**HU 4690, SEC. 001, Special Topics: Technical Communication in the Age of the Image**

**Spring Semester 2009**

**Tuesday/Thursday 8-9:30 a.m.**

**Walker 134**

**INSTRUCTOR**

Dr. Karla Saari Kitalong, Associate Professor

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**PHONE**

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**WEBSITE**

http://courses.mtu.edu

**OFFICE HRS**

Tu & Th 10-11:30 a.m., Wed. 3-4 p.m.

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**TEXTS:**


**MATERIALS:**

Computer; printer; MS Word or comparable word processor; MS Excel or comparable spreadsheet program; access to image editing program (e.g. Photoshop); reliable Internet access.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This special topics course is designed for undergraduate technical communication majors. We will examine the technical communication profession and the role of the technical communicator as they affect and are affected by a world that is increasingly reliant on visual communication.

**OBJECTIVES:**

As a result of the work you do in this course, you will:

- Understand information graphics and be able to explain their meaning and significance to a variety of audiences.
- Evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of images and other visual communications within particular social contexts.
- Gain an improved understanding of how meaning is made through the presentation of numerical data, images, words, and combinations thereof.
- Learn and practice software techniques and graphic design strategies for representing numerical data.
- Strengthen your oral, written, and visual communication capabilities by creating informational and argumentative presentations that can be supported with data, logic, and evidence.
- Synthesize a variety of materials to make a significant argument that uses multiple communicative strategies.

**LEARNING METHODS:**

To fulfill the course objectives, you will:

- Read critically and carefully—an average week requires 30 to 50 pages of assigned reading
- Write both to learn and to communicate—three major graded assignments, weekly design responses, and many in-class and homework assignments
- Present your ideas visually—in both formal and informal contexts
- Present your ideas orally—in class discussions, brainstorming, formal and informal presentations
- Practice collegiality—in written and oral peer review to your classmates and by helping each other learn relevant software and design techniques.
- Manage your time—meet all class deadlines
- Practice accuracy and precision—identify appropriate evidence and support, check facts, edit, revise, proofread
- Identify and share resources to help yourself and each other.
GRADING

Weight | Assignment | Grade | Percent | GPA | Rating
---|---|---|---|---|---
10% | Miller homework | A | 93 – 100 | 4.00 | Excellent
15% | Design discussion/response | AB | 88 – 92 | 3.50 | Very good
20% | Assg. 1: Data display project & presentation | B | 82 – 86 | 3.00 | Good
20% | Assg. 2: Design memoir | BC | 76 – 81 | 2.50 | Above average
25% | Final project (multi-part) | C | 70 – 75 | 2.00 | Average
5% | Misc. class- and homework | CD | 65 – 69 | 1.50 | Below average
5% | Reflection (finals week) | D | 60 – 64 | 1.00 | Inferior

I – Incomplete grades are given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student's control. Must be approved in writing by the Dean.

X – Conditional grades are given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up within the next semester in residence or the grade becomes a failure (F). A grade of X is computed into the grade point average as an F.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University's policies.

Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

Discrimination: Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310. Please speak with Dr. Kitalong as soon as possible to ensure that proper accommodations are made.

Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao/

Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability


CLASS POLICIES

ASSIGMENTS: You must complete all major assignments with a passing grade to pass the class.

ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOR: All absences are unexcused. Every absence after three (3) may reduce your grade.

Respect our work by being on time. Do not behave in any way that obstructs or disrupts the learning environment. All electronic devices should be turned off and stowed, including laptops.

E-MAIL DO’S AND DON’TS: Type HU4690 in the subject line. Sign your first and last name to the e-mail. DON’T email assignments without prior consent of the instructor.

MISSED CLASSES: If you miss class, DON’T email Dr. K. to ask for a recap, but do obtain missed handouts or written assignments from her. Much of the work of this class emerges out of the discussion; if you’re not there, you’ve missed it. Ask your classmates for notes. Missed in-class work may not be made up.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Major assignments are due at the beginning of the assigned class period. Major assignments turned in as much as a class period late are subject to grade penalties of up to one full letter grade.

Assignments more than a class period late will earn an F.

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION: This syllabus may be modified at the professor’s discretion. You will be notified of modifications to the syllabus before they happen. Changes often affect the schedule, and it is your responsibility to know if due dates change.

UNDERSTANDING ASSIGNMENTS: You will receive written instructions for each major assignment, including a grading rubric. For daily or homework assignments, your instructions may be available only on the class Blackboard site and not handed out in hard copy. Please ask questions about the assignments.

