

Syllabus

Welcome to [CM501 – Design Strategy & Software](#)! This class provides knowledge and practice for effective graphic design for all media. You'll develop a foundation in design principles and software skills including Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign. This class develops those skills through five design projects you'll complete throughout the semester. Class time is split between lecture, discussion, group problem-solving time, and project working time, with technical tutorials and written critique outside of class. To get the most out of this class, plan for additional time outside of class to explore and experiment with the software on your own.

Meets:

Tuesdays 6:30pm–9:15pm
COM 211

Instructor:

Ashley Kolodziej (she/hers)

Direct message: in [Pronto](#)

Email: kolodz10@bu.edu

Office hours:

Monday, Thursday, and Friday
2–5pm by appointment –
[Request here](#)

Learning Objectives

- Gain new strategies for effectively engaging audiences and enhancing communication in all forms of media.
- Learn the fundamentals of graphic design by participating in lectures & critiques, completing design projects, homework & in-class assignments.
- Gain skills in graphics software to produce design projects.
- Learn and explore the creative process used in solving design problems.
- Gain analytical skills and improve verbal communication of visual concepts.

What To Expect

In this class, you will:

- Design and produce projects using Adobe Creative Suite desktop software.
- Complete assignments which reinforce software skills.
- Complete weekly design research discussions to practice finding, reviewing, and analyzing design works in the real world.

Communication Tools

We'll use the following tools to communicate this semester:

- **Pronto:** Day to day conversations, quick feedback, staying connected.
- **Zoom:** Office hours by appointment using Zoom. Request an appointment in Blackboard.
- **Blackboard:** Everything related to grades – submitting your final projects, due dates, and design research submissions will be here. This also serves as a central hub for all course information.

Laptops & Software

Students will use their own laptops in class. Before the first class, please do the following:

- Apply for Adobe Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop here (free):
<http://www.bu.edu/tech/services/teaching/digital-multimedia-production/adobe-creative-cloud/request/>
- Install and test Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop.
- iPad, Android, and other tablet-based versions of the Adobe Creative Suite software are not sufficient for the requirements of this class.

Textbooks

Graphic Design Essentials: Skills, Software and Creative Strategies, Second Edition Joyce Walsh – Required. \$34.95 paperback or \$16.98 digital. Available [at the BU Bookstore](#) or from:

- **Amazon:** [Paperback](#) \$34 / [Kindle](#) \$16
- **Bloomsbury:** [Paperback](#) \$31 / [eBook \(multiple formats inc. PDF\)](#) \$25
- **Rakuten Kobo:** [eBook](#) \$28

A project-based primer on graphic design, Western graphic design history, and the Adobe Creative Suite, and the basis of this class. Recommended for students who are new to Adobe, graphic design principles, & design history, or who learn best through reading and following written tutorials. Core concepts and contemporary design examples will be covered in the Tuesday evening lectures.

Grades

The four projects are weighted equally and account for 80% of the final grade. Class participation via weekly design research discussions and assignments in Blackboard comprises 20% of the final grade (10% each). Late projects will be penalized 10% for each class past the due date.

Weekly design research discussions: Design research discussions are due the Monday following each class, and graded as pass/fail. The goal of these discussions is to help you practice finding, looking at, and describing design. They are graded this way to give you an opportunity to experiment with, explore, and practice the process of learning visual language on your own terms, without risk to your grade. Replies to responses are not required – just one weekly post.

Letter grade numeric values:

A 100-94	A- 93-90	B+ 89-88	B 87-84	B- 83-80	C+ 79-77	C 76-74	C- 73-70	D 69-60	F 59-0
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Attendance and Participation

This class is an in-person, synchronous class, and will meet at our regularly scheduled class times. Please let me know as soon as possible if you anticipate any troubles attending class – generally, we can work it out and keep you on track if you need to miss 1-2 classes. Recordings are provided each week for reference, **but are not a substitute for in-person attendance**. In-person attendance is critical for receiving critique and feedback on your work.

You will also have opportunities to participate in weekly design research discussions outside of our scheduled class time. Participation in these online discussions will not only help you grow, but **serves as how I measure class participation**. Critique participation is graded separately, as part of each project grade, and is done in-person.

Participation is a critical part of building a space where we can explore and learn design together in these next few weeks. Thoughtful critique, responding to discussion prompts in Slack, and discussions about design are all great ways to participate and stay connected.

