

Department of Arts,
Culture & Media

Rm: Warren 427

Rebecca Pauline Jampol
Adjunct Professor
rjampol@gmail.com

Office hours:
By appointment

Department of Arts,
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Chair: Ned Drew

Course pre-requisites:
As specified by major sequence

*This course is a BFA in
Graphic Design Requirement.

SENIOR STUDIO SEMINAR I

“Research is not just information retrieval at the beginning of the design process but ongoing feedback and evaluation of the consequences of design action, including across the lifespan of messages, products, environments, and services.”

AIGA DESIGNER OF 2025

“Every project is a journey, an opportunity to discover new ways of seeing and understanding the world.”

REBECA MÉNDEZ

“Research informs design. Then design empowers people.”

BOBBY C. MARTIN JR.

“Design is the process of going from an existing condition to a preferred one. There’s no such thing as a perfect design.”

MILTON GLASER

“Analysis of the problem is the most significant part of the design process.”

LOUIS DANZIGER

“The place in which I’ll fit will not exist until I make it.”

JAMES BALDWIN

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Design is a continual process of approximating an ideal—always leaving room for improvement. Emotionally resonant iteration enriches our work beyond mere function.

To prepare you for the completion of the Graphic Design program, this course will address all facets of designing your portfolio and successfully presenting yourself as a practicing design professional. The course will assist you in identifying and establishing a brand for yourself; organizing, finessing and presenting a cohesive body of work, as well as promoting and protecting that work, while acquiring the skills to navigate and prosper in the profession.

Classes will balance lectures, discussions, critiques and student presentations of design work that focuses on the (re)development of your portfolio work to expose yourself as a polished designer.

Assignments will follow a typical client/designer process: conducting research > grasping context > introducing an idea > developing and/or shaping content > creating form.

Projects will emphasize problem analysis, the relation between form and content, and executing your ideas. They will cover a variety of formats including brand identity, multifaceted layouts, publications and typographic systems design. Course work will also underline a development and understanding of your individual aesthetic and sensibilities as a designer. We will discuss the creative process and how it is linked to your influences and personal expression.

At all times, you will focus on questioning the intent, efficacy, and value of your work in relation to the interconnectivity of all things, ensuring that your design interventions are placed mindfully within broader cultural and social landscapes.

DELIVERABLES

Portfolio Inventory & Refinements

- / Refine & complete 10 projects (single and/or systems).
- / Create a branded PDF portfolio including visuals + project descriptions.

Personal Branding

- / Establish & apply your personal identity system to stationery, a promo item, your résumé, a creative contract & your PDF portfolio presentation.

Portfolio Website

- / Design & develop the experience of your personal presence online.
- / Populate your website with refined projects.
- / Include professional photography of finished pieces + project descriptions.

Creative Platform or Social Media

- / Create a professional profile involving 8+ projects in a creative network for showcasing and discovering creative work or social media platform of your preference (ex: Behance, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- + Finesse independent critical thinking to solve communication problems through design.
- + Embrace and exploit technology to satisfy 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.
- + Become familiar with intellectual property rights and protections, ethics, basic business practices.

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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.

Through the semester, you will be required to conduct mindful research and make use of the DANA Library archives for further assessment. I will also expect you 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

When you start working on a project, and throughout its course, consider these elements within your process:

- Trigger > *The brief and its scope. The challenge in all its context.*
- Audience > *The people, their surroundings, their feelings and their challenges.*
- You > *Self reflection and awareness of your place and voice within the challenge/conversation.*
- Concept > *Ideas; your intellectual or emotional intentions.*
- Content > *The message. The information intended to be communicated.*
- Function > *The purpose. Practical use of the work.*
- Place > *The environment where your piece will live and the circumstances surrounding it.*
- Structure > *Organization of how the content is arranged. Hierarchy / Architecture / UX.*
- Form > *Appearance. The physical manifestation of your piece.*
- Prototype > *The Testing of ideas/proposal and refine based on comments/feedback.*
- Reflect > *Document and assess impact of offerings.*

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.

REQUIRED READING

Readings will be assigned over the course of the semester, and will be posted to our class website. Our class site is: acmgd.info/gd5

MATERIALS

Students should have materials for sketching and idea-generation for all classes (sketch pads, tracing paper, pencils, pens, etc.) a device for backing up their work on a source other than their computer (digital backup), and a sketch-book. Digital cameras would be useful, but are not required.

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.

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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 me. For students who need to reach me outside of class time, my email address is listed above on the top right of this handout.

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.

ATTENDANCE

Consistent and prompt attendance develops responsible professional behaviour and ensures 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 scheduled class periods. Punctual arrival, effective use of the full studio period, and participation in assigned work are required.

Students are allotted 2 absences per semester to accommodate emergencies, significant events, and documented illness (doctor's note required). Doctor appointments, advisor conferences, trips to supply stores, employment, etc. should not be scheduled to conflict with class.

More than 2 absences will affect the final course grade. Each additional absence will lower the final grade by one letter grade, unless supported by a doctor's note or approved as a pre-arranged excused absence.

The following will also count toward absences:

- 3 instances of lateness = 1 absence
- Arriving more than 1 hour late = 1 absence
- Early departures, excessive break time, lack of participation in assigned studio activities, or not having required homework may count as equivalent to an absence.

Lateness is defined as arriving 10 or more minutes after the start of class or departing before the class has been formally dismissed.

Prolonged illness should be verified by a physician. If a student is unable to attend regularly or complete course-work in a comprehensive and timely manner, withdrawal from the course may be necessary. In some instances, unsatisfactory attendance may result in a failing grade.

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:

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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 in order 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

GRADING

The grading system for this course is the following:

- A Excellent without exception
- B+ Well above average
- B 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 it 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/>

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USAGE

AI-generated content must not replace original creative work or core design decisions. While AI tools may be used to support the creative process, their use must be guided by critical thinking and thoughtful reflection. Students who choose to use these tools are fully responsible for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in their work. Furthermore, all AI-assisted content must be clearly documented in an appendix. Please refer to the **ACM-GD Policy** addendum on **AI Tools Usage Guidelines** at the end of this document for detailed instructions and ethical considerations.

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further its mission of access 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 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 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) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can help with 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, recovery from surgery, etc.). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

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. VPVA is a confidential resource and does not have a reporting obligation to Title IX.

Students can call the office at (973) 353-1918 or email run.vpva@rutgers.edu. VPVA also maintains 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 to receive assistance; any student can receive services, information, and support.

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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 Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805.

Additional support is available to any RU-N student through Uwill services:

- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.
- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your netid.
Services are confidential and free.

For emergencies, call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (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>