Syllabus

Section Information:

Course:	ART 250 M01 Computer Art I
Semester:	Spring 2010
Time:	MW 12:00-14:30
Professor:	David González
Credits:	3
Prerequisites:	None

Contact Information for Professor González
david@semanticaestudio.com
Office Hours: by appointment only, every class day after class.
The preferred method of contact is via e-mail.

Course Description

The use of computers and the growth of digital imaging have diminished the boundary between art and craftsmanship, between artistic and commercial work. The easy access to technology and the massive flow of ideas through the net and other media has made that membrane even more permeable and the mutual influence between art and design (visual, interactive, industrial…) is ever growing. As in many aspects of life, interesting things are bound to happen close to the borderline.

It is no longer correct to think of Computer Arts as the tools and techniques of an isolated individual in front of a screen. Computers are a powerful tool, but even more powerful is their capacity to communicate people in a completely new way, a way that has generated or reinvigorated small revolutions such as “creative commons”, “copyleft”, “freeware”, “collaborative work”, “open source”, “self promotion”, “cloud computing”… and this is only the beginning.

With computers becoming smaller and faster, and internet access widespread and universal the number of new ways to share, produce and deliver visual content (and ideas) grows exponentially.

In order to create visuals that entertain and communicate effectively, an artist or designer cannot ignore, however, what humans naturally observe. The rules that apply to visual design are in many ways independent of the tools used to create them.

The purpose of this course is to provide a basic understanding of visual design and how to integrate this knowledge into digitally produced two dimensional images.

To achieve this knowledge, the course will address the different steps of digital visual production (research, roughs & sketches, composites, finish & output) from a practical point of view, but taking into account the elements and principles that apply to any visual design (digital or not),

The course will focus specifically in the use of bitmap and vector graphic software (Adobe Photoshop & Adobe Illustrator). Being a studio course, guided personal work with the computer and practice in the use of the software will be the principal means of learning.

Goals

To gain the necessary skills and knowledge to accomplish a visual design project using the computer as a tool, from conceptualization to the final output, using the software packages Photoshop & Illustrator.

To learn the elements of visual design, the principles that apply in their use and how different artistic movements were influenced by them.

To build a resource library of visual assets for use in personal projects, and learn about the types of licenses that exist and the rights they grant.

To use the internet and new media as a source for inspiration, knowledge and resources for visual design production and distribution.

Course Requirements

This is a studio class that meets almost six hours per week. Students are expected to work on class assignments during that time. Some of the assignments will be accomplished in groups, and students should be able to work in a group environment. Students should also expect to work at least six hours a week outside of class on assignments and studying the software.

This class is taught using Blackboard. Students are responsible for reading and printing the assignments as they need them.

In preparation for executing an assignment, each student will sketch a variety of possible ideas. These ideas will then be presented in the classroom. Students should be prepared to give and take feedback.

Students will turn in assignments before the beginning of class on the day the assignments are due. The completed assignments will be projected in the classroom for peer, self, and instructor evaluation. Students will self-evaluate the assignment for quality and also identify in which ways the assignment goals have been met.

The projects will be graded according to the grading criteria below.

There will be a midterm and final project, which will count for 40% of the grade, the rest of the grade will depend on daily work and assignments

The students will explore the computer as an art-making tool. This exploration will include, but is not limited to: reading, writing, discussing, researching, looking, sketching, giving and receiving feedback on creative endeavors, and creating artwork using the provided software. While no previous artistic experience is required, students must be prepared to to invest time in theoretical comprehension and idea development. Multiple revisions of each assignment and dedication to excellence in assignment execution are necessary to succeed in this course.

Course Calendar Outline

Jan - Wed 13 Spring 2010 classes begin
Jan - Tue 26 Last day to drop the course without a grade of W
Feb - Wed 17 Mid term projects deadline
March - Fri 12 Last day to drop the course with a grade of W
May – Mon 3 Final projects deadline

Introduction (jan 13- 18)
Students will familiarize with the first steps using the software, learn the basic operations and receive guidelines on creating and storing files, get a hold of the software interface and learn the basic tools and commands.

