

Department of Arts,
Culture & Media

Chantal Fischzang

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Office hours:
By appointment

Department of Arts,
Culture & Media
Chair: Ned Drew

Course pre-requisites:
As specified by major sequence

*This course is a BFA in
Graphic Design Requirement.

SENIOR STUDIO SEMINAR II

“Designers can’t solve problems they don’t understand. We have to first build relationships and trust with the communities we are designing for. That’s how you create common ground.”

DE NICHOLS, AIGA Senior UX Researcher at CULTURE LAB for YOUTUBE

“Design is the intermediary between information and understanding.”

PAULA SCHER, Principal at PENTAGRAM

“The role of the designer is to ask the right questions and listen carefully to those most affected by the problem. Only then can we begin to establish common ground and co-create solutions.”

BRYAN LEE JR., Founder of COLLOQATE DESIGN

“The way I see it, problem-seeking is the yin to the yang of problem-solving. Solving is narrow and practical. Seeking is expansive and brimming with possibility. Solving asks “What’s wrong?” and then tries to fix it. Seeking asks “What if?” and then shows how.”

BRIAN COLLINS, chief creative officer of COLLINS

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COURSE INTRO

This course focuses on the conception, design, and implementation of your capstone project to be presented in the 2025 Senior Exhibition *COMMON GROUND: Perspectives On Freedom* at the Project For Empty Space Gallery opening in April of 2025. The exhibit will showcase self-driven capstone projects under a common theme. This experience will teach you to apply your expertise to communicate your point of view as a system and create impact through design.

CAPSTONE

COMMON GROUND: Perspectives on Freedom

In the 21st Century, the pursuit and protection of freedom is both a personal and collective challenge. The 2025 Graphic Design Senior capstone exhibition, *COMMON GROUND: Perspectives On Freedom*, explores how opposing viewpoints can reveal shared truths and foster unity. Through the lens of Communication Design, each project examines how perspectives can intersect, creating spaces for understanding amid polarization.

Each student will choose a specific intersection of opposing viewpoints to investigate the “common ground” that connects them. Using a Venn Diagram as a launch pad to brainstorm ideas, students will explore multiple perspectives, embracing differences and seeking convergence. They will uncover how diverse viewpoints can reveal shared truths. The exhibition is an invitation to expand perspectives and seek common ground, fostering dialogue that can lead to positive transformation.

QUESTIONS

- What does freedom mean to you?
- What makes you feel free?
- What divides us in our pursuit or understanding of freedom?
- What unites us?
- What matters to you?
- What matters to your community?
- What recent event has widened your perspective or changed your mind?

CHALLENGE

Students are tasked with exploring and investigating opposing/multiple perspectives. They will respond with a transmedia project that seeks to find common ground and propose creative, inclusive ways to restore relationships and strengthen communities.

PERSPECTIVES (examples)

- / **Freedom of Expression:** Exploring the boundaries and significance of expressing ideas in society.
- / **Identity and Intersectionality:** How overlapping identities shape perspectives on freedom and understanding.
- / **Cultural Symbols and Their Meanings:** The significance of symbols in conveying freedom and identity across cultures.
- / **Political Discourse and Freedom:** Examining the role of political language in shaping public perception and freedom.
- / **Art as a Form of Protest:** How artistic expression challenges norms and advocates for freedom.
- / **Digital Activism:** The impact of social media on freedom of speech and collective action.
- / **Global Perspectives on Freedom:** How different cultures interpret and experience freedom.
- / **Freedom vs. Control:** The tension between personal freedoms and societal regulations.
- / **Translating Freedom:** The complexities of expressing the concept of freedom across languages and cultures.

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- / **The Role of Humor in Freedom:** How satire and humor challenge authority and provoke thought.
- / **Generational Perspectives on Freedom:** How different age groups perceive and prioritize freedom.
- / **Mental Health and Freedom:** Exploring the relationship between mental well-being and the experience of freedom.
- / **Environmental Justice:** The intersection of freedom and environmental rights in various communities.
- / **The Role of Education in Freedom:** How access to education shapes understanding and expression of freedom.
- / **Historical Perspectives on Freedom:** Learning from past movements to inform contemporary understandings of freedom.

