

George Mason University Course Syllabus

Course Title:	Professional Practices in Illustration (Special Topics)
Course Code/Section:	AVT 399, Section 4
Session/Year:	Spring 2010
Meeting:	Tuesday, Thursday, 4:30–7:10 PM, AB L004
Professor:	Jandos Rothstein
Contact Info:	jrothste@gmu.edu
Class information:	www.jandos.com/forstudents
Office Hours:	TBA, and by appointment

Course Description: This class is designed to introduce students to the art of illustration. Sharing the tools and techniques of gallery artists and the communicative goals of graphic designers, illustrators work across media to make concepts understandable and powerful in the service of editorial, informational or persuasive goals. Successful illustration comes in a staggering range of forms and objectives, it is unified by clarity in formal voice and objectives. Although most illustration emerges from a collaborative commissioned process, illustrators have wide creative latitude for determining their own voice, style and topics.

This class is cross-listed with AVT 399. AVT 419 fulfills one of the “special topics” requirements for design students in the BFA graphic design program. AVT 399 fulfills upper division credit requirements for all students except BFA graphic design majors.

Objectives:

Develop professional visual sensitivity and competency in graphic communication and art through the discipline of the illustration process. Explore a range of communication problems and solutions through assigned and self-directed projects.

By the end of class students should:

Have a basic familiarity with the art and business of illustration;

Have experienced a number of commonly used illustration media, making evaluations about what is suitable for further personal exploration;

Have made progress in development of the concepting ability necessary for an illustration, graphic design or commercial photography career;

Have sustained a style and done a body of work around a single self-directed theme or project.

Content

Students will produce a series of illustrations, developing them from rough through “camera-ready” art. Students will be expected to show adequate progress in the development of rendering and visual communications skills.

Attendance Policy

Studio courses include substantial critique/discussion components and lab components. By their nature, studios are dynamic educational environments. During critique periods and in the interaction of instructor and student on ongoing projects, the studio provides resources and learning opportunities that cannot be “made up” by other means. In short, your attendance is just as important as mine. Therefore:

Students are required to attend all class meetings, to arrive on time, and to stay for the duration of the class.

Students arriving seven minutes or more late to class will be marked tardy. Students arriving 20 minutes or more late will be marked absent. Three tardy marks equals one absence. Students who leave before the class is dismissed will be marked absent.

Students who are having difficulty with the attendance requirement may be asked to drop the class.

Students who accumulate three or more absences will receive a reduced or failing grade.

There are no excused absences.

TEXT AND REFERENCES

Required:

There is no required text for this class, however you will be expected to purchase at least one magazine and pay attention to the illustration field during your time in this course, including noticing how illustration is used in various print and online media contexts. As you look at illustration (and READ the related text) you should evaluate how the work effectively meets the needs of communication goals be they editorial, advertising or institutional. Students should regularly visit large magazine racks, internet sites, and the library noting where, how and why illustration is used.

Suggested:

American Illustration, current and previous volumes.

The Society of Illustrators Annual, current and previous volumes.

Communications Arts Magazine, particularly the illustration annual

Print Magazine

3x3 Magazine (In each issue, three illustrators write about three other illustrators)

Illustration Magazine (a look at illustration before 1960, available at Borders and some other large bookstores).

Society of Publication Designers Annual, current and previous volumes.

Society for News Design Annual, current and previous volumes.

Heller, Steven and Marshall Arisman, *Inside the Business of Illustration*, Allworth Press, 2004.

Heller, Steven and Marshall Arisman, *The Education of an Illustrator*, Allworth Press, 2000.

Zeegan, Lawrence and Crush, *The Fundamentals of Illustration*, AVA Academia, 2005.

Visocky O'Grady, Ken and Jenn, *The Information Design Handbook*, How Books, Cincinnati, Ohio 2008.

McCloud, Scott, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Harper, 1994.

Sabin, Roger, *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art*, Phaidon, 1996.

Web sites:

www.drawger.com (home to more than 100 gifted illustrators who blog about their work and the profession)

www.ai-ap.com (companion site to *American Illustration*)

www.rappart.com, marlenaagency.com (examples of illustrator rep sites)

Materials & Supplies:

You will need the following tools and materials for this course, and should have them at each session

Graphite pencils in a range of hardnesses from 6b to 4h

Compressed charcoal
Flexible nib pen and ink
Kneadable and Art Gum erasers.
Stanford Sharpies in fine and Med. Weights
ruler marked in inches and picas
14" • 17" tracing paper or vellum—not tissue
masking/drafting/artist tape sketch pad (9" • 12" minimum)
11" • 14" pad bristol board or cold-pressed watercolor paper
Complete set 16 or more acrylic (preferred) or gouache artists colors, brushes, pallet and container for water.
Old Magazines, paper, etc. for collage assignment.

