

The Inclusion of Social Responsibility in the Visual Communications Curriculum

2008

Case Study

Submitted by:

Tyler Galloway
Assistant Professor
Kansas City Art Institute
Kansas City, MO

“It’s important that students realize that design can serve many different ends beyond commercial culture. It can be used in education, information display, entertainment, and as a persuasive tool. At KCAI, we are trying to demonstrate those uses through the types of projects we assign throughout the curriculum.”

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Assistant Professor
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Kansas City Art Institute

Synopsis from official website <<http://www.kcai.edu/about/>>

The mission of Kansas City Art Institute is to be a leader in visual arts and design education by preparing gifted students for lifelong creativity through intensive interaction with preeminent faculty and facilities and by stimulating active public awareness, support, and participation in the visual arts and design.

Visual Advocacy Course

To follow are the documents used in the Visual Advocacy Course offered at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Also please visit <http://visualadvocacy.blogspot.com>, a blog where students of the Visual Advocacy Course are required to post discussion topics throughout the semester.

course number: desn 435
credit hours: 3
instructor: tyler galloway, assistant professor, tgalloway@kcai.edu 816.802.3543
office hours: tuesday 11:00–12:00, wednesday 2:30–3:30
course meetings: monday 8–10:50, wednesday 11:30–2:20
course location: futura room / dsb 101



KCAI school of design *course syllabus*

visual advocacy

COURSE DESCRIPTION

what does it mean to be a designer in the global consumer culture of over-branded, corporate-driven products? theories of design responsibility and accountability will guide our discussion. although historical in scope, the course will focus on identifying ways that designers have used the tension between design and business to mobilize a critique of both. students will examine how we can be socially and politically-active designers, how design can be more than a service to clients, and how we can invoke change. the course will consist of reading, discussion, participation in an online web log, presentations, interviews, debates and visual projects.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

as a result of this course, students will be able to:

- describe at an advanced level what visual advocacy is, and apply it through your own work in this class.
- hold a perspective on design's role in commerce.
- hold a perspective, at a basic level, on our ethical responsibilities and opportunities as creators of visual culture.
- explain at a basic level graphic design's role in the history of advocacy and communication of socio-political ideas.
- describe at a proficient level the various ends to which design may be used
- hold a perspective on various relevant social / political issues, and apply that through meaningful visual explorations beyond the normal designer–client relationship.
- hold a perspective on how we might begin to transform design practice to reflect our ethics.
- apply critical thinking skills to making, speaking, reading, and writing about design issues at a basic level.

COURSE STRUCTURE

- reading, writing, and group discussion of relevant essays and articles
- design projects – both self-authored and in response to assigned readings / topics

COURSE POLICIES

USE OF STUDIO SPACE AND TIME

rapid progress is a benefit of the frequent interactions occurring in a community environment. therefore, students are encouraged to work in the studio, utilizing the space provided for them. students are expected to plan and manage their time properly, and are required to be actively working in the class area during studio time, with the following allowances (with instructor's permission): working in the wood shop, library research, computer lab, or any area within the classroom building. leaving to get supplies, food, etc is not acceptable, and should be done before or after class.

KANSAS CITY ART INSTITUTE
spring 2008
visual advocacy

tyler galloway
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
tgalloway@kcai.edu
816.802.3543

ATTENDANCE DETAILS FOR THIS COURSE

the general attendance policy is in place because students are responsible for the entire content of the courses, including required portfolios and examinations. an absence from a regularly scheduled class or studio session is defined by a student not attending a scheduled class time and/or missing a significant portion of any class time, as defined by the instructor.

“excused absences” include absences due to illness of the student, illness of an immediate family member for whom the student must care, death of an immediate family member, religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during class), or representation of KCAI in an official capacity. students seeking an excused absence must provide documentation to the arc to substantiate the excuse. the arc will notify instructors that the documentation is on file.

please take note of the following:

any absence (excused by the arc or unexcused) negatively affects your grade.

“late” = out of the classroom during roll call at the beginning of class.

“absent” = late by 30 minutes or more, asleep, disengaged or lack of participation.

three lates = one absence.

