over the term. For each assignment, I will specify by name where you should upload it to so everything ends up in the right place.

Mini-Projects (32%): Over the course of the term, we will do four more involved but still small projects that you will submit and share with class, which will also receive feedback and be graded.

Office Hour Conversation (3%): You are required to come by during professor's open office hours or make an appointment for another time to have a conversation about your work, address any questions you wish to explore. To receive full credit – you must show up at least once to have a conversation of some substance (doesn't have to last an hour – 10 minutes is fine!). This is an opportunity to talk about your ideas one-on-one with your professor and help me get to know where you are coming from better. Take advantage of it!

Final project: An intense examination of your choosing that addresses something with visual communication or visual culture. You are invited to do this in a visual form, but you may also do it as a traditional essay. Whether project or paper, *what matters most is that it incorporates what we've done over the term, that it demonstrates that you brought to bear your creative and critical attention to it, and is meaningful to you.* Topic and format will be discussed in class and approved in conversation with the instructor. To this end, before you begin the final project, you will be required to submit a formal proposal outlining your intent and the form the project will take.

Proposal/pitch: The proposal must be between 100-150 words long, can include any accompanying visual or other information to make clear what you have in mind, and should clearly state how your project relates to course material. Finally, it should indicate the working thesis or aims of your proposed project. Input from cohort and review by instructor will shape revisions – upon which student will receive approval to proceed.

For those doing a project in a creative format, your project needs to address course material in some fundamental way. That is, your project should indicate an advanced understanding of what we've explored over the term. In addition to your project itself, you are required to submit a short reflective essay 500-1000 words long that outlines your motivations and aims for the project in relation to the overall course content.

If you choose to do it as a traditional paper, you will draw on what we have learned to write a traditional analytical essay of 1500-2000 words. Your essay should have a clearly-outlined thesis—that is, it should have an argument, and be an attempt to convince the reader of something concerning the topic in visual communication/culture you are addressing.

Final Gallery Tour: Final projects are **due Monday, May 21** for the Final Exam period 10:45-1:15 – where everyone will showcase and share their projects with the rest of class.

Grades

Ongoing Activities – Response Gallery: 35% – graded as Complete/No Credit

Mini-Projects 1-4: 32% Comics Analysis, Shape of Your Thoughts, Politics of Design, & Dear Data

Office Visit: 3%

Final Project: 30%

Grading Criteria: You will produce a great deal of work over the term in the form of ongoing activities. These will be graded either as completed or no credit. There will be four mini-Projects assigned over the term that will receive in-depth feedback and be assigned grades, as will the Final

Project. As emphasized above – all your work will be evaluated primarily on completion, your willingness and effort to try new approaches, your curiosity, along with an understanding of how the work we are doing relates to the course material.

Course Outline: Some changes to our outline may occur as we may end up devoting more time to some things than expected or make room for ideas I hadn't anticipated. You will be apprised in class, as well as via email and iLearn. So that we all remain on the same page, you are expected to regularly check iLearn and your sfsu.edu account.

Class 1 1/22/18: Intro – overview

In-class exercise: Grids & Gestures

Class 2 1/24/18: "The privileging of text" & Visual Notetaking

HW: Sketchnote of class

Class 3 1/29/18: "The Eyes Have it": Perception – optics, cognition

HW: Drawing exercise

Class 4 1/31/18: "Making before Matching" The Origins of Drawing

In-Class: Drawing Exercise

Class 5 2/5/18: "Drawing to See"

In-class: Drawing exercise

Class 6 2/7/18: "Embodied Drawing" – Molly Bang, Gonyea, Arnheim

In-class: Relationship Cutouts

Class 7 2/12/18: ** Guest: Andrea Kantrowitz "Drawing as Thinking"

In-class: Drawing exercises

Class 8 2/14/18: ** Cartoonist Justin Hall combined class with Women & Gender Studies...

In-class: Sketchnote of talk

Class 9 2/19/18: "I See Faces Everywhere"/ Drawing is Alive – cartooning

In-class: Boids, Eyebrows, cartoon people

Class 10 2/21/18: "Understanding Comics" – history & McCloud, sequential art, image-text...