IF YOU’RE TAKING THE COURSE FOR GRADUATE CREDIT: Let’s meet during Week 1 to discuss additional work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk/Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>In Class/Reading assignment</th>
<th>What's Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Tu</td>
<td>Jan. 13</td>
<td>Course Introduction; review introductory,</td>
<td>data display, &amp; design discussion assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Th</td>
<td>Jan. 15</td>
<td>Role of the Visual in Tech Comm.</td>
<td>Introductory Assignment, Web search activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Tu</td>
<td>Jan. 20</td>
<td>Ideology of information graphics Dragga &amp; Voss (2 PDFs)</td>
<td>Examples of “cruel pies”</td>
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<td>2 Th</td>
<td>Jan. 22</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion posting</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Tu</td>
<td>Jan. 27</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion response</td>
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<td>3 Th</td>
<td>Jan. 29</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 5</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion posting</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Tu</td>
<td>Feb. 3</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 6</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion response</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Th</td>
<td>Feb. 5</td>
<td>Winter Carnival Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Tu</td>
<td>Feb. 10</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 7</td>
<td>HW problems; oral dataset proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Th</td>
<td>Feb. 12</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 8</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion posting</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Tu</td>
<td>Feb. 17</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 9 &amp; 10</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion response</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Th</td>
<td>Feb. 19</td>
<td>Miller Chapter 11 &amp; 12</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion posting</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Tu</td>
<td>Feb. 20</td>
<td>Information Graphics Lupton and Miller pp. 142-156 &amp;</td>
<td>HW problems/Design Discussion response</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>McNaughton (PDF)</td>
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<td>7 Th</td>
<td>Feb. 26</td>
<td>No class meeting; Dr. K is out of town. Meet with</td>
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<td>small group to conduct peer review and turn in</td>
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<td>documentation of review to Dr. K. by Sunday, Mar. 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Tu</td>
<td>Mar. 3</td>
<td>Project presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Th</td>
<td>Mar. 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assg. 1: Data display assignment due</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Tu</td>
<td>Mar. 10</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>9 Th</td>
<td>Mar. 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Tu</td>
<td>Mar. 17</td>
<td>Images as ideology Harrison, Kinross (PDFs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Th</td>
<td>Mar. 19</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 157-166</td>
<td>Design discussion posting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Tu</td>
<td>Mar. 24</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 134-141</td>
<td>Assg. 2: Design Memoir (basic) due Design Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Th</td>
<td>Mar. 26</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. viii-23</td>
<td>Design discussion posting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Tu</td>
<td>Mar. 31</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 24-40</td>
<td>Design Memoirs Rewrite 1 (fonts) due Design Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Th</td>
<td>Apr. 2</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 40-65</td>
<td>Design discussion entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Tu</td>
<td>Apr. 7</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 72-89</td>
<td>Design Memoirs Rewrite 2 (pictograph) Design Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Th</td>
<td>Apr. 9</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 90-119</td>
<td>Design discussion posting</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Tu</td>
<td>Apr. 14</td>
<td>Images in Society Lupton and Miller pp. 120-133</td>
<td>Design Memoirs Rewrite 3 (promotional poster)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Th</td>
<td>Apr. 16</td>
<td>Highlights from the History of Design Lupton and</td>
<td>Review design discussion threads and bring in your own</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Miller pp. 168-202</td>
<td>highlights for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Tu</td>
<td>Apr. 21</td>
<td>Final project presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Th</td>
<td>Apr. 23</td>
<td>Final project presentations</td>
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Exam Week: Final projects & reflections due Monday, April 27, midnight.
Purpose of the Assignment

This assignment gives you an opportunity to identify examples of design that emerge out of the reading, to write about these examples using the language and terminology presented to you in the books, course readings, and class discussion, and to respond to (and thereby learn from) your classmates' postings. These entries can be thought of as similar to journal entries or reflections. That is, you are encouraged to experiment with ideas, think expansively and creatively, and identify examples that are less serious than the ones in the book.

The difference between these entries and private musings is that these entries will be read and responded to by others in the class.

Guidelines/How to Proceed

Each Thursday (except as noted on the class calendar), you will post an entry into a designated Blackboard discussion area. Your entry should pertain to the readings for that week. So for Thursday, Jan. 22, the first date that a Design Discussion entry is due, your post should build on, extend, argue with, or otherwise illustrate the material we read for Jan. 20 and 22.

Between Thursday and the following Tuesday (except as noted on the class calendar), you will respond to the previous week's postings.

What Should I Post About?

Sometimes we'll discuss possible topics in class. Sometimes I'll post a prompt that you may choose to respond to. But mostly, you're on your own, so you should be on the lookout for images, information graphics, layouts, photographs, or other visual references that somehow can be discussed using the current week's reading/concepts.

Deliverable

The finished product will be a collection of observations that illustrate the work of our class and enlighten us about the application of design theory to real world situations.

Just as a guideline, posts should be around 250 words and responses should be around 75. Make them good words, not "fluff."

Grading Criteria

The assignment is worth 15% of your grade (150 points). Eight (8) discussion entries are assigned during the semester. Post at least six (6) substantive entries to get full credit (up to 90 points). In addition, respond substantively to at least 15 of your classmates' posts during the semester, over at least 4 of the 8 weeks (60 possible points).

POSTS
• Participate in a meaningful way by presenting new ideas, offering examples, offering alternatives, speculating, asking questions, or summarizing/synthesizing.
• Post at least 6 of the 8 entries and do it on time.
• Explicitly reference the readings, even if you don't agree with, like, or even understand them.

RESPONSES:
• Respond to at least 15 distinct posts. Spread out your responses. Do them by Tuesday.
• Write substantive responses (not "I agree" with nothing more added). Write responses that demonstrate you're in tune with the class and the readings.
• Help out when you see a posting with few or no responses.