3 absences = one letter grade reduction.

4 absences = two letter grade reduction.

5 absences = course failure.

absences will be considered unexcused until proper paperwork is received from the arc.

DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATIONS

students who have documented disabilities and are eligible for accommodations must provide documentation of the disability to kathy keller, disabilities coordinator in the academic resource center before accommodations can be provided. kathy phone: 816.802.3485 email: kkeller@kcai.edu

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY

academic dishonesty is defined as follows:

a) the copying of another student's, work or the use of unauthorized notes and materials during examinations,

b) plagiarism, or the presentation of either the written or visual work of others (including that of other students), as one's own

plagiarism is a serious offense in the academy, as well as illegal in the context of our nation's copyright law. as such, it is important to know what plagiarism is in both one's studio and liberal arts work. according to the modern language association, plagiarism is “the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own.” in other words, plagiarism is the use of not just words but ideas borrowed from someone else without crediting the source. students are required to learn the arts-standard, chicago manual of style guidelines for citing sources referenced in their own work, and must follow them carefully in their research and writing projects. for proper citation method, following the chicago manual of style, refer to maria buszek's website at http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai/citation_style.htm

students are also expected to be honest in their studio practices, particularly since the practice of appropriation is such an important strategy in art history. though they might appear to be similar, plagiarism and appropriation are actually two very different practices. while it is true that appropriation involves taking possession of something often without permission –which for the visual artist usually means taking an image – it is also true that an appropriated image isn't passed off as the original production of the appropriating artist. indeed, the appropriation artist wants the viewer to recognize that an image has been utilized and referenced. (an artist who appropriates an image inevitably wishes to comment upon the original source in some way, usually as a critique, parody, or homage – all of which happen to fall under the realm of “fair use” in copyright law.) as such, appropriation is actually more like citing a source than plagiarizing it. all academic dishonesty is taken as an offense against the institute and may result in penalties assessed by the faculty member teaching the course in which the offense has occurred and the judicial board, up to and including expulsion.

when a faculty member has reason to believe that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred, s/he will inform the student/s involved, the head of the department (or director/dean, if applicable) in which the course is offered, and the head of the department (or director/dean, if applicable) in which the student is majoring. the faculty member will forward a report in writing to the dean of student life for presentation before the KCAI judicial board. the judicial board will interview and/or receive written statements from the student accused of academic dishonesty prior to making any determination.

once a determination has been made that an offense did occur, faculty members maintain the right to assign a failing grade to the student. additional penalties, up to and including expulsion, will be determined by the judicial board working in tandem with the faculty member who reported the offense.

COURSE PLAGIARISM POLICY

any project/paper discovered to have its origins anywhere other than the student's mind will result in an *f* for the project/paper. research or opinion papers utilizing any ideas directly from a source must cite the source properly, utilizing the chicago manual of style.

CHEATING/UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

it is inappropriate for students to provide or receive unauthorized assistance during an examination or for other assignments. for example, the use of cheat sheets, copying from another individual's paper/examination is in violation of the kcai student code of conduct.

LATE/INCOMPLETE/MISSED PROJECTS

projects submitted for any final critique that are obviously not completed will be graded as-is. any project not submitted at the beginning of its final critique will result in a failing grade for the project, unless the absence or tardy can be excused with proper documentation. students that miss classes will be expected to make up all studio work in addition to homework assignments and will not be granted extensions to project deadlines.

PROJECT REVISIONS:

any project is subject to improvements based on instructor and student feedback. after a final project critique, revisions may be necessary and are encouraged for your portfolio development. students are encouraged to make necessary revisions in a timely manner (approx 2 weeks) after the initial critique date. projects revisions are generally not accepted for grade adjustment or averaging – exceptions are rare and will be at my discretion. these improvements will be reflected in your end of year review.

USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

regarding the myriad ways we may digitally communicate with one another – please practice the utmost respect for classmates, instructors, and your own intellectual development during designated course times.

END OF SEMESTER REVIEW

the end of semester review provides the opportunity to verbally and visually demonstrate your command of this course, to present revised project work from the semester, and for faculty to view your accomplishments and suggest opportunities for further growth. your revisions and presentation of pre-determined project work will be assessed as a project and included in your final grade for this course.

