

## OVERVIEW

WE ARE HIGHLY VISUAL CREATURES LIVING IN AN INCREASINGLY VISUAL CULTURE. TOGETHER, WE WILL EXPLORE WHAT VISUAL THINKING MEANS AND ENGAGE WITH VISUAL CULTURE. 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 ASKS YOU TO QUESTION WHAT THINKING LOOKS LIKE AND PREPARES YOU TO GO ON VISUAL EXPLORATIONS OF YOUR OWN DEVISING...

## READINGS

DAVID MAZZUCHELLI ASTERIOS POLYP  
RUBEN PATER POLITICS OF DESIGN

## MATERIALS

NOTEBOOK/SKETCHBOOK  
DRAWING TOOLS - PEN, PENCIL,  
COLOR, A BONUS  
+ SCISSORS, GLUE, CONSTRUCTION PAPER

MW 11:00-12:15 ZOOM

NICK SOUSANIS@SFSU.EDU

STUDENT HOURS W 2-3, TH 1-2 OR BY APPT!

**NOTE:** NOTHING ABOUT THIS MOMENT IS NORMAL, AND OUR EXPECTATIONS MUST REFLECT THAT. YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIVES, NEED TO COME FIRST (AND SHOULD ALWAYS COME FIRST). DEADLINES ARE IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THEY KEEP THE CONVERSATION MOVING, BUT LIFE IS BIGGER, ALWAYS, SO WE'LL BE FLEXIBLE AND WORK IT OUT TOGETHER.

# LS 426 THOUGHT & IMAGE SPR 22



SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY

1 M 1/24 INTRO

2 W 1/26 PRIVILEGING TEXT/SKETCHNOTES + MAPPING

3 M 1/31 'EYES HAVE IT' - PERCEPTION

4 W 2/2 ORIGINS OF DRAWING

5 M 2/7 DRAWING TO SEE

6 W 2/9 EMBODIED DRAWING

7 M 2/14 WONDERFUL IDEAS + 100 ARROWS

8 W 2/16 DRAWING AS THINKING

9 M 2/21 'I SEE FACES EVERYWHERE' (DRAWING IS ALIVE!)

10 W 2/23 UNDERSTANDING COMICS - SEQUENTIAL ART

11 M 2/28 COMICS - TIME + SPACE 4D!

12 W 3/2 ASTERIOS POLYP

13 M 3/7 A.P. + MULTIMODALITY

14 W 3/9 COMICS FINALE - FONTS!

15 M 3/14 WRITING AS A VISUAL ART

16 W 3/16 THE SHAPE OF OUR THOUGHTS

DUE - IN CLASS SHARING

17 M 3/28 DATA STORIES - VISUALIZATION

18 W 3/30 DATA VIZ - DEAR DATA

19 M 4/4 DATA VIZ 3

20 W 4/6 MAPPING

\* 21 M 4/11 MAPPING/TBA

22 W 4/13 DUE DEAR DATA PROJECTS

23 M 4/18 POLITICS OF DESIGN

24 W 4/20 P.O.D. 2

25 M 4/25 UNPLEASANT ARCHITECTURE

26 W 4/27 99% INVISIBLE - FLAGS

27 M 5/2 DUE POLITICS OF DESIGN PROJECTS

28 W 5/4 ACCESSIBILITY

29 M 5/9 TBD

30 W 5/11 RECAP!

FINAL EXAM PERIOD  
WEDNESDAY 5/18 10:15-12:15

FINAL PROJECTS  
DUE - SHARED

\* LET ME KNOW IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO SHARE ANY OF YOUR IMAGES ON MY WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA. - NS

**MINI-PROJECTS (32%):** MORE-INVOLVED PROJECTS THAT YOU WILL SHARE WITH CLASS AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK AND GRADE.

**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, AND WILLINGNESS TO DIVE IN AND EXPLORE!

**STUDENT HOURS (3%):** TALK TO ME (ON ZOOM) ABOUT YOUR IDEAS, PROJECTS - MUST DO ONCE FOR FULL CREDIT.

**FINAL (30%):** DUE 5/18 IN FINAL EXAM PERIOD INTENSE EXAMINATION OF YOUR CHOOSING THAT TAKES UP SOMETHING IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION OR CULTURE. YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO DO IT AS A VISUAL PROJECT (THOUGH YOU MAY DO MORE 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 4/11)

San Francisco State University: Liberal Studies  
**LS426 Thought & Image**  
Spring 2022

Class Meetings: M/W 11:00-12:15; ZOOM  
Instructor: Nick Sousanis [sousanis@sfsu.edu](mailto:sousanis@sfsu.edu)  
Student Hours: W 2-3, Th 1-2 or by appointment

**A Note about Now:** Let me acknowledge to start off, nothing about our current circumstances is normal, and our expectations must reflect that. As understanding as I typically am about deadlines and workload in normal times, I am even more so now. Your health, your lives, need to come first (and *should always* come first), and we can work out solutions for whatever is going on (preferably with a good channel of communication). I want to see the work we do together as helpful to what you are experiencing and not an added burden. This doesn't mean we won't work hard and that it won't be challenging, just that it serves you as something meaningful and relevant to find your own way into it. Deadlines are important, because they allow us to keep the conversation moving and keep learning from one another, but life is bigger, always, and definitely now, so I'll remain flexible and we'll work it out together.