Students will find and bookmark free resources, and start a resource library of their own to use during the course distinguishing the different types of licenses and the rights they grant. They will then experiment their use in the software, modify them and create new assets for their personal library by downloading, transferring and scanning images.

Assignment (jan 20- 25)
Drawing from observation, abstraction through simplification

Students will familiarize with simplification by drawing a simple man made object (cell phone, stapler, pencil...) and developing various studies using shape, composition and negative space. They will then choose (and justify) their preferred composition and place it into Illustrator for tracing.

Tools & techniques: manual drawing, composition, scanning, drawing simple shapes (square, ellipse, line segment) and organic shapes (pen tool & Bézier curves). Use of layers, the pathfinder tools and the shape modes, resizing and moving objects, the clipping mask.

Master Class
The digital canvas: New media & output devices
Visit to Medialab-Prado for an insight into new media & digital arts http://medialab-prado.es/article/informacion

Assignment (jan 27)
Abstraction through repetition

Using their previous studies, students will develop a composition using repetition and placement. They will also experiment with positive & negative shapes.

Tools & techniques: complex selections & grouping objects, rotating objects, guide layers.

Assignment (feb 1)
Abstraction using lines

Students will experiment in the use of lines to create shape, mood & sense of direction. They will modify previous compositions in order to create implied shapes with the use of lines and see how line direction affects the composition.

Tools & techniques: Types of strokes & stroke options, stroke weight, caps & joins, alignment

Assignment (feb 3)
Type composition

Students will create a logo by using one of the previous abstraction methods and

integrating it with a typeface. They will learn the basics of typographic design & letterforms, structural forms of typography.

Tools & techniques: The type tool, installing and using typefaces, licensing free typefaces, converting type to paths, transform tool (reflect, rotate & scale), direct selection tool.

Assignment (feb 8-10)
Typographic layout:

Students will create a typographic layout for the cover and inside pages f a magazine, learning the basics of page layout, rhythm and proportion, balance an the main typographic devices.

Tools and techniques: type alignment, kerning, leading, justifying text, widows and orphans, typographic style.

Assignment (feb 15-18)
Figure abstraction and nonobjective shape. Image sequences

By creating an image sequence, students will experiment continuity, closed & open form & figure abstraction an get a brief introduction into animation techniques

Tools & techniques: Convert anchor point tools, reflect tool & joining points, the pathfinder tool, moving points & handles

Master Class
Lecture on visual identity by a senior graphic designer Animation, Video, Interaction, usability and UX (User experience)
Visit to an animation production studio

Group Assignment (march 8- 29)
Students will work in groups to produce the different areas of a magazine. They will work on the image, identity & logo, style guide, layout, photo editing, type selection, etc. for the number zero of a magazine, discussing their choices in public.

Assignment (apr 5 -7)
Photo editing & retouching

Students will create a storyboard for a tv commercial with photographs taken from various sources, using the techniques for modifying assets and digital montage.

Tools & techniques: Value, color & color theory. Modifying existing assets: The nondestructive process. Embedding vs. Linking. Layers. Version control.
Digital montage /Collage

Master class
Photo editing and retouching. The use of layers and the digital negative.
(by a professional photographer).

Final course assignment (apr 12 to may 3)
Students will produce a personal project revisiting the concepts and techniques learnt in previous classes, and following a structured process from the research to the output. Furthermore Students will release their work under the license of their choice

and promote it on the internet in a collective online show.

Supplies

Students should have a USB memory stick for storing files and a sketch book. For practical reasons, the USB Memory capacity should be of 1GB at least.

The purchase of books for the course is not necessary. The teacher will, however, recommend books & online publications during the course in case the students want to get a deeper knowledge on specific subjects.

It is highly recommended for students to have a means of connecting to the internet out of class hours and an email address in order to access online publications and download assets. It is also recommended (but not necessary) for students to have a digital camera or a phone that can capture digital images and transfer them to the memory stick.

For every project or assignment, the teacher will provide assets and examples for students to use as a starting point. Please note the students are expected to find and/or produce their own assets, and organize them into their personal library. This is regarded as an important part of the projects and will be taken into account for the grades.