COURSE AND PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

a process book is required for each project. this should consist of all the handouts, class notes, conceptual sketches, notes regarding project development, and evidence of your visual inquiry. process book(s) will be assessed on the basis of its quantity and quality of content as part of the critique for each project.

at semester's end, cd documentation of your digital files will be required along with your process book. the cd should include final packaged working files (indd, psd, ai, etc) as well as the appropriate final presentation files (pdf, jpg, etc). details of the cd documentation will be provided in a handout later in the semester.

GRADING

each major project will be graded on four levels, each worth up to 25 points:

objectives – ability to meet stated project objectives that clearly exhibits learning through risk-taking, failure, and pushing one's limitations.

presentation – attention to detail and sense of craft. level of quality and refinement achieved in final presentation design, and clarity of project presentation in final critiques and reviews.

participation – ability to articulate thoughts and ideas verbally and in written form in a group setting and with the instructor, in a professional and respectful manner, daily and in final critique. absences will negatively affect your average in this area.

process – consistent level of effort, and ability to follow a logical and thorough path from concept through refinement to completion. absences will negatively affect your average in this area.

shorter exercises and papers will be graded on various criteria more appropriate to their purposes, described in each project sheet. extra credit will be offered at the instructor's discretion.

the four areas will be totaled for a final project grade with 100 points being the maximum possible grade. the grading scale is as follows:

a	90–100	superior
a-	81–89	
b+	75–80	
b	68–74	above average
b-	61–67	
c+	55–60	
c	48–54	average
c-	41–47	
d+	35–40	
d	21–34	below average
f	20–0	failure

students will be graded against the instructor's perception of their full potential, as well as upholding a bachelor of fine arts degree and in relation to expectation for entrance into professional practice. if you have worked at your absolute full potential in all areas, you will earn a project score of superior or above average. if you make no special efforts beyond your normal capabilities, you will earn a score of average or below.

MATERIALS

consider sharing or using reasonable substitutes.

bring to every class:

- laptop!
- flash drive, rewritable cd or access to reliable data storage and retrieval system
- sketching and note-taking materials (whatever system that works best for you; just be sure to keep it organized so you don't lose your valuable ideas).

every student must have access to lynda.com software tutorials throughout the semester. one subscription = \$25/month or a group (minimum of 10 students) subscription = \$10/month. arrange with leslie for a group subscriptions.

bring to class when noted:

- xacto knife
- metal straight edge for cutting
- cutting surface: self healing mat 20 × 30
- adhesive: rubber cement, glue stick, spray mount, or studio tac
- ream of bright white paper for nicer computer prints
- black matte board for presenting projects

TEXTS

required:

none.

recommended:

many texts will be on the reserve shelf, and you are highly encouraged to browse through them this semester.

no logo by naomi klein

looking closer 4: critical writings on graphic design edited by michael bierut

citizen designer: perspectives on design responsibility edited by steven heller and véronique vienne

also:

adbusters magazine, available in the library and on-line at www.adbusters.org

graphic agitation 1 and 2 by liz mcquiston

the design of dissent by mirko ilic and milton glazer

how to be a graphic designer, without losing your soul by adrian shaughnessy

september commando by john yates

act like nothing's wrong by winston smith

good: an introduction to ethics in graphic design by lucienne roberts

guerrilla advertising: unconventional brand communication by gavin lucas and michael dorrian

design anarchy by kalle lasn



visual advocacy: course calendar

January							February							March																																									
m	t	w	t	f	s	s	m	t	w	t	f	s	s	m	t	w	t	f	s	s																																			
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	31	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
visual history essay							propaganda alert!							kccg																																									
first day of studio							lecture: <i>advocacy history</i>							lecture: <i>propaganda</i>							movie: <i>the persuaders</i>							lecture: <i>ethics/responsibility</i>							lecture: <i>transformative practice</i>																				
READING							READING							READING							READING							READING																											
adbusters #27 pp 18–23, 40–50, graphic agitation pp 14–27							adbusters #27 pp 52–62 looking closer p 10–21							looking closer p 26–31, 107–113 aiga’s standards of professional practice: http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/standards-professional-practice							guerrilla advertising pp 14–18							http://sustainability.aiga.org/sus_reading/sustainable_design cradle to cradle pp 45–67							cradle to cradle pp 68–91							citizen designer “beyond pro bono” pp 25–31													
spring break <i>seriously, take a break</i>																																																							