The course is synchronous so as to preserve the dynamic, interactive, and frequently collaborative atmosphere that has been so key to these classes, but all will be recorded, all instructions and resources will be available on iLearn, and there will be no penalty for not being able to make a session. We can check in outside of class, and make sure everyone is up to speed no matter their circumstances. Let's see this course and my role as being there *to support you in where you are going*. With that said, on with what we'll do together...

**Overview:** 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:**

*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, 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 (35%):** 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 (cropping the photo if possible), and 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, in some cases, upload a PDF, PPT, or other file. This will serve as a gallery to share with your classmates, as well as a place for us all 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.

**Zoom Visit (3%):** You are required to visit with professor during *student hours* or make an appointment for a different 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. 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 (30%):** 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. On the Final Exam period, we will do a **Gallery Tour**, where everyone will showcase and share their projects.

## Assessment

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

**32% Mini-Projects 1-3:** Shape of Your Thoughts, Politics of Design, & Dear Data/Mapping

**3% Student Hours**  
**30% Final Project**

**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 complete or no credit. There will be three 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 Monday 1/24:** Intro – overview

In-class exercise: Grids & Gestures

**Class 2 W 1/26:** “The privileging of text” & Visual Notetaking + Mapping advance look...

HW: Sketchnote of class

**Class 3 M 1/31:** “The Eyes Have it”: Perception – optics, cognition

HW: Drawing exercise

**Class 4 W 2/2:** “Making before Matching” The Origins of Drawing

In-Class: Drawing Exercise

**Class 5 M 2/7:** “Drawing to See”

In-class: Drawing exercise

**Class 6 W 2/9:** “Embodied Drawing” – Molly Bang, Gonyea, Arnheim

In-class: Relationship & Conceptual Cutouts

**Class 7 M 2/14:** The Having of Wonderful Ideas & 100 Arrows

HW: Reading Response

In-class: Arrows

**Class 8 W 2/16:** “Drawing as Thinking”

In-class: Drawing exercises

**Class 9 M 2/21:** “I See Faces Everywhere”/ Drawing is Alive – cartooning

In-class: Boids, Eyebrows, cartoon people

**Class 10 W 2/23:** “Understanding Comics” – history & McCloud, sequential art, image-text...

In-class: Panel Lottery, comics collaborative exercise

**Class 11 M 2/28:** “Comics & The Fourth Dimension”; time/space, simultaneity

In-class/HW: 3-person collaborative comic

HW: Sketchnote summaries

**Class 12 W 3/2:** Comics: *Asterios Polyp* Pt 1 – multimodality

HW: Reading response

**Class 13 M 3/7:** Comics: *Asterios Polyp* continued

HW: Reading response & Shape of Your Thoughts

**Class 14 W 3/9:** Comics/Drawing final day/Why Fonts Matter!

HW: TBD

**Class 15 M 3/14:** Writing as a Visual Art...

In-class: TBD

**Class 16 W 3/16:** The Shape of Our Thoughts

In-class sharing of Shape of Your Thoughts Projects

DUE: **Shape of Your Thoughts Projects**

**\*\* NO CLASS M 3/21 – *Spring Break***

**\*\* NO CLASS M 3/23 – *Spring Break***

**Class 17 M 3/28:** “Data Stories” – Data Visualization  
In-class: TBA

**Class 18 W 3/30:** Data Visualization 2 – Dear Data, WEB Du Bois  
HW: Data Viz project

**Class 19 M 4/4:** Data Viz 3: Mark Lombardi, network diagrams  
In-class: Small workshop on drafting a proposal/abstract  
HW: Draft Proposal

**Class 20 W 4/6:** Mapping  
HW: Neighborhood mapping

**Class 21 M 4/11:** TBA  
DUE: Final Project Proposal  
In-class: discussion of Final Project proposals

**Class 22 W 4/13:** DUE: **Dear Data/Mapping Projects** – Shared in class

**Class 23 M 4/18:** Read excerpt from *Politics of Design*

**Class 24 W 4/20:** *Politics of Design* 2/Photoshopped/Gender/Clothing ...  
Reading: excerpt from *Politics of Design*

**Class 25 M 4/25:** “Unpleasant Architecture” – 99% Invisible  
HW: Response to public architecture & suggestion for improvement

**Class 26 W 4/27:** 99% Invisible – Flag Design  
In-class: Design a Flag

**Class 27 M 5/2:** Politics of Design sharing  
DUE: **Politics of Design Project**

**Class 28 W 5/4:** Accessibility – Blind Comics

**Class 29 M 5/9:** TBD

**Class 30 W 5/11:** RECAP – reflecting together on all we covered over the term

FINAL Exam Period **Wednesday, May 18 10:15-12:15** Zoom Gallery tour of Final Projects

**Note:** I frequently share examples of what we do in class on my educational website/social media. Please let me know if you *do not* want me to share any of your images.

**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:** This is a class that thrives on interaction, improvisational collaboration, so it’s best if everyone is in attendance and on time. That said, given the circumstances and in regards to my note at top – our expectations will be different. The main thing is to keep me posted on what’s going on if you can’t join in regularly – we can work with anything from a point of communication.

**Late Assignments:** Again, as above, I’d like to see deadlines observed or clear communication about missing them if necessary – conversations grow best when we’re working together. But understanding, flexibility, and grace are essential now more than ever – so keep me updated as you can, and we can make it work.

**Contact and Feedback:** You are encouraged to visit me during student hours or make an appointment to discuss class, raise questions, or just check in. When emailing me, please use your “sfsu.edu” account when possible and put “LS 426” and topic 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](mailto: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](mailto: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/](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>