FRAMEWORK

“Transmedia, used by itself, simply means ‘across media.’ ...Transmedia refers to a set of choices made about the best approach to tell a particular story to a particular audience in a particular context... Transmedia immerses an audience in a story’s universe through a number of dispersed entry points, providing a comprehensive and coordinated experience of a complex story.” — HENRY JENKINS

The Senior Capstone Exhibition *COMMON GROUND: Perspectives on Freedom*, will open in mid-April, 2025. The exhibition will showcase a rigorous research-driven design process and an exciting and unique visual rendition of your research. The purpose of this exhibition is to present your value as a professional designer by demonstrating what graphic design can do to communicate messages through compelling experiences.

Each of you will formulate the conceptual framework, develop, design and deploy an integrated transmedia narrative or campaign composed of three (3) distinct stories or narratives which together create a “*comprehensive and coordinated experience of a complex story.*”

Each student (or pair of collaborating students) will establish a direction or micro-theme that can be explored through a 3-part narrative lens. Each narrative will have its own focus within the larger “story” and take a different point of view on the topic. The narratives should be able to stand on their own, but taken together they broadly address a single issue.

Students will develop a long-term working plan and execute the technical and technological implementation, whereby the narratives are arrayed and experienced across multiple media platforms to culminate in a unified exhibition installation set, with interrelated narrative content, where “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” The goal is: form/medium and content inextricably working together.

NARRATIVE

Narrative is one of the principal ways we organize our experiences of the world. Narrative helps us communicate with one another, chart our way through new experiences, and make order out of the complexity/disarray of events, characters, actions, and time periods that make up our lives. Narratives come in many forms — written, image-based, diagrammatic, static, time-based, or any combination. While narrative is often bound to a sequential structure, shifts in place or time add depth and complexity to what might seem at first to be a straight “linear” story. Shifts in narrator or point of view from which the story is told can expand how a narrative functions.

CAPSTONE COMPONENTS

- / **Abstract:** the name, working title, and a 100-200 word description of your capstone — subject and point of view, research interests, background history/research, target audience, use of media, exhibition considerations, strategy for design approach, and description of your solutions.
- / **Narrative/s:** a larger “story” made up of three distinct narratives, utilizing 3 different media
- / **Exhibition:** design of exhibition installation of your narrative/s
- / **Documentation:** presentation of your research and design process

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PROCESS OVERVIEW

- + Phase 1: Ideation & Research
Ideation & Research will consist of the formulation of the conceptual framework for your project, identification of larger narrative “theme” or story, and the development/collection/creation of content and other raw materials. Write an approx. 100-200 word abstract that describes your topic.
- + Phase 2: Design Development
Design Development, will encompass the creation of multiple narrative content (your “Story World”), the planning of a systems-oriented functional framework of three (3) distinct narratives that work independently and as a “whole:” the goal being: form/medium and content inextricably working together. An extensive research and sketch process will be an essential aspect of your work.
- + Phase 3: Design Implementation
Design Implementation will involve the refinement of your narrative/s, the build-out of all technological requirements (i.e bookbinding, interactive prototyping/simulation, etc), and the design and planning of your individual exhibition.
- + Phase 4: Design Validation
Design Validation will focus on the completion of your Capstone, and the coordination and presentation of a cohesive transmedia narrative experience.