April							May																																															
m	t	w	t	f	s	s	m	t	w	t	f	s	s	m	t	w	t	f	s	s																																		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
kccg							propaganda alert! <i>cont</i>							2POV: corporations							prationer trading cards																																	
lecture: <i>interventions</i>							lecture: <i>interventions</i>							lecture: <i>interventions</i>							lecture: <i>interventions</i>																																	
READING							READING							READING							READING							READING																										
no logo p 77–85							no logo p 195–211							citizen designer “the cultural influence of brands” pp 70–81							no logo p 3–15							no logo p 63–76							looking closer “the case for brands” and “truth in advertising” p 61–65 how to be a graphic designer...							countering the tradition of the apolitical designer – mccooy, “when designers create culture” – mccooy [PDFs on website] pp 17–27												
DP final presentations																																																						

graphic design has a long history of being used for political or social ends. we'll learn about this ourselves, then share that information with others through a website.



project one

visual history essay

thomas nast
constructivism/lissitzky/rodchenko
womans suffrage movement 1900–1920
wwi posters
works progress administration
john heartfield
hitler/goebbels/ riefenstahl
abram games
campaign for nuclear disarmament
atelier populaire/paris commune
communist revolution in china
south african apartheid/maviyane project
vietnam protest
aids crisis
act up/gay rights
grapus/pierre bernard
guerrilla girls
barbara krueger
black panthers/civil rights
womens lib
greenpeace/environment
animal rights/lynx/peta
9/11
anti-capitalism
adbusters
otpor
gulf war
bosnian conflict/ trio

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OBJECTIVES

at the project's end, you should be able to:

- explain at a basic level graphic design's role in the history of advocacy and communication of socio-political ideas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

create a screen-based visual essay to educate the general public about the connection between visual communication to promote social/political agendas.

refer to the following links for references on what a visual essay might generally look like:

<http://theadallender.com/multimedia> <http://www.frankejames.com>

<http://www.techcrunch.com/2007/02/12/the-web-20-we-weave>

SPECIFICATIONS / REQUIRED CONTENT

specs: 800 × 600 px flash file, embedded in an html file with a black background. filenames: lastname_firstname.html, lastname_firstname.swf; both in the same folder. they will be linked to a title screen with a listing of all your titles and names.

required content: a concise and descriptive title, basic background information about the person/movement, selected imagery, and your own impressions or opinions. answer the following questions: if this is this an effective and powerful use of graphic design, how so? what are the ethical implications of this work [does it cause people to act in “good” or “bad” ways]?

PROJECT SCHEDULE

M JAN 28

in class: receive project. select a movement to work on.

homework: research. read adbusters #27 pp 18–23, 40–50, graphic agitation pp 14–27.

brainstorm ideas based on research.

W JAN 30

in class: discuss reading. lecture: advocacy history. work time and desk crits.

homework: continue idea development.

M FEB 4

in class: work time and desk crits.

homework: continue idea development.

read adbusters #27 pp 52–62 and looking closer p 10–21.

W FEB 6

in class: discuss readings. work time and desk crits.

homework: finalize production. make sure all files are gathered onto one jump drive for projection.