Students may be required to purchase additional supplies, and to replenish material as it is consumed.

A note on computers:

While we will be focusing on traditional methods this semester, Most illustrators incorporate computers in whole or in part into their professional practice. Many merely scan traditionally created work for digital delivery to clients, some modify or revise handmade work on the computer, and others work entirely digitally. At one time, computer-generated work had a distinct look, these days it can be hard to tell if an illustration was created using traditional or electronic methods or a combination. While there will be no computer instruction as part of this class, students who have software fluency and a portable system may use it for later projects (or I may grant permission to work in the lab if that seems workable). Illustrators most often use Photoshop, Painter, (raster-based) Illustrator, and Freehand, (vector-based). Our labs have all of these except for Freehand. The School of Art also owns a limited number of pressure-sensitive drawing tablets (Wacom brand), which facilitate image creation on the computer.

Student Evaluation/Methods of Assessment:

The quality of each project will be determined using the following criteria:

Concept: Originality, creativity and effectiveness of the solution

Aesthetics: Visual impact, appropriateness of technique and style to solution

• Presentation: Craftsmanship, effective use of materials.

Class, Department and University Policies:

All projects are due at the **beginning** of class on the date assigned. Late projects will be reduced one letter grade for each week late or portion thereof. After two weeks, projects will not be accepted. The final project is due on the last day of class. No extensions will be given.

This class will be conducted as an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the Department of Art and Visual Technology adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The

honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by the instructor.) Violations must be reported to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously. Using someone else's words or ideas without attribution is plagiarism, a very serious Honor Code offense. Plagiarism will also result in a failing grade.

Students must be completely prepared for class to be considered present, ie. they must have all necessary supplies and computer files and all ongoing (ungraded) projects with them. Working on the design portion of projects on platforms and software other than Macintosh QuarkXpress or Adobe InDesign is by permission of instructor only.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Students are responsible for the content of university and class communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly. Students are responsible for the content of messages that bounce due to "over limit" errors.

Cell phones and pagers must be turned off during class. The use of headphones is permitted during work periods.

Students may redo work for a higher grade if the piece was originally turned in on time. Revisions must be a substantial reconsideration of the original—not merely a correction of errors. The deadline for revised work is the last day of class.

Useful Information:

Open Studio Hours AVT teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the AVT studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

ArtsBus If you need ArtsBus credit for this semester, you **MUST** enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment. There will be **NO** exceptions. If you plan to go on multiple ArtsBus trips this term and wish to count them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://arts-bus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.

Important Deadlines

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course) **February 2**

Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course) **February 9**

Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester) **February 22–March 26**

Incomplete work from Fall due to instructor **March 26**

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for late adds (up until the last day of classes) must be

made by the student in the AVT office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid processing). Requests for non-elective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

Course Outline (Subject to change)

Workup Material With each project, students will turn in an envelope containing documentation of creative preparatory work. Each envelope should contain at least 8 distinct concepts and 4 pencil refinements of the chosen idea. The envelope need not be expensive but must be easily resealable—such as a manila envelope with metal clasp or string tie.

Introduction to class and illustration, First two assignments. PROJECT 1: take a trip to Borders or another large bookstore, find an illustration you like in a magazine and purchase the magazine—note that the illustration must be credited to an author rather than a service (like PhotoDisc or The Stock Yard). Likely candidates are *Entertainment Weekly*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe*, *The New Yorker*, *Harper's* and *The Progressive*. However, you need not limit yourself to these, there are many other options. Identify the illustrator, find his or her web site and look at the work for themes running through it and consistency of style. Write a two-page (maximum) self-contained essay that answers the following questions in any order you like: Why were you attracted to the published illustration? What is the article about? Did the illustrator effectively illustrate the story, why or why not? What strategy did the illustrator use—is there a key scene, person, or overarching theme that the illustrator chose, or did he/she take a more conceptual approach? Could this story have been illustrated with photography, why or why not?—If yes, what advantages and disadvantages would photography have offered? Look at the work of a few illustrators. Why do you think the art director hired this illustrator for the assignment rather than another?—support your answer with attached work samples printed from the illustrator's web site. PROJECT 2: Pick an inanimate object that can bring to class—a shoe, a telephone, a toy, or other piece that isn't overly simple or complex in form. Draw four 10" x 10" monochromatic drawings using pencil, charcoal and/or Sharpie, one of which communicates "Desirability," and the other three of which communicate your choice of of the following meanings: • Foreboding, • Trustworthiness • Authority, • Loneliness or isolation, • Humor or levity, • Despair, • Rebirth, or • Age or decay. Students may change perspective, scale "camera angle" drawing method, line/tone quality or use distortion to accomplish the goal of bringing meaning to the object.