CONSIDERATIONS

- / What point of view will you take on the capstone theme?
- / What is the goal of your communication? (inspire, educate, prompt action, etc.)
- / What strategies can you use to gather and document data/raw materials about your topic?
- / What different strategies can you use to structure these raw materials to create a compelling visual narrative?
- / Explore/create the user journey/map that represent the “touch points” of the experience.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- + Finesse independent critical thinking to solve communication problems through design.
- + Embrace and leverage technology to amplify and enhance your message.
- + Hone collaboration and presentation skills.
- + Refine your eye for detail and impeccable, appropriate presentation.
- + Learn how to properly document and present work.
- + Perfect your projects demonstrating creative knowledge, technical expertise and an original perspective.
- + Apply writing as a tool to strengthen critical thinking.
- + Demonstrate effective time management & planning skills.
- + Encourage class members to be critical observers of design.
- + Make observations verbal by making use of the professional design vocabulary.
- + Balance originality of expression and appropriateness of purpose for a target audience
- + Learn to effectively navigate our sociotechnical & data-centric landscape
- + Gain an understanding of the social and ethical responsibilities of communication design practice

EXPECTATIONS

You will be expected to apply previously gained notions in printed and digital means, where typographic principles, the relationships between form and meaning, sign and symbols, visual/informational hierarchy, type specifications, comprehensive understanding of composition, grid systems & problem solving process skills, are habitual considerations.

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Through the semester, you will be required to conduct mindful research and make use of the DANA Library archives for further assessment. You will also be expected to actively participate in class critiques, make use of critical analysis towards your work and the work of your peers, apply your design vocabulary, formally present and defend your work, read all assigned materials, write your own content, improve your craft skills as much as your competency in design software, explore alternative media, and to pursue references beyond the fields of art and design to broaden your perspectives and add depth to your work.

PROCESS BOOK

Along with your assignments, you will be expected to keep track of your process, research and evaluations visually. This documentation may be manifested as a sketch/scrap book or a digital representation of it, like a personal blog or folder structures of process that backup your projects, but notes, sketches and visual revisions must be uploaded. (see pg. 9 for organization of process)

REQUIRED READING

Readings, research resources, and sources of inspiration will be assigned throughout the semester and posted on our class website: acmgd.info/gd6

MATERIALS

Students should have materials for sketching and idea-generation for all classes (sketch pads, pencils, pens, etc) a device for backing up their work on a source other than their computer (digital backup, hard drive, flash drive), and a sketchbook.

DIGITAL POLICY

The responsibility for backing up digital files lies solely with the individual student. Corruption of files containing coursework will not be considered a valid excuse for missing a deadline. It is each student's responsibility to consistently back up work on multiple devices in case of file corruption, disk or computer failure.

PREPARATION FOR CLASS

Students are to be prepared at the start of each class with assigned work and supplies. This includes the presentation of sketches and comps for projects, in required form, for class critiques. Students who are not prepared and do not participate in class critiques or individual discussions with faculty when scheduled to do so should not expect private critiques at a later date. Students are also responsible for the knowledge and practice of tools, materials and methods previously covered in class. Students who miss lectures and class discussion due to absences must obtain notes and assignments for subsequent classes from a responsible student prior to the next class period. While I will be happy to clarify information for students who are confused, I cannot repeat lectures or elaborate project descriptions on an individual basis. Students should make every attempt to obtain general information from classmates before discussing details with the instructor.

DEADLINES

This course is structured so that all work can be completed during a normal semester. There will be no incomplete grades given without a serious, documented excuse. Completion of ALL required projects is mandatory to pass the course. Any project not completed by the deadline must be turned in by the beginning of the next class at which time it will automatically receive one grade lower. All projects must be handed in at the deadline but may be further developed and refined for the final review. The new grade assigned will be the average of the original and new project.

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ATTENDANCE

Consistent and prompt attendance develops responsible professional behaviour and insures that students have access to the full range of experiences and information necessary to complete class assignments and acquire the skills and knowledge emphasized in a university education. Attendance is required during the scheduled class periods. Punctual arrival, effective use of the full studio period, and participation in assigned work is required. For this course, only two excused absences for the semester are acceptable. Allotted absences are to accommodate illness only. Doctor appointments, advisor conferences, trips to supply stores and labs, employment, etc., should not be scheduled to conflict with class. All students are expected to attend class on a regular basis. Prolonged illness should be verified by a physician and may require the student to withdraw from class if they cannot complete work in a comprehensive and timely manner. In some instances, unsatisfactory attendance may result in a failing grade.

