Lesson Introduction

Graphic design is typically a visual problem solving field concerned

with communication of specific messages to specific audiences. It

is ever changing, as societies and technologies evolve. This makes

it a compelling field of study. The term graphic design is somewhat

problematic and may be better represented as visual communication.

Designers take on client based projects and through the design

process solve a client's problem. These problems come in all shapes

and forms, from small straightforward business cards (see Figure 1)

to complex visual systems such as the Olympic games (see Figure 2).

Designers tackle projects from a communication standpoint focusing

on a defined problem, not on their own personal preferences.

The design process is not unique, nor a new process. Many

professionals use the design process because it works. What is

unique is the goal to attach visual messages which have greater

power to inform, educate, or persuade a person or audience into

action. Designers implement their artistic abilities to communicate.

Though art and design have identical fundamental guiding principles,

graphic design is typically done for someone else, as art is often

created for more introspective reasons. That isn't to say that design is

not artistic or introspective, nor that designers devalue personal style

or artistic expression, but rather, by understanding design, students

comprehend the potential design holds and the potential found in

the design process. This lesson is meant to give students a better

understanding of the process designers implement in order to find

solutions to the visual problems they take on.

The design process has been defined through five steps:

⋅⋅ Define the Problem

⋅⋅ Learn

⋅⋅ Generate Ideas

⋅⋅ Design Development

⋅⋅ Implementation

The first step helps designers better understand the root of the

problem, while the second step drives understanding and empathy

through research. When the problem has been defined and

there is good understanding of what surrounds it, then concept

development can commence in the idea generation stage. Once a

strong concept has been developed, then sketching commences.

Design development is typically a student's favorite part of the

design process as they get to use their artistic abilities. This is where

aesthetics should be addressed. Eventually a design is chosen and

implemented through the last step. All these steps are essential

in developing successful design and will be addressed fully in the

following unit sections.

By the end of this unit, students should not only be able to identify

each step in the design process, but be able to understand the

importance of each step and implement them. They should continue

to utilize the design process in subsequent units, reinforcing the

concepts driving the design process. Their work will improve if

they commit to utilizing the complete process. The tendency is to

skip vital steps in order to quickly finish or do what is comfortable

or easy. For example, students would rather start working directly

on the computer (if available) instead of exploring and developing

their ideas on paper first because it's easier. This sketching part

of the process is where ideas are explored and developed. The

misconception is they will get more done faster by skipping the hand

drawings, but what typically ends up happening is that their ideas

aren't developed enough to produce unique solutions. The computer

becomes a crutch through the lack of technical skills. Even if a

student has the technical skills, the ideas are lacking. Emphasize the

importance of each step in the design process. This will help resolve

ineffective design issues.

The magic occurs where all steps meet (see Figure 3). The more

students utilize the process the more potential there is for developing

a successful solution. This process may initially seem daunting

but in reality it is a common sense approach to problem solving.

Often times, it doesn't even seem like a process at all but more as

experimentation or play, which it should.

Even the best methodologies and processes cannot ensure effective

design. The defined process is meant as a starting point that can be

molded and customized to fit the needs of each designer. These five

steps are considered vital and a good foundation for developing

positive professional habits. Though a designer's process may

change with time and experience, this foundation should continue to

guide their process—whatever that may be.

We could say that this unit is about developing useful professional

habits that can transcend disciplines, supporting not only art minded

students but all students. They will be better prepared to solve the life

problems they'll be dealt, both on a professional and personal level.

**Vocabulary**

Aesthetic: a set of principles underlying and guiding

the work of a particular artist or artistic movement;

concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty.

Big idea: the driving force behind a design.

Compelling: evoking interest, attention, or admiration

in a powerfully irresistible way.

Concept: a plan or intention. The big idea.

Design: the creation of a plan or convention for the

construction of an object or a system (as in architectural

blueprints, engineering drawings, business processes,

circuit diagrams and sewing patterns).

Design for good: the implementation of design

thinking for social change. Design is problem solving.

Therefore designers hold the tools and have the

potential to transform social norms for the better of

society as a whole.

Design process: a defined system of steps presented

to aid a designer in the planning and execution of a

plan in order to solve a presented problem.

Graphic design: also known as communication

design, is the art and practice of planning and

projecting ideas and experiences with visual and

textual content. The form of the communication

can be physical or virtual, and may include images,

words, or graphic forms. The experience can take

place in an instant or over a long period of time.

The work can happen at any scale, from the design

of a single postage stamp to a national postal

signage system, or from a company’s digital avatar

to the sprawling and interlinked digital and physical

content of an international newspaper. It can also be

for any purpose, whether commercial, educational,

cultural, or political [Juliette Cezzar, www.aiga.org/

what-is-design/].

Graphic forms: of or relating to visual art, especially

involving drawing, engraving, or lettering; giving a

vivid picture with explicit detail; denoting a visual

image such as charts or graphs.

Ineffective design: the inability of design to

effectively (successful in producing a desired or

intended result) solve its intended purpose. Design

is created to solve a problem and therefore should

be effective in its mission.

Method: a particular form of procedure for

accomplishing or approaching something, especially

a systematic or established one.

Visual communication: communication through

visual aids, which conveys an idea(s) and information

in forms that can be read or looked upon, including

signs, typography, drawing, graphic design,

illustration, industrial design, advertising, animation,

color, electronic resources, etc. It also explores the

idea that a visual message accompanying text has

a greater power to inform, educate, or persuade a

person or audience.