M FEB 11

in class: final crit. receive project two.

writing, like the design process, can be a way to think out loud, synthesize ideas, demonstrate understanding, and persuade others. in short, it's another mode of making and learning – something worth doing.



ongoing project

blog discussion/interaction

OBJECTIVES

at the project's end, you should be able to:

- describe at an advanced level what visual advocacy is, and apply it through your own work in this class.
- hold a perspective on design's role in commerce.
- hold a perspective, at a basic level, on our ethical responsibilities and opportunities as creators of visual culture.
- explain at a basic level graphic design's role in the history of advocacy and communication of socio-political ideas.
- describe at a proficient level the various ends to which design may be used
- hold a perspective on various relevant social / political issues, and apply that through meaningful visual explorations beyond the normal designer–client relationship.
- hold a perspective on how we might begin to transform design practice to reflect our ethics.
- apply critical thinking skills to making, speaking, reading, and writing about design issues at a basic level.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

through the course of this semester, introduce or participate in a minimum of eight discussions on the course blog [<http://visualadvocacy.blogspot.com>], with at least one of those being a discussion-starter. you are invited to voice your opinion on readings, class discussions, projects, or outside topics you discover to be relevant to this course. opposing viewpoints and heated debate [keep it civil] are encouraged. basically all of the course objectives above can be satisfied through writing in one way or another.

SPECIFICATIONS / REQUIRED CONTENT

specifications: grading will be based primarily on the quality [thoughtful, logical, well-written] of your posts, but you should also have the minimum eight posts for a good level of engagement with your peers.

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in an image- and marketing-saturated society, visual literacy is just as important as traditional literacy. this project will help you to recognize visual manipulations and educate those around you about how they work.



project three

PROPAGANDA ALERT!

OBJECTIVES

at the project's end, you should be able to:

- hold a perspective, at a basic level, on our ethical responsibilities and opportunities as creators of visual culture.
- explain at a basic level graphic design's role in the history of advocacy and communication of socio-political ideas.
- describe at a proficient level the various ends to which design may be used
- apply critical thinking skills to making, speaking, reading, and writing about design issues at a basic level.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

teach the media-consuming public what propaganda is *as they're encountering it* and how they can recognize it elsewhere.

audience: determined by you, based on the piece of propaganda you utilize.

refer to <http://www.propagandacritic.com> for details of the various propaganda types. keep in mind many of the reference points for this site are speech and writing, but the principles apply to the visual realm as well.

SPECIFICATIONS / REQUIRED CONTENT

specs: open. determined by context and audience.

required content: keep content very concise. there should be only enough info to educate the audience properly and help them identify propaganda elsewhere.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

M FEB 11

in class: receive project

homework: [3 hrs] research propaganda website and at least two other sources of your discovery. read *looking closer* p 26–31, 107–113 and aiga's standards of professional practice:

<http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/standards-professional-practice>

no other sketching or writing on the project yet.

W FEB 13

in class: discuss reading. discuss your other research findings. lecture: propaganda.

watch movie: *the persuaders*.

homework: [3 hrs] search for and document [photograph, record, or collect artifacts] at least five sources of propaganda in the environment of a particular type of citizen [retiree, school-child, lawyer, etc]. name the primary technique for each artifact, and try to collect/document a wide range of artifacts.

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M FEB 18

in class: in small groups or alone, determine two artifacts to which you'd like to respond. considering the audience, write your content and email to tyler by end of class. subject line: VA: propaganda content. i will try to respond soon with any major content problems.
homework: [3 hrs] read guerrilla advertising pp 14–18.
brainstorm design ideas to shape your content. how can you alert someone they're encountering propaganda as they're viewing it? i'll be looking for a wide range of possibilities.

W FEB 20

in class: discuss reading. review / discussion of brainstorming as a group. determine directions to pursue. you should be considering and responding to two pieces of propaganda.
homework: [3 hrs] development of 3 to 4 directions for your work. be thorough. focus on the development of innovative, yet appropriate, form and composition. don't forget the audience.

M FEB 25

in class: small group process crits. determine a final direction to pursue. make careful notes and update your process books.
homework: project freeze. receive new project.

PART II

W APRIL 2

homework: [3 hrs] pick up on your final direction. make refinements as needed. you have plenty of time to make the form excellent here. utilize that time. tweak details and make it beautifully appropriate.

M APRIL 7

in class: work day and desk crits. produce any required simulations to demonstrate interactions with or features of your design.
homework: [3 hrs] read *citizen designer* "the cultural influence of brands" pp 70–81.
continue production for presentation / portfolio purposes.

W APRIL 9

in class: final crit. turn in project and process book. receive project four.