Recording and Slack Information & Tips

- Class sessions are recorded for reference purposes.
- If you are not feeling well, please stay home and rest, and review the recording when you are rested and ready to learn.
- Please add a photo of yourself and your preferred name to Zoom and Blackboard.
- When participating in Pronto, please remember the following:
 - I typically check Pronto on my lunch breaks and in the evenings.
 - Use [Do Not Disturb Mode](#) when you need time to focus, without Pronto distracting you (especially if multiple classes you're taking are using it!).
 - Body language, voice, and tone are important parts of communication that you can't see in Pronto messages. Instead, use emojis and class appropriate gifs liberally, and create a supportive space for everyone! 🎉

Presentations

Presentations will be held during regular class time and are not recorded. You will connect to the class projector and present your work from the front of the room. If you are unable to attend class on a presentation day, please let me know, and we will coordinate a time for you to present work.

Supplies

None required, but you may use any medium and experience you have available to you to support your design work. Explore pen, paper, paint, photography, and anything else you can get your hands on easily, and don't be afraid to experiment! Graphic design flourished for years before software was available – don't underestimate the power of a pen and paper when you're stuck.

Positive Classroom Experience

I want to make sure you have the most positive experience in the classroom as possible. At your discretion, please alert me to anything related to pronouns, name or nickname, or any extenuating circumstances or trigger warnings (personal, medical, etc.) that might affect your classroom experience. If work that gets shown in this class, professional or student-generated, offends you in any way, please mention it in class or talk to me privately about it so that we can all learn from each other.

Strategies for Success

- Attend class, take notes & ask questions.
- Keep your files organized by project in one place on your computer.
- Read the book and online recommended readings.
- When watching a software tutorial for the first time, give yourself 2-3 times the recording length so you can pause, rewind, and try the skills yourself in real time.
- If you find it difficult to pay attention because of the pace of a recording, you can slow it down or speed it up by viewing the recording in full screen and using the speed setting to adjust the pace of the recording to your needs.
- Design research assignments are critical to learning design skills that support your ability to use the software, and take time to complete. Stay on track with them so you don't get overwhelmed.
- Test drive and refine your presentation before the day of class presentations.
- Strive for excellence in every assignment: in class and projects.
- Provide constructive, meaningful feedback during critique, and don't be afraid to ask questions about others' work.
- Take risks in your work. There are many rules to learn; experiment with breaking them intentionally for particular effects.
- Design is a learned skill, and everyone you see in this class is here to learn it. No one is born an excellent designer.

Class Schedule

Date	Topics covered & classwork:	Checklist for next class:
Class 1 Tuesday 9/3/24	Welcome! Intro to Design & Typography Illustrator Basics Graphic Design Essentials, Chapters 1 & 2 Begin Project 1	For critique: • Prepare a first draft of Project 1, Layout 1 Reading & discussion: • Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 1 • Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 2 • Complete Design Research Discussion 1
Class 2 Tuesday 9/10/24	Elements of Design & Color Theory Pen tool & shapes in Illustrator Type Tool & Shapes Review Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 3	For critique: • Prepare a first draft of Project 1, Layout 2 • Make edits from critique to Layout 1 Reading & discussion: • Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 3 • Complete Design Research Discussion 2 Submit to Blackboard: • In-Class Assignment: Explore Color
Class 3 Tuesday 9/17/24	Critique Project 1, Layouts 1 and 2 Research for Designers Concept Development Software Review: Illustrator	For presentation: • Make edits from critique to layouts 1 and 2 • Prepare a presentation for Project 1 Reading & discussion: • Complete Design Research Discussion 3 Submit to Blackboard: • Project 1: Lyrical Layouts (both layouts) • Homework: Gather and review 5 user research survey results

Class 4 Tuesday 9/24/24	Present Project 1: Lyrical Layouts Analyzing Design Research Results Sourcing Illustration & Photography Photoshop Basics Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 4 Begin Project 2	For critique: ● Prepare a first draft of Project 2: Snack Advertisement Reading & discussion: ● Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 4 ● Complete Design Research Discussion 4 Submit to Blackboard: ● In-Class Assignment: Snack Persona ● In-Class Assignment: Cropping and Placement
Class 5 Tuesday 10/1/24	Critique Project 2 Layout Integrate Type & Image Advanced Photoshop: Masking & Manipulation Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 5	For presentation: ● Finalize all edits to Project 2 ● Prepare a presentation for Project 2 Reading & discussion: ● Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 5 ● Complete Design Research Discussion 5 Submit to Blackboard: ● Project 2: Snack Advertisement
Class 6 Tuesday 10/8/24	Present Project 2: Snack Advertisement Software Review: Photoshop & Illustrator InDesign Basics Begin Project 3	For critique: ● Prepare a first draft of Project 3: Design Magazine Layout Reading & discussion: ● Complete Design Research Discussion 6 Submit to Blackboard: ● In-Class Assignment: Set Type in a Grid
10/15/24	No class - Substitute Monday schedule	
Class 7 Tuesday	Critique: Project 3 Advanced InDesign: Layout & Placement	For critique: ● Prepare a second draft of Project 3: Design