In-class: Panel Lottery, comics collaborative exercise

Class 11 2/26/18: "Comics & The Fourth Dimension"; time/space, simultaneity

In-class/HW: 3-person collaborative comic

HW: Sketchnote summaries

Class 12 2/28/18: Comics: *Asterios Polyp* Pt 1 – multimodality

HW: Reading response

Class 13 3/5/18: Comics: *Asterios Polyp* continued

HW: Reading response

Class 14 3/7/18: More Comics

HW: Shape of your thoughts/Comics Analysis – due in a week...

Class 15 3/12/18: Comics/Drawing final day...

HW: TBD

Class 16 3/14/18: The Shape of Our Thoughts

In-class discussion of What Your Thinking Looks Like...

DUE: **Visual Analysis & Shape of Your Thoughts Projects**

3/19/18 SPRING BREAK – No Class

3/21/18 SPRING BREAK – No Class

Class 17 3/26/18: Read excerpt from *Politics of Design*

Class 18 3/28/18: *Politics of Design* 2/Photoshopped/Gender/Clothing ...

Reading: excerpt from Politics of Design

Class 19 4/2/18: "Unpleasant Architecture" – 99% Invisible

HW: Response to public architecture & suggestion for improvement

In-class: Small workshop on drafting a proposal/abstract
 HW: Draft Proposal
 Class 20 4/4/18: 99% Invisible – Flag Design
 In-class: Design a Flag
 Class 21 4/9/18: Politics of Design sharing
 DUE: **Politics of Design Project**
 DUE: Final Project Proposal
 In-class: discussion of Politics of Design projects and Final Project proposals
 Class 22 4/11/18: ** Guest: RJ Andrews “Data Stories” – Data Visualization
 In-class: TBA
 Class 23 4/16/18: Data Visualization 2 – Dear Data, WEB Du Bois
 HW: Data Viz project
 Class 24 4/18/18: Data Viz 3: Mark Lombardi, network diagrams
 Class 25 4/23/18: Mapping
 HW: Neighborhood mapping
 Class 26 4/25/18: Logo Evolution
 HW: Analyze evolution of team or corporate mascot over time
 Class 27 4/30/18: Selfie City Project
 DUE: **Dear Data/Mapping Projects** – Shared in class
 Class 28 5/2/18: Why Fonts Matter!
 Class 29 5/7/18: TBD – Things that we may do (or may get mixed in earlier): Disabilities: Blind; Deaf/signing; Semiotics?; Emoji Story, Arrows
 Class 30 5/9/18: TBD
 Class 31 5/14/18: RECAP – reflecting together on all we covered over the term
 FINAL Exam Period Monday, May 21 10:45-1:15: In-class Gallery tour of Final Projects

iLearn

We will be using the iLearn website for this class. Those of you unfamiliar with iLearn can find resources and assistance online as well as with the office of Academic Technology. You are automatically enrolled in iLearn for all of your courses registered at SFSU.

Academic Technology website: <http://at.sfsu.edu>

iLearn log-in page: <https://ilearn.sfsu.edu/login/index.php>

Course Policies

Classroom approach: I consider learning as acquiring the tools to follow one’s own curiosity, and thus teaching means providing a framework, establishing an environment for participants to explore and thrive. Rather than being out in front, I see my role as accompanying students on a journey we all make together.

Classroom Policies: Because many of the ongoing activities will be done in-class, attendance is important and expected. Of course, sometimes obligations, illness, or other unforeseen events make attendance impossible. If you know of an upcoming obligation or ongoing health/personal challenges that that will preclude your attendance, let me know in advance and we will make alternative arrangements. In addition, repeatedly coming late to class is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We want this classroom to be a great learning environment for everyone, so we need to all take care of each other to make it so. Laptops and smart devices, if used well, can complement discussion and so are permitted. If they are being used in a way that detracts from the overall environment, the instructor will address that.

Late Papers and Homework Assignments

An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of class on the day it is due. Assignments that are turned in up to a week late will be marked accordingly and receive a full-grade deduction. Medical or family emergencies are valid excuses and will be accepted with written documentation. Also, assignments will not be accepted over email unless special arrangements are made with me.