Excessive lateness, early departures, excessive break time, lack of participation in assigned studio activities and not having homework will count as equivalent to an absence (2=1 absence). Lateness is defined as being ten minutes late for class or departing before the class has been formally dismissed by the instructor. Lateness that exceeds one hour will be counted as one absence. More than 2 unexcused absences equals a lower letter grade (without a note from the Doctor or a pre-arranged excuse).

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Throughout the semester we will use a combination of formative assessment (discussion and critique) leading to summative evaluation (a grade). You are expected to play an active role in this process. Final grades will be determined using the following criteria:

The quality of your design process:

- + Quality of Research
- + Conceptual Strength
- + Conceptual Development (sketches, roughs, drafts)
- + Attention to Detail / Craft / Presentation of Work
- + Syntactic Quality of Work (form, composition)
- + Semantic Quality of Work (message, communication)
- + Pragmatic Quality of Work (function)
- + Understanding of the role of medium & technology as an ever-changing entity to serve communication goals
- + Motivation
- + Successful completion of all Final Deliverables

Your professionalism and conduct (as a member of the studio):

- + Participation in Critiques / Discussions
- + Written Articulation
- + Verbal Articulation
- + Overall Attitude
- + Class Attendance / Punctuality
- + Deadlines / Class Preparation
- + Respect for your work and the work of others
- + Meeting Objectives of Assignments
- + Mastery of the objectives of the course

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GRADING

The grading system for this course is the following:

- A Excellent without exception
- B+ Well above average
- B Above average
- C+ Average
- C Average
- C- or below, failing
- INC Incomplete

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS CLASS

- + Self-advocate. If you do not understand something, or need help, make your project advisors and classmates aware of the situation. This is part of the collaborative approach to a "learning community."
- + Set individual progress milestones as well as meeting those held in common within the class.
- + Be flexible in your problem-solving approaches.
- + Develop project management and organizational strategies or seek out help to do so, if you lack these skills.
- + Be willing to tutor another student if you have knowledge or skills that would be useful to help them progress.
- + Critique constructively and do not offer false praise.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the RU-N ODS website (ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

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For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm.

For more information, students should refer to the University's Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures located at <https://uec.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/60-1-33-current-1.pdf>

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. The office does not have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence; any student can receive services, information and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If students are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out Sanvello for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support. Visit <https://my.rutgers.edu/>, click on Sanvello: Wellness @ RUN, and log in with your netid to begin your journey toward wellness.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)

Room 140, Bradley Hall
(973) 353-5608
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center>

Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops)

Room 126, Conklin Hall
(973) 353-5847
nwc@rutgers.edu
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>

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PROCESS BOOK FORMAT

<p>TITLE</p>	<p>DESCRIPTION</p> <p>A paragraph or two about your project.</p> <p>Think about it like a design brief.</p>	<p>RESEARCH</p> <p>Reference images, lists words, books, quotes, etc.</p> <p>Multiple pages.</p>
<p>ROUGH SKETCHES</p> <p>Multiple pages.</p>	<p>RESPONSE TO 1ST CRIT</p> <p>A paragraph about feedback.</p>	<p>REFINED SKETCHES</p> <p>Several pages. It can be purely screen shots, but should show the different explorations based on your last crit.</p>
<p>RESPONSE TO 2ND CRIT</p> <p>A paragraph about feedback.</p>	<p>RE-REFINED SKETCHES</p> <p>Several pages. It can be purely screen shots, but should show the different explorations based on your last crit.</p>	<p>POST MORTEM</p> <p>Conclusion : A paragraph or two about what failed, what worked, lessons learned, & what you'll do moving forward.</p>