10/22/24	Individual check ins and questions: Project 3	Magazine Layout Reading & discussion: • Complete Design Research Discussion 7
Class 8 Tuesday 10/29/24	Introduce Project 4 - Logo Design Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 6 Competitive Research & Analysis Working Time: Project 3	For this project's presentation: • Finalize all edits to Project 3 • Prepare a presentation for Project 3 Reading & discussion: • Complete Design Research Discussion 8 Submit to Blackboard: • Project 3: Design Magazine Layout
Class 9 Tuesday 11/5/24	Present Project 3: Design Magazine Layout Choose groups for final project Brainstorm project direction Begin competitive analysis	As a group: • Share contact information • Choose a regular check in time outside of class to coordinate • Choose a business type to focus on and 3 competitors • Decide on how to divvy up competitive analysis Reading & discussion: • Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 6 • No discussion this week. Please focus on the competitive analysis instead! Submit to Blackboard: • Homework: Competitive analysis for Project 4
Class 10 Tuesday 11/12/24	Check In Project 4 - Competitive Analysis Logo Design Workshop	For critique: • Prepare draft 1 of logo design • Begin supporting design research - voice, tone, and logo applications - using mood board as a starting point Reading & discussion: • Complete Design Research Discussion 10

Class 11 Tuesday 11/19/24	Check In Project 4 - Logo Design Visual Themes Review Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 7	For critique: • Prepare draft 2 of logo design • Prepare draft logo applications Reading & discussion: • Read Graphic Design Essentials, Chapter 7 • Complete Design Research Discussion 11
11/26/24	No class - Happy Thanksgiving!	
Class 12 Tuesday 12/3/24	Critique Project 4 Working Time & Deskside Feedback	For presentation: • Finalize all edits to logo and brand applications • Finalize brand guidelines • Prepare a group presentation using the brand guidelines as a starting point Reading & discussion: • Complete Design Research Discussion 12 Submit to Blackboard: • Project 4: Brand Design • Digital Sketchbooks
Class 13 Tuesday 12/10/24	Present Project 4: Brand Design	

BU Hub Learning Outcomes

This course satisfies the following [BU Hub requirements](#). Please refer to the [official course description](#) for more information. You can expect the following outcomes from this class:

Aesthetic Exploration (AE)

- Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of notable works in literature and/or the arts, including the cultural contexts in which those works were created, and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance.
- Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and vocabulary necessary to interpret a work of art (literature, music, visual arts, etc.).
- Students will produce evaluative, analytical, or creative works that demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics—such as genres, modes, styles, and cultural history—of at least one literary or artistic medium.

Creativity/Innovation (CI)

- Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.
- Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.

Digital/Multimedia Expression (DME)

- Students will be able to craft and deliver responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments using media and modes of expression appropriate to the situation.
- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities of various communication technologies and be able to use these technologies ethically and effectively.
- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of visual communication, such as principles governing design, time-based and interactive media, and the audio-visual representation of qualitative and quantitative data.

Policies

Artificial Intelligence

For imagery: You are encouraged to use Adobe generative features, such as [Adobe Firefly](#) or generative fill features within Adobe programs, for supplementary image generation only. For example, you may use image generation to create images for the snack ad project, so that you have assets to work with. You may not use these tools to create full mockups or otherwise design any layout in this class, as your original design work is an important part of your grade and learning.

When using Adobe Firefly, you must credit Adobe and [provide a link to the prompt](#). When using Adobe Generative AI features, such as generative fill, you must credit Adobe and provide a brief description of how AI was used. You can do this in Blackboard in the text submission area. If you have many assets to credit, you can include a publicly shared Google Docs link.

