

Spring semester 2018
11:45–1:00 pm, Tuesday & Thursday
3 credits

GDES 4361W Senior Thesis & Writing

Steven McCarthy, MFA, Professor

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St Paul campus

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Office hours are
by appointment

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GDES 4161W Senior Thesis & Writing is a capstone experience for seniors in the BFA Graphic Design Program, and is followed by the required course Senior Thesis and Exhibition. A hybrid of lecture and seminar, Senior Thesis and Writing will combine inquiry, research, creative problem-solving, and ideation. The course will use research and the design process to launch the initial stages of a comprehensive graphic design thesis project that will be completed next semester.

Senior Thesis and Writing is writing intensive and also reading and speaking intensive – students will be expected to read, verbalize and share their writing and designs.

Desired writing outcomes from GDES 4361W, Senior Thesis and Writing:

- » Competent use of writing mechanics (spelling, punctuation, use of capitals, etc.)
- » Consistent use of correct grammar (clauses, syntax, tenses, sentences, etc.)
- » Effective use of organizational structures (paragraphs, transitions, introductions, conclusions, etc.)
- » Use of lively, descriptive vocabulary commensurate with college-level education.
- » Use of appropriate graphic design field-specific terminology.
- » Visual and literal choices work with chosen media (print, screen, kinetic, etc.)
- » Understanding the relationships between legibility, readability and writing comprehension (type face choice, size, color, composition, line measure, etc.)
- » Layout evidences knowledge and understanding of visual hierarchy and sequencing principles.
- » Understanding of, and addresses the underlying needs of, target audiences, using reader-appropriate writing and typography.
- » Development of individual voice through appropriate writing modes (descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and creative).

University of Minnesota Student Learning Outcomes

*(Upon course completion,
students...)*

*Can identify, define, and solve
problems...*

By applying the elements and principles of design through the iterative design process; by proposing solutions, incorporating feedback and refining design proposals; by experimenting, innovating and testing ideas involving image and text compositions.

Can communicate effectively...

By making oral and visual presentations; by participating in critiques; by developing a critical vocabulary; by concurrently considering message content and visual form.

Text (required, but from three choices)

The Designer As... Author, Producer, Activist, Entrepreneur, Curator and Collaborator: New Models for Communicating by Steven McCarthy. BIS Publishers.

Developing Citizen Designers by Elizabeth Resnick. Bloomsbury.

Writings on Graphic Design, Music, Art, and Culture by Kenneth FitzGerald. Princeton Architectural Press.

Purchasing online (Amazon, direct from publisher, etc.) is recommended. Order ASAP!

Materials

Budget \$30–70 for your digitally printed books.

Canvas

A UMn Canvas site will be used to digitally submit writing and design files.

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Attendance and punctuality policy

Daily attendance is required to learn the course material. Absences should be for substantiated medical and personal emergencies only. Two unexcused absences are the maximum allowed before lowering the student's course grade. Please arrive on time and plan to stay the entire session, unless notified otherwise or given permission. Being substantially late (>5 minutes) is disruptive to the class and the professor, and will be counted as an absence. Assignments are also due on the specified date; late assignments will be lowered a letter grade.

Assignment policy

Assignments are outlined on a subsequent page; changes and/or details will be provided in a timely manner. Pay attention to the constraints of the assignment, so that your time and effort are used effectively. There are no extra credit options. Assignments are due at beginning of class or other specified time; assignments are generally returned within two weeks of due date. For missed in-class presentation, give it during the next class meeting.

Conduct and participation policy

The seminar aspect of class is conducive for an informal atmosphere, with student interaction and discussion required. Please keep the focus on the task at hand too, and be respectful of your classmates and their work. *Turn off cell phones and other personal devices; refrain from non-related web browsing; earbud/headphone use forbidden!* Please be appropriately generous with your thoughts and ideas, especially during class discussions and presentations; but also, allow space for everyone to participate.

Communication policy

There are times when I'll need to reach the class for special announcements, due date changes, etc. It is required that you maintain a University of Minnesota email account, and check it daily, or as close to daily as is reasonable. If you prefer using a non-UMn email address, then set up your "U" account so that it forwards to the other one. Label all Canvas uploads with name as: "McCarthyS-01.doc," "...03.pdf" (with number and suffix changing).

Grading policy

Due to the diversity of learning tools and parallel working methods, course grades will be determined at the end of the semester. Assignments will be assessed with both comments and scores, not necessarily letter grades. Students will still have a strong sense of their performance from feedback as the course progresses; students should see the professor if an idea of interim grades is desired.

Release of Work Statement:

Students understand that enrollment in this course grants consent for their work to be selected for inclusion in college or departmental publications (online or in print). Your instructor may select to use your work to represent her/his skills as an instructor in a teaching portfolio (online or in print).

grading terminology

A	outstanding
A-	excellent
B+	very good
B	good
B-	okay
C+	not bad
C	adequate
C-	weak
D	poor
F	failing

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Academic Services:

If you would like additional help, please contact one of the offices listed below.