The students must have full non-commercial rights on any asset they use for their project. Please be aware that assets such as images, fonts, software or texts downloaded from the internet can be copyrighted. Assets of unknown source or without specification of license will not be acceptable for their use in the course. The teacher will aid students in the choice of assets and understanding of their licenses.

Policies

This is a studio art course where students learn and practice computer art with guidance and under the supervision of the professor; attendance is mandatory. More than three unexcused absences represent an irreplaceable loss of course content and may result in a final grade of “F”.

Repeated unexcused lateness arriving to class (more than five times) may have the same effect on grades as 3 unexcused absences

Since part of the final grade is based on daily work, an absence may result in a grade of "F" for the assignments given that day. Students will have the opportunity to catch up on the lost work and present the assignment later, but the absence will still count. Late assignments will be counted down a letter grade per day, unless the tardiness is due to an excused absence.

Absences are excused if the student can provide written documentation from a doctor or of recognized University activity (sports, debate, professional day etc.) Students who forsee missing class because of personal situations such as illness or death in the family are instructed to contact their Dean's office as soon as possible. The Dean will then help the student determine if further course enrollment is possible and contact the professor if accomodations are needed.

If a student is unprepared to work on Computer Art I projects during class time, the student will be considered absent without an excuse.

Please turn off cell phones during class time. Classroom computers are provided for Computer Art One coursework. Student who use the computers for other purposes such as email or homework for other courses may be asked to leave the classroom and will be counted absent without an excuse.

Grades

During the course, students will develop various projects and assignments in the classroom or by themselves. Each project or assignment will have a weight on the final grade, based on the amount of work and the importance of the issue. Students will also develop a mid-term and a final course assignment.

The weighed average of the course assignments and daily work will yield a classroom grade. This grade will count for a 60% of the mid-term or final grade

mid-term and final course assignment will count for a 40% of the mid-term or final grade

Each project or assignment will be graded according to the following criteria:

A (number value=4.0) Project exhibits conceptualization, execution, and presentation that is exceptionally sophisticated and high in quality.

A- (number value= 3.7) Project exhibits a conceptualization that is well developed and sophisticated, the presentation is appropriate, but the execution is lacking.

B+ (number value= 3.3) Project concept is adequate, execution and presentation are excellent. Or, Concept is excellent, but execution and presentation are poor.

B (number value=3) Project concept, execution and presentation are good.

B- (number value= 2.7) Project is overall good but lacking in concept, execution or presentation.

C+ (number value=2.3) Project shows minimal investment except in concept, execution or presentation, where some additional effort has been made.

C (number value= 2) Project shows minimal investment.

C- (number value = 2-) Project shows minimal investment and is lacking in concept, execution or presentation.

D (number value=1) Project is completed but is lacking in concept, execution and or presentation.

F (number value=0) Project is either not completed or is entirely lacking in value.

Saving and Backing Up Class Files

Students will log on to the classroom computers using their banner log-on and password. ll students must log out at the end of each class and working session.

Each student is responsible for backing up and saving his or her own class work. While working, save often so that a program crash will cause only minimum damage. Please also back up (make copies of or save-as) all assignment files and supplementary files at the end of every work session! Computer crashes will not be considered an excuse for a late assignment! If you don't have a back up of the pertinent files, you will have to recreate the work anew… Remember to save often and back up daily!

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information on examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the Academic Honesty Policy. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. If the above link does not work, please type:

http://spain.slu.edu/academics/policies_&_procedures/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf

into your browser to access the A & S policy on academic honesty.

Office Hours

Students who would like to discuss their progress in the course or who have questions about the course material are encouraged to make an appointment with Professor González to meet during his office hours MW 14:30-15:30. Other times may be made as needed. Please confirm appointments via e-mail or telephone two days in advance.

Disability

Any student who qualifies for special accommodations due to a learning disability or physical handicap should contact Counseling/Disability Services. Please phone the office at 91 554 5858 (ext. 230), or send an e-mail to vandrew1@slu.edu. Students may also stop by the Counseling/Disability Services office in the Manresa building. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

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