syllabus

Instructor: Anne Wysocki (awysocki@mtu.edu)
Office Hours: T 3-4pm and Th 1-3pm, and by appointment
Office: 137 Walker (but check the CCLI, too)

COURSE DESCRIPTION - ABSTRACT
This is a course about looking & judging & making. This is a course about paying attention. This is a course in critical thinking.

During our 10 weeks together--through using the course text & your eyes and brain and heart--you will be developing your own set of graphic design rules, as well as notions about when those rules should be broken. Oh, you will certainly be hearing (and seeing) a lot about what makes for type that is easy-to-read, and about what kinds of arrangements of graphic elements on a page grab a reader's attention... but you (WE) will also be questioning the purposes of any designs we look at.

We will be looking at pages and screens other people have designed, and figuring out why (or why not) they succeed in doing what they set out to do. We will be looking at our own work in the same way, intensely.

By the end of the quarter, I hope that we are the mad dogs of graphic design, ripping and tearing into what we see, and making things we can't take our eyes off of.

In other words, by the end of the quarter, you should be able to:

- Describe the major elements of a design, be it yours or someone else's
- Describe how a design is or is not successful in terms of its audience and intended effect

(Notice, please, that I have not yet used the word "beauty"--we will discuss this.)

(We will also discuss issues of intellectual ownership in this course.)

(And, finally, note that this one class will not turn you into someone who should go out and print personal business cards with "Graphic Designer" on them. By introducing you to the issues, concerns, tools, questions, skills, and habits of mind typical of many designers, this class might help you decide to go on to learn more about a discipline that requires considerable attention & time...)
COURSE DESCRIPTION - CONCRETE
This is a computer intensive course. Everything you make in this class will be made on computers (which is not to say pencils & pens are forbidden; they will, however, be infrequent) because that is how most graphic design is produced these days, and because I am assuming that the jobs most of you will take when you leave MTU will require you to know how to use computers to do the kinds of design we will do in this class.

By the end of the quarter, you will be comfortable using the following software:

- PageMaker (page-layout)
- PhotoShop (scanning & image manipulation)

You will be using the software to produce (at least) the following projects:

- personal type style sheets
- several type-only layouts
- several flyers with graphical/photographic elements
- a brochure
- a redesign of the elements of a manual or instructional brochure
- a "Design Notebook"

(Oh, and -- just as with writing -- first drafts are usually tools for discovering more about what it is you REALLY want to do. Nothing you do in this class will ever exist in one, primary version.)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- A notebook (homemade or purchased or found) for holding images you like & the words you write about those images
- Passionate Eyes

ABOUT THE DESIGN NOTEBOOK
At the end of the quarter, you will have a collection of all your work in a Design Notebook, as well as your written reflections on your work and on general principles we will have covered in class. I hope that this Notebook will be something you value, as a reminder to you in the future of your work, but also as something that holds together and allows you to think in an organized and useful manner about what we cover in class.

For seven weeks of the quarter (see the Course Calendar for which weeks) I want you to find one example of a BLACK & WHITE (or grayscale) design you think is successful. Somehow get these designs onto a page you can put into your Design Notebook. (If you find something in a magazine you own, rip it out and put it in; otherwise XEROX the thing.) Look for advertisements, magazine layouts, manual pages, brochures, flyers -- anything that is on paper AND THAT IS BLACK & WHITE is fair game. (We will be talking about design for computer and TV screens, but -- for now and your notebooks -- stick to what is on paper.)

Also, put into your notebooks samples of everything you create over the quarter.
Then, for each sample you put into your notebook and for each "finished" project, TYPE 250-500 words (1-2 pages), using the following questions to guide what you write, and put the writing into the notebook in such a way that I can tell what writing goes with what sample:

- What effect is this design intended to have?
- On what particular audience is the design to have this effect?
- What elements & arrangements in the design led you to conclude what you have about the design's intention and audience?

I will be collecting and looking at these notebooks several times throughout the quarter (see the course Calendar for when). I will be looking at both the form & content of your writing (make sure your writing is in full sentences, coherent paragraphs, and appealing grammar) as well as at how you put together the Notebook itself an object of design.

COURSE RESOURCES

On "Reserve" in the CCLI
I have put several million things on "reserve" in the black cabinet in the CCLI. There are books on type design, books of type designs, books on pictorial symbols, magazines with outside-of-the-usual visual things going on in them, articles about how to do even cooler things with the software we are using, etc. etc. etc. (Many of the things on reserve belong to me. I always have clean hands. I never bend pages. I do not eat when I look at these books or magazines. These items are usually expensive, because they are usually printed in full, interesting color. Can you hear how I am asking for your care in using these things?)

I have put these things on reserve to augment what we do in class. Sometimes I will give you specific assignments using the reserve materials; other times, go over and browse through the materials because I guarantee that there are things there to spark your design sense and make you desire the impossible. (Just tell the consultant in the CCLI that you want to look through the black cabinet, and -- in exchange for your ID card -- you can take out something to look at it.)

Me
I have office hours. I do not bite. I love this stuff. Come talk to me. Show me your work at any stage.

The CCLI
You will use the Center for Computer-Assisted Language Instruction (CCLI, in Walker 113) more-than-frequently during this quarter, both during regular class meetings and outside. The consultants in the lab are there to help you. You can also reserve equipment in 2-hour blocks, so, if you know you need a particular machine, reserve it ahead of time. You are also responsible for knowing the lab hours, and when lab maintenance is, so that you can plan your computer time. (You are also responsible for keeping backups of your work. You can keep backups on floppy disks or on Zip disks (which hold 100 Mb and are available for $12.50 each from STC officers (look for the signs around the lab and the first floor)); the lab supports these formats. While I am generally understanding about electronic failure (better for you to learn here than on a job how frequently such failures happen) I am generally understanding once -- and only if your backup has failed, too.)

Each Other
The purpose of designing information is to move someone else in some particular way. You, the designer, will know what your design is supposed to do, so you will rarely be the appropriate judge for figuring out if you have succeeded in doing what you've set out to do. Always ask others what they see in what you make.

Also, we will undoubtedly have some computer whizzes in class, people whose dreams involve the software we are using. I am hoping that we will help each other discover all the tricks of which the software is capable. (And sometimes people who do not know what the software is supposed to be
able to do discover some pretty interesting techniques.)

**ATTENDANCE**
Be here. We will be looking at a lot of things and learning a lot on the computers. You will not be able to make up any of this from someone else's class notes. Come to me ahead of time if you must miss class. (Missed classes do have a bearing on your grade: If you miss more than 1 class, you can expect to see less of a grade than you might expect.)

**GRADING**
I do not grade individual assignments... but you will receive plenty of feedback from me, and I will be checking in with you around mid-quarter to come to agreement about where your overall grade is then. If you ever want to know where you think your grade is, just ask. I expect you to give care and attention to your work, and do not settle for less.

I have put considerable effort into thinking about what goes into A-level work for this class, and have written what I hope will be a useful description of the qualities of A-level work.

**ADA STATEMENT**
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). MTU is committed to a policy of educating individuals with physical or learning disabilities without discrimination. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, x2212. For other concerns about discrimination, please contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office, x3310.