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DESCRIPTION

COURSE DESCRIPTION - CONCEPTUAL
This is a course about looking & judging & making. This is a course about paying attention. This is a course in critical thinking. This is a course in applying rhetoric to visual composition and analysis.

During our 14 weeks together -- through using the course texts & your eyes and brain and heart -- you will be developing your own set of graphic design guidelines, as well as notions about when those guidelines 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 examining all layouts in terms of how different audiences respond to them (or variations on them) in different contexts. And that is rhetorical
work...

We will be start by looking at type as shapes, as something that can convey different meanings depending on how you size it or turn it or crop it -- this is how we will start thinking about and working rhetorically with the elements of visually verbal communication. We will also look at the very fine points of typographic convention, at photographic composition, and at words and photographs working together on pages.

By the end of the semester, I hope that we are the happy mad dogs of graphic and information design, ripping and tearing into what we see, and making things we can't take our eyes off of. I also hope that we all have acquired a sense of how design shapes us as we shape it -- and thus that we have acquired a sense of what kind of change we can make when we change the design that we see all around us.

COURSE DESCRIPTION - CONCRETE
This is a computer intensive course. Almost everything you make in this class will be made on computers (which is not to say pencils & pens are forbidden -- in fact, you will be using them a lot, too) 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 -- at least sometimes -- the kinds of design we will do in this class.

By the end of the semester, you will be comfortable using the following software:
• InDesign (page-layout) (Note: if you are already familiar with InDesign and wish to use Quark Express, that is fine. I start with InDesign because it is a much easier application for beginners to learn.)

• 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 photographic compositions
• several flyers with graphical/photographic elements
• a brochure
• a redesign of the elements of a manual or instructional brochure

(Oh, and -- just as with writing -- you will not be able to produce work that satisfies you (or me) without going through multiple drafts of any piece. As with writing, first drafts are usually tools for discovering more about what it is you REALLY want to do; subsequent drafts help you develop and strengthen your ideas and produce pieces that show thought and well-related ideas.)

At the end of the semester, you will produce and turn in a portfolio of your best work. We will discuss the details of this portfolio as the semester comes to its final weeks.
One thing that is important to note: We will only be working with black and white (and all the greys in-between) in this class. Color is wonderful, yes, but is worthy of its own 14 weeks (and then some) of study. In order to help you get a solid grounding in how and why you place things where you do on a page (or screen), we will not be using any color this semester.

Another thing that is important to note: We will only be producing projects on paper this semester. All that you learn about layout and typefaces in this class applies directly to work you do for computer screens -- such as webpage design and multimedia design -- but it will help us to learn about layout with more focus if we stick to one medium.