GRAPHIC DESIGN PORTFOLIO

Course Overview
GDES 4355 Graphic Design Portfolio is a Lecture/Studio and Critique class with the purpose of helping the student develop and refine a body of design work that constitutes a professional graphic design portfolio. We will also discuss professional issues related to the business of graphic design. The prerequisite is GDES 4354 or 4365.

The preparation of a professional portfolio is an essential part of transitioning from graphic design student to working designer. A strong professional portfolio can also provide an important foundation for the development of a successful future design career. The course assignments will give students guidance in improving their current student portfolio pieces, developing new portfolio pieces, and presenting their work, and themselves, to prospective employers in a compelling way.

There will be several guest speakers who are design school graduates working locally. They will share their portfolio and job search strategies, and interviewing experiences. Several texts are recommended (see below) for additional guidance and reference.

Course Goals
Graphic Design Portfolio will build competency in the following areas:
- Design Analysis and Critical Evaluation. The ability to judge the effectiveness of portfolio contents through critiques and a better understanding of real-world expectations.
- Job Market Familiarity. The development of an understanding of job opportunities and employer expectations, through research and obtaining an informational interview.
- Personal Marketing. The creation of a self-promotion system.
- Effective Portfolio Presentation. The design of an effective display of your portfolio pieces in several media.
- Pride in Production. Maintaining high standards and craftsmanship as a work ethic.

Recommended Materials and Possible Expenditures
Bring the materials you need to be productive to each class session to work on assigned projects.

At your studio you will need all supplies necessary to create mockups, presentations, and promotional materials for your finished portfolio. Some kind of case or container will be required to hold your physical portfolio pieces. Other expenses may include high-quality computer outputs, web-hosting fees for a portfolio web site, printing costs for a promotional piece or a personal stationery system, or stock photo (royalty-free) purchase costs. Access to, or purchase of, a digital camera may be helpful. The amount of money you spend to create your final portfolio and marketing program is individual, and a specific dollar amount is not required. However, it is not uncommon for a student to spend between $500 and $1500 on a final portfolio.

Required Text Book

Recommended Text Book

Contact Information
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ASSIGNMENTS

The FOUR ASSIGNMENTS in the Graphic Design Portfolio class are designed to help you assemble a polished, professional portfolio and present yourself to a prospective employer. The assignments may all be started at the beginning of the term, and each student will be expected to work diligently throughout the term, with benchmarks indicated on the course calendar. Each student may work at their own rate, but all must have these assignments completed by May 4th and be ready, on that day, to display the following:

- A Professional Portfolio, mounted and in a case. This includes an expanded or new project you have developed for this class, and projects that you have refined or improved to be featured in your portfolio.
- A Personal Stationery Set (letterhead, business card, envelope).
- A Web Portfolio (at minimum features 3 projects).

Assignment #1: Portfolio Inventory

STEP 1. VISUAL AUDIT: Take an inventory of all your work: school assignments, group projects, internship work, freelance projects, etc. Make a master list of work you want to include in your final portfolio. Organize your list in a way that seems appropriate, with creation date, class, project type (identity, web, packaging, campaign etc.). Then make a chart or table ranking your projects/pieces one by one: Does it have the potential to be in your final portfolio (definitely, maybe, only if I’m desperate). Does it need to be revised/rewritten? Make notes about what’s required to bring the piece up to a professional standard (revise layout, new type, images etc). Then, rate your projects on a scale of 1 to 5. 5 means the highest design quality (looks professional), 1 means needs work (looks too amateur).

Finally, create a schedule or timeline to upgrade and finish your portfolio pieces by the end of the semester.

STEP 2. SLIDE SHOW OF CURRENT PORTFOLIO: Now that you’ve identified the finalists, make a low-res digital presentation of your portfolio as it is now to present in class. This slide presentation can be made in PowerPoint, Keynote, pdf or Flash. You can get digital images of your work by exporting native files as PDFs or JPGs. For some pieces use screen shots, photographs or scans. Some projects will need to be depicted in multiple views. This slide show is not intended as a final portfolio presentation, but rather as a low-res survey to help you plan and edit your work. As you flip through this presentation, we’ll be able to see trends and identify any gaps in your portfolio. Revise your schedule based on feedback.