Why do I need to declare AI edits vs. my own edits in Photoshop or Illustrator? The way that Adobe's AI features works is very different from how a human typically edits in these programs, and can result in significant visual errors that may not be noticeable if you have been looking at the image for a while. Declaring your AI edits helps me as someone critiquing your work double check that the edits are high quality and portfolio-appropriate.

Example 1: Using Adobe Firefly

Chips illustration generated by Adobe Firefly.

https://firefly.adobe.com/public/t2i?id=urn%3Aaaid%3Asc%3AUS%3A8241204e-2746-4f39-8497-69a1b8c62284&ff_channel=shared_link&ff_source=Text2Image

Example 2: Using Adobe Generative AI features

Modified using Adobe Generative AI: removed subject from left area of image, replaced sky, added bag of chips to table.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else's creative and/or academic work as your own, in full or in part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words,

pictures or ideas of another, or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator and/or the copyright owner of those works, pictures or ideas. Any fabrication of materials, quotes or sources, other than that created in a work of fiction, is also plagiarism. Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense that you can commit and can result in probation, suspension or expulsion. [Boston University College of Communication Plagiarism Policy](#)

A special note on plagiarism as a visual designer: There will be projects in this class and in your career as a designer where you will use existing resources others have produced, such as typefaces, photographs, and illustrations, to support and create your own unique design, or look to other people's design ideas for inspiration. Your job during these projects is to create **a new and unique visual idea** that was not present previously through the combination of these elements, the skills you learn in class, and your own knowledge and concepts.

Plagiarism:

- Using or modifying a design template or design work you found on the internet.
- Using a fully generated design from any AI-assisted design service.
- Using assets you do not have the rights to use in your work.
- Using the same colors, typeface, or imagery as someone else who solved the same design problem as you are solving.

Inspiration:

- Analyzing someone else's design choices, understanding why they work, and applying concepts you see in that and other works to your own design problem (ie, using a cool color palette to evoke a winter feeling vs. using the same color palette as Frozen).

I am only able to grade you on your work, not someone else's. Always ask yourself what is left after you take out someone else's design idea you've chosen as inspiration. If there is little to nothing left after, I will have little to nothing left to grade in your work as well.

Universal Academic Conduct Code

All BU students are bound by the [Academic Conduct Code](#). Please review to ensure you are acting responsibly and ethically in regard to your academics.

Sexual Misconduct

Boston University is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct – including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success, and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy resources can be found at the end ([Section XII](#)) of the [BU Sexual Misconduct Policy and on the Supportive Measures page](#).

Equal Opportunity Policy

BU has strict guidelines on classroom behavior and practices when it comes to treatment of students and guests on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, genetic information, military service, national origin, or due to marital, parental, or veteran status. Discrimination for any of these reasons is prohibited. Please refer to the [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy](#) for more details.

Recording of Classes

Classroom proceedings for this course might be recorded for purposes including, but not limited to, student illness, religious holidays, disability accommodations, or student course review. Recordings will be published to Kaltura (mymedia.bu.edu). Note also that recording devices are prohibited in the classroom except with the instructor's permission.

Student Athletes

All student-athletes should be provided with a sheet from Student-Athlete Support Services regarding absences throughout the semester. These sheets should be handed in as soon as possible to avoid potential conflicts and so arrangements can be made to provide for missed lecture notes, classwork, or discussion.

Disability & Access Services

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the [Office of Disability and Access Services \(DAS\)](#) at 617-353-3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. DAS is located at 25 Buick Street, on the third floor.

Faculty Mentorship

All COM students are automatically assigned a faculty member within their department, who can help with professional and educational mentoring, as well as advice on how to take advantage of resources within your field. You can check who your mentor is on the [MyBU Student Portal](#). If you would like to request a different faculty member to be your mentor, please inquire within your department administration office.

Additional Support & Resources

Taking an incomplete – is it right for me?

<https://www.bu.edu/advising/academic-policies/taking-an-incomplete/>

Support services:

<https://www.bu.edu/com/resources/current-students/student-support/>

In addition to the resources on this site, please know that we are here to help you find the resources to help you get through stressful times.

COM Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

<https://www.bu.edu/com/about-com/diversity-equity-inclusion/>

BU Newbury Center for First-Generation Students:

<http://bu.edu/newbury-center>

COM Writing Center:

<https://www.bu.edu/com/for-current-students/the-com-writing-center/>

BU Dean of Students office:

<https://www.bu.edu/dos/>

Any student who is experiencing food or housing insecurity and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support.

In addition, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable us to provide any resources that we may possess.