Center for Writing
10 Nicholson Hall, Mpls
612 626-7579

Student Academic Success
Service
340 Appleby Hall, Mpls
199 Coffey Hall, St. Paul
612 624-3323

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Grading Structure:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/GRADINGTRANSCRIPTS.html>

Make Up Work for Legitimate Absences:

<http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html>

Personal Electronic Devices in Classroom:

<http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html>

Use of Class Notes and Materials:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/CLASSNOTESSTUDENTS.html>

Scholastic Dishonesty and Student Conduct Code:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

Sexual Harassment:

<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.pdf>

Academic Freedom and Responsibility:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Academic_Freedom.pdf

Statement on Climate of Inclusivity:

You are expected to be attentive during class, ask questions if you do not understand something, and to offer your opinion. You are also expected to listen respectfully to other students and to me when speaking. The University of Minnesota is committed to providing a safe climate for all students, faculty, and staff. All persons shall have equal access to its programs and facilities without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. Racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ageism and other forms of bigotry are inappropriate to express in this class. Reports of harassment are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help.

(http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf)

Availability of Disability and Mental Health Services:

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities. Disability Services (DS) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental health, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), are invited to contact DS to arrange a confidential discussion at 612 626-1333 (V/TTY) or ds@umn.edu.
- Students registered with DS, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester to discuss accommodations outlined in their letter.

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via www.mentalhealth.umn.edu or contact Counseling/Consulting Services at 612 624-3323.

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SEMESTER DELIVERABLES

Opinion Paper (15%)

Using first person voice, write an opinion-based paper that criticizes or analyzes some artifact, condition, process, system or interaction, with an eye for how this can eventually be addressed through graphic communication. 'Criticism' needn't be thought of as solely negative language; it can be pointed, comparative and constructive as well as damning. Rhetorically, this paper should be more subjective and casual than a research paper – no sources needed. It is okay to include an image of the work discussed. The goal of the critical paper is to identify a topic area that you might improve upon with your thesis project, but it is not a 'thesis proposal' itself. The subject of the critique could be a 'problem to be solved' or an 'opportunity to be exploited.' Page goal: 4 pages, double-spaced. Print out and provide electronic .doc.

Research Paper (25%)

The purpose of this paper is to formalize your interest in the topic that will be the heart of your Senior Thesis. You'll dig deeply, cast broadly, cite a variety of sources, check the sources of your sources (that's why it is called 're'-search) and use a third-person voice to maintain objectivity. Use the paper to objectively justify the subject you'll pursue with your Senior Thesis Project. Consistently use the APA (American Psychological Association) method of citation. Page goal: 8 pages, double-spaced. Use at least a dozen sources; of these, no more than half should be web sites (okay to source publications in .pdf form). Images may be used, but are in addition to page count. Print out and provide electronic .doc.

Reflection Essays (10%)

Reflection essays are informal bits of writing, typically written in class, that respond to the assigned book chapters and additional readings. While you should summarize the material to the point where it's obvious that you read it, your reactions and opinions are the main thing. We'll also use these to try specific exercises related to writing technique and style. There will be six required reflection essays total, due at the end of each class. These will be uploaded to the class Canvas site.

Book Design and Production (30%)

Design of an on-demand book (Lulu or Blurb) that contains your ideas, notes, reflective writing, opinion paper, your research paper, any images or illustrations, thumbnails, process designs, etc. – package your entire semester's work in this book. Form and content are considered together. Specifications to follow for a CMYK, .pdf document.

Presentations (20%)

Concept boards and interim presentations will be graded in aggregate. A final oral/visual public presentation (PowerPoint or other format) that proposes your senior thesis topic and draws a trajectory from your research to your design will be a summation of your work in GDES 4361W.

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The fine print

This syllabus is meant to provide a schedule for the semester, and is subject to change with unforeseen circumstances; reasonable notice will be given.

Weekly class schedule (underlined item is deliverable due date)

- January**
16. Introduction to course, instructor, each other, the textbook choices
 18. 'Interest mapping' exercise using experiences, values, interests
 23. Discuss reading, in-class reflective writing
 25. Oral presentation of interest areas, topic ideas
 30. Discuss reading, in-class reflective writing
- February**
1. In-class writing workshop
 6. Discuss reading, in-class reflective writing
 8. Opinion paper due, oral readings
 13. Discuss reading, in-class reflective writing
 15. Oral presentation of thesis topic
 20. Discuss reading, in-class reflective writing
 22. 'Affinity groups' created, based on thesis keywords, in-class research
 27. Discuss reading, in-class reflective writing
- March**
1. Alumni panel discussion
 6. Half-draft of research paper (bring 2 printed copies); peer review
 8. Presentation of design vocabularies
 13. SPRING BREAK
 15. SPRING BREAK
 20. Research paper due, oral readings
 22. Presentation of concept sketches
 27. Visit from GDES 4362 instructor
 29. Best practices for book design
- April**
3. Designed book PDFs due (roughs) – one-on-one feedback
 5. Designed book PDFs due (roughs) – one-on-one feedback
 10. Presentation of 3 rough design prototypes
 12. Designed book PDFs due (final) >> *upload to on-demand publisher!*
 17. Presentation of 3 final design prototypes
 19. Presentation of 3 final design prototypes
 24. Best practices for oral/visual presentations
 26. Final thesis presentations
- May**
1. Final thesis presentations
 3. Books due