Contact and Feedback

You are encouraged to visit office hours or make an appointment to discuss the topics covered in class, and to clarify any questions you may have about assignments and requirements. When sending emails to me, please use your "sfsu.edu" account when possible, and put "LS 426" followed by your subject in the subject line so I am sure to address it more quickly.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating or fraud; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgment, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Liberal & Creative Arts will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

Disability access

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/415-338-2472, video phone/415-335-7210) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).

Student disclosures of sexual violence

SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Title IX Coordinator by completing the report form available at <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>, emailing vpsaem@sfsu.edu or calling 338-2032.

To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/

Counseling & Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>

For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>

LS 426 THOUGHT & IMAGE

We are highly visual creatures living in an increasingly visual culture. Together, we will explore what visual thinking means, engage with visual culture, and work to become visually literate. This will be a highly hands-on experience—we will LOOK, READ, analyze, critique—and we will make—DRAW, DESIGN, compose. Assignments will be posed as opportunities for serious PLAY. Ultimately, the course gets you to question what thinking looks like and prepares you to go on visual explorations of your own devising...

READINGS David Mazzucchelli: Asterios Polyp
Ruben Pater: Politics of Design

MATERIALS • Sketchbook
• Drawing tool of choice
Optional: scissors, glue, construction paper

M/W 12:35-1:50 ! HUM 217
Nick Sousanis SOUSANIS@SFSU.EDU
OFFICE 581 HUM Hrs M2-3 W11-12
OR BY APPOINTMENT

SCHEDULE

- 1 1/22 INTRO
 - 2 1/22 Privileging of Text/Sketch-Notes
 - 3 1/29 Perception-Optics
 - 4 1/31 Origins of Drawing
 - 5 Drawing to See 2/5
 - 6 2/7 Embodied Drawing
 - 7 2/12 Guest: Dr. Andrea Kantrouli + 2 "Drawing as Thinking"
 - 8 3/4 Guest: Justin Hall, cartoonist w/ Women + Gender Studies Class
 - 9 2/19 I SEE FACES Everywhere
 - 10 2/21 Comics: Sequential Art
 - 11 2/26 Comics: Time-Space-Simultaneity
 - 12 2/28 Asterios Polyp
 - 13 3/5 A.P.II + Multimodality
 - 14 3/7 MORE COMICS
 - 15 3/12 Comics/Drawing wrap...
 - 16 3/14 SHAPE OF OUR THOUGHTS
- SPRING BREAK** **DUE** ① Comics Analysis **DUE** ② Shape of Thoughts

- 17 3/26 POLITICS of DESIGN
- 18 3/28 P.O.D. 2
- 19 4/2 UNPLEASANT Architecture
- 20 4/4 99% INVISIBLE-FLAGS
- 21 4/9 ③ P.O.D. Projects **DUE**
+ **DUE** Final Proposal
- 22 4/11 Guest RJ ANDREWS
DATA STORIES
- 23 4/16 Data Viz 2-DEAR DATA
- 24 4/18 Data Viz 3
- 25 4/23 Mapping
- 26 4/25 Logo Evolution?
- 27 4/30 Selfie City Project
DUE ④ Dear Data
- 28 5/1 FONTS!
- 29 5/4 TBD
- 30 5/9 TBD
- 31 5/14 RECAP

ONGOING ACTIVITIES (35%): Regular in-class + at home quick exercises. Drawing, designing, and more—posted to iLearn. Assessed on COMPLETION Not skill. Emphasis on inventiveness, curiosity, effort, & willingness to dive in and explore!

Mini-Projects (32%): 4 more-involved projects that you will share with class and will receive feedback and grade.

OFFICE VISIT (3%): Come talk to me—About your ideas, projects, ...—Must come once for full credit.

FINAL (30%) DUE 5/21 in FINAL Period
Intense examination of your choosing that takes up something in Visual Communication or VCulture. You are encouraged to do it as a VISUAL PROJECT, but you may do a traditional essay. What MATTERS MOST is that it incorporates what we've done over the term, that it demonstrates your creative & critical attention, and is MEANINGFUL TO YOU.
Must submit 100-150 word proposal in advance to determine suitability of project. **DUE 4/9**

FINAL EXAM PERIOD
MONDAY 5/21 10:45-1:15

final projects
DUE/SHARED