

DEREE COLLEGE SYLLABUS FOR: GD 3550 Special Topics in Graphic Communication Design 0/1/3				
(Fall 2026)				
PREREQUISITES:	GD 2127 Design Thinking Fundamentals GD 2428 Elements & Principles of Graphic Design GD 2426 Typography Basics			
CATALOG DESCRIPTION:	Exploration of rotating, advanced, and emerging themes in contemporary graphic design. Each offering centres on a focused topic, such as experimental publishing, data storytelling, design activism, speculative practice, artificial intelligence in visual communication, or material-driven making. Course structure varies by theme and may be theoretical, practical, or hybrid. Emphasis on critical inquiry, domain-specific skill development, and the production of research- and/or design-based outcomes.			
RATIONALE:	This course provides curricular flexibility to address evolving topics in contemporary graphic design beyond the fixed core curriculum. Students learn to research and analyze emerging design issues, apply specialized methods and tools, and develop theme-specific conceptual and technical skills. The course supports both theoretical inquiry and practice-based experimentation, fostering creative risk-taking and critical reflection. Through focused projects and research, students gain experience translating ideas into design outcomes and are prepared for diverse professional, academic, and interdisciplinary pathways.			
LEARNING OUTCOMES:	<i>As a result of taking this course, the student should be able to:</i> 1. Investigate a specialized topic within contemporary graphic design using appropriate theoretical, historical, or practical frameworks. 2. Apply research or making methodologies that align with the selected theme. 3. Develop a design project or critical study that demonstrates conceptual clarity, methodological rigor, and relevance to the topic. 4. Communicate ideas, processes, and outcomes effectively through professional written, verbal, and/or visual means.			
METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:	• Lectures, seminars, demonstrations, and guided class discussions. • Case studies, critiques, and thematic workshops (analogue, digital, or hybrid depending on topic). • Homework assignments and independent research/project development. • Use of library facilities for further study and preparation. • Instructor office hours for individual support and feedback. • Blackboard for lecture materials, readings, assignment instructions, announcements, formative quizzes, and online submissions. • Optional fieldwork, studio visits, or guest talks depending on topic. • Required recording of the design process; analogue (sketchbook) or digital platform (online journal), according to level, instructor guidelines and student preference. • The use of AI tools in this course follows the College and Program AI policies. • LinkedIn Learning resources for software and digital production skills.			
ASSESSMENT:	Summative: <table><tr><td>1st assessment: Thematic Research & Exploratory Study Practice-based pathway:</td><td>40%</td></tr></table>		1 st assessment: Thematic Research & Exploratory Study Practice-based pathway:	40%
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	<table border="1" data-bbox="643 147 1441 822"> <tr> <td data-bbox="643 147 1251 286">visual and process exploration with presentation, and sketchbook. Theory-based pathway: thematic research study (1,000–1,500 words) with presentation.</td><td data-bbox="1251 147 1441 286"></td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="643 286 1251 356"></td><td data-bbox="1251 286 1441 356">Enter percentage.</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="643 356 1251 822"> Final assessment: Click or tap here to enter text. Integrated Graphic Design Project or Critical Study with presentation and process documentation - Practice-based pathway: design project with process documentation, presentation and print deliverable. - Theory-based pathway: critical study (2,000–2,500 words) with visual analysis and presentation. </td><td data-bbox="1251 356 1441 822">60%</td></tr> </table> Formative: <table border="1" data-bbox="643 887 1441 960"> <tr> <td data-bbox="643 887 1251 925">Exercises</td><td data-bbox="1251 887 1441 925">0%</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="643 925 1251 960"></td><td data-bbox="1251 925 1441 960"></td></tr> </table> The formative exercises aim to prepare students for the summative assessments. Summative 1 tests Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 4. Summative 2 tests Learning Outcomes 1-4. Students are required to resit failed assessments in this module.	visual and process exploration with presentation, and sketchbook. Theory-based pathway: thematic research study (1,000–1,500 words) with presentation.			Enter percentage.	Final assessment: Click or tap here to enter text. Integrated Graphic Design Project or Critical Study with presentation and process documentation - Practice-based pathway: design project with process documentation, presentation and print deliverable. - Theory-based pathway: critical study (2,000–2,500 words) with visual analysis and presentation.	60%	Exercises	0%		
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Exercises	0%										
INDICATIVE READING:	REQUIRED READING: Davis, M. (2020). <i>Graphic design theory</i> (2nd ed.). Thames & Hudson Ltd. [Perlego] RECOMMENDED READING: Bierut, M., Drenttel, W., & Heller, S. (Eds.). (2010). <i>Looking closer 5: Critical writings on graphic design</i>. Allworth Press. Bierut, M. (2017). <i>Now you see it and other essays on design</i>. Princeton Architectural Press. [Perlego] Cottier, N. (2025). <i>Alphabetical playground: Experimental graphics and type exploration</i>. Kessels, E. (2016). <i>Failed it!: how to turn mistakes into ideas and other advice for successfully screwing up</i>. Phaidon. Lupi, G., & Posavec, S. (2016). <i>Dear Data</i>. Princeton Architectural Press. Scherling, L. (Ed.). (2024). <i>Ethics in design and communication: Critical perspectives</i>. Bloomsbury Visual Arts. Triggs, T. (2019). <i>The graphic design reader</i>. Bloomsbury Publishing. Other sources, including journal and newspapers' articles, research papers etc. recommended by the instructor throughout the semester.										
INDICATIVE MATERIAL: (e.g. audiovisual, digital material, etc.)	REQUIRED MATERIAL: Click or tap here to enter text. RECOMMENDED MATERIAL: Click or tap here to enter text.										

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:	• Blackboard and an active ACG email account. • High standards of oral and written English are expected in all assignments. • Students should clearly present and discuss their work using appropriate design terminology, both orally and in writing, in English. • Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to articulate conceptual intent, design decisions, and process rationale through critiques, presentations, and reflective statements. • Professional communication and the use of critical vocabulary are integral components of the design learning process.
SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS:	MS Office and Blackboard CMS Varies by topic. Digital software and analogue materials. Instructors will specify tools at the beginning of the semester.
WWW RESOURCES:	https://designobserver.com/ https://www.noupe.com/magazine/design/graphic-design-theory-50-resources-and-articles.html https://www.eyemagazine.com/ https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/ https://www.designspiration.com/ https://www.inspirationgrid.com/ https://www.typewolf.com/ https://abduzeedo.com/ https://www.behance.net/ https://www.logolounge.com/ https://www.smashingmagazine.com/ https://alistapart.com/
INDICATIVE CONTENT:	1. Experimental publishing and print media 2. Data visualization and storytelling 3. Design activism and social practice 4. Speculative and future-oriented design 5. Artificial Intelligence and computational design 6. Material-driven and tactile making 7. Typography & Experimental Letterforms 8. Branding and identity systems in context 9. Cross-disciplinary and interactive media 10. Critical Theory & Design Discourse.