01/20 Wednesday: Introduction to class, syllabus, and first assignment.

01/25, 26 Monday: Oral report on your illustrator, studio work (if time permits). Wednesday: studio time, Assignment of Op-Eds.

02/01, 03 Monday: Critique of Assignment One. Wednesday: Studio Day.

Op-Ed Using one of the provided op-ed columns from the New York Times or the Washington Post, students produce a B&W final in pen & ink illustrating the key point or points that the writer is making. Op-Eds are often assigned in the afternoon for publication in the next morning's paper, giving illustrators just a few hours to complete a finished illustration. Likewise, we will follow an abbreviated schedule, students will produce five concept sketches for approve in class on the third, and will turn in finished art at the beginning of class on the 8th. The final will be in pen and ink, but student may add ink washes or create tone with stippling or hatching.

02/08 Monday: Final Critique of Assignment Two.

Informational illustration (A.S.F.) Illustration has the ability to make complex arguments and concepts understandable, as the last project demonstrated. Illustration can also be used to explain a sequence of events (such as what happened between the plane hitting the tower and the tower collapsing) a microscopic or surgical process (such as appear in medical and scientific journals) and the perfect storms of unrelated events that can effect the economy (such as Forbes might use to illustrate a tumultuous week on Wall Street) Students will use illustration to explain an odd coincidence or event that happened to them, illustrate the friendships and tensions in their circle of friends, or another technical topic. For this project, students may, but need not use words as part of their work.

- 02/10 Wednesday: Assignment of Infographic, in-class project.
02/15, 17 Monday: Studio time, Wednesday: Roughs due, Studio time, small group critiques.
02/22, 24 Monday: Studio time. Wednesday: Small group critiques of "Smooth" rough due.
03/1, 3 Monday: Studio Time, introduction to portrait project. Wednesday: Final critique.

WEEK OF MARCH 8: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS.

Caricature/Portraiture Using a collage technique (which can be mixed with drawn, painted and/or computer-generated components, students will use portraiture as a jumping off point to illustrate a theoretical book cover for the biography of a historical or current personality from the world of politics or entertainment. The illustration should be based on genuine research about the subject and should use that research to take a stand about the quality of that person's contribution (good or bad) and/or incorporate narrative elements from the subject's life or career. Students may choose to find a specific article or book to inspire a illustrative point of view, or can form their own perspective based on a range of sources. Students may, but need not choose to incorporate title and other information into their illustration, but must consider where text might be added later.

- 03/15, 17 Monday: Studio time discussion of final project, Wednesday: small group critiques, studio time.
03/22, 24 Monday: Studio time, Wednesday: final due, final critique.

Week 10–15 Final Project. Students will produce a series of no less than four related illustrations for an article, book or product that interests them. Alternatively, students can use this project to further explore technical or informational illustration, children's book illustration or greeting card illustration. Students may also use this project to work further in one of the media used in the first few projects or another, including the computer. The illustrations must be unique, but relate thematically and stylistically. For example you might illustrate related events or people who were connected to each other in some way. Students will produce at least four rough sketches for each component of the final project.

- 03/29, 31 Studio time Monday and Wednesday.
04/5, 7 Monday: Studio time, Wednesday: Presentation of roughs for all four drawings, small group critiques, studio time.
04/12, 14 Monday: Studio time, Wednesday: Studio time, small group critiques of work in progress.
04/19, 21 Monday: Studio time, Wednesday: Studio time, small group critiques of work in progress.
04/26, 28 Monday: Studio time, Wednesday: Studio time, small group critiques of work in progress.
05/3 Final Critique, all work due, no extensions. Have a great summer.