Assignment #2: Expand an Existing Project or Create a New Portfolio Project

This project offers a chance to create a campaign for project you designed in a GD2 or GD3. You may want to design and ad campaign or website for a packaging project. Or, if you’ve identified a gap in your portfolio you can concept and design a new project for your portfolio. This project should be in an area of design that’s of special interest to you, and should fill a gap in your book. You will concept, research and develop this project to be pertinent to the business world. It should have a client (can be fictitious), target audience, competition, and a business and design strategy. Some examples might be: Design a new line of packaging for a sports company; or, redesign a real company’s brand identity or website. After you have chosen your Expanded or New project, create a typewritten project outline (not to exceed one page) that gives a clear project overview. This outline is due in class on Thursday, October 7th. We will discuss the proposed projects in class.

Assignment #3: Create a Personal Identity and Stationery Set

Design a personal logo or wordmark, stationery system (letterhead, business card, envelope). Be sure that your contact information and other pertinent details are somewhere communicated within your personal identity system.

Assignment #4: Design a Web Portfolio

Design a website that features your portfolio. Make sure to use your personal logo, and to design a visual vocabulary for the site that is related to your stationery system. Your website must feature at least 3 projects. Each student should obtain an available domain name through register.com, Network Solutions, go daddy. Get a web host and upload your web site when functional. Make sure your portfolio website url is on your stationery.
CLASS EXPECTATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

This is one of the most important classes you will take in terms of your future success as a designer, despite the fact that it is pass-fail. The more effort you put in to participation and collaboration, the more you will get out of the class. Take a proactive attitude and work very hard to design the best portfolio you can. Your future job depends on it. With a large number of students and only one class session per week, it is difficult for me to give everyone a lot of feedback. So you must also help each other. I strongly recommend you follow these guidelines to insure your success in this class and in your job search:

1. DO THE ALL THE CLASS ASSIGNMENTS. ON TIME. Meeting deadlines is a very important skill to master. Respect the syllabus calendar and don’t get behind. Set aside enough time for the class assignments and come to class prepared with your work finished. The Portfolio Inventory project will help you organize and plan a strong foundation for your portfolio. The slide show part of the project will help you make the best decisions about which projects to revise, add or dump. Your Personal Brand Identity and Website will give you the opportunity present your work to perspective employers in a memorable way that showcases your personality and creativity.

2. Every week, come to class ready to work as a team, with me and with each other. Give constructive feedback on each other’s work. You’ve spent many semesters together and this is a time when you can help each other reach your full potential. Be open to criticism and self-improvement. Your work can always be better. The best designers don’t finish a project, it gets yanked out of their hands. Throughout the semester I’ll be asking you “Can the design be improved?” “What would make it stronger conceptually and visually?” And I hope to hear you ask and answer the same question for each other.

AIGA Student Portfolio One-on-One

It is strongly recommended that each student participate in this program, which takes April 24th (check website for details, minnesota.aiga.org). Here is the program description:

Since 1993, AIGA Minnesota’s annual Portfolio One-on-One event has provided advice, insight, and industry information to design students from around the upper Midwest. Over the course of two days, students interact with professional designers during studio tours, portfolio reviews, and other activities. Students gain invaluable career insights and make connections that can lead to internships, mentorships, and jobs.

Studio tours give students a glimpse of different types of work environments. A panel discussion provides a chance to hear advice from and ask questions of experienced design professionals. Students are also given the opportunity to submit their portfolios for scholarship awards. Workshops on a variety of topics relevant to students and entry-level designers are held in tandem with the portfolio review sessions. Each student is given the opportunity to participate in at least three of these scheduled review sessions. The 20-minute sessions place the student one-on-one with a design professional who critiques the student’s portfolio and evaluates their presentation skills. The designers who donate their time to the event come from large and small studios throughout the Twin Cities. They all have several years of experience in the industry and represent all varieties of print, multimedia, and interactive design.