

# publication design

**instructor:** michael mcdermott

**email:** mmcderm8@gmu.edu

**phone:** 202.556.0839

**office hours:** by appointment

**web:** [gmugd.github.io/publication25-spring](https://gmugd.github.io/publication25-spring)

## required materials

Cutting Tool (Olfa, Xacto, etc.)

Extra Blades

Cutting Mat (12x18 minimum)

Metal, cork backed ruler (18 inches minimum)

## as needed materials

Paper

## required software

Adobe CC, specifically InDesign

Zoom

## delivery and timing

We will meet once a week in person on Thursdays from 10:30 to 1:10 in room 1020 in the Art and Design Building. The classes are required and during our sessions we will discuss work, complete demos, and further our design knowledge. The class is scheduled to run for 16 weeks and you can expect to work for 6 hours outside of class each week.

## prerequisites

AVT 311: Graphic Design Principles and Methods

## course description

This course explores long-form print graphic design. While our focus will be on books and publications, the skills developed—creating engaging design within a branded, organized and inviting structure, presenting information in various content-appropriate formats, developing a visual identity and finding and creating effective imagery is also applicable to other common design tasks—annual reports, ad campaigns, business collateral, newspapers, websites, books, exhibition design, branding systems, and other commonly produced documents. Design is a tool for persuading, informing, and entertaining. In this class you will be required to do all three.

The primary intent of this course is the development of conceptual, typographical, and print design skills. It is a fundamental expectation that students will rise to the challenge of mastering the technical skills they need to achieve an effective and visually and typographically literate outcome. While learning software is not the goal of this class, increased software (or digital craft) skills are the byproduct of (and evidence for) a successful outcome.

## objectives

- to introduce students to editorial and periodical publication design.
- to demonstrate fluency in the visual vocabulary and technical skills relevant to editorial design
- to enhance written, visual, and oral presentation techniques
- continue development of professional computer design skills in page layout, and image manipulation using Adobe CC software.
- improve typographic skills
- gain knowledge of production techniques
- understand the process of designing publications
- apply graphic design principles in the ideation, development, and production of visual messages.

## content

This course consists of three projects, weekly prompts, and in class discussions and demos. The demos and discussions are to begin to familiarize students with specific concepts and ideas and the projects are a synthesis of the concepts and ideas we will cover. Weekly prompts will encourage you to critically engage with publication design you encounter outside of class.

## projects

### PROJECT 1: BOOK DESIGN

In collaboration with Stillhouse Press, students will create a design for a book to be published in the spring of 2026. Students will design the interior and exterior of the book using a provided manuscript.

### PROJECT 2: EDITORIAL FEATURE

This project is one of the problems available for The Real Show 25. Students will design a cover and feature editorial layout for the article titled: *Striving to Connect: Health Officials are raising alarms about loneliness and isolation. Can researchers identify what helps?* in Science magazine.

### PROJECT 3: EVENTS CALENDAR

Students will create a doubled sided mailer that showcase upcoming events for an arts based organization. The project will be a culmination of the skills and concepts you have learned throughout this course.

## discussion of work

You will need to take an active role in both the presentation and discussion of your work. We will review projects in a variety of ways and you are expected to be able to talk and write about your own work and give feedback to your peers about their work. The ability to discuss your work and other student's work is a very important part of your education at Mason. Use this class to improve on those skills.

## communication

Your ability to communicate with me is of prime importance in this course. If you are going to be absent, late, or not have your work, it will be your best interest in communicating those things to me in advance. I do not need to know your reasons for being absent, late, or not having your work but I do need to know. A simple, short email will be fine.

The same goes for if you are struggling in this class or having other issues that are hindering your ability to complete work in this class. The more you keep me in the loop the more I can help you and adjust as needed.

## attendance

Your attendance is tied to your engagement grade. Each class you miss will lower your engagement grade by 25 points unless you let me know you won't be in class and make an effort to cover what you missed in class. Each class you are late to will lower your engagement grade by 10 points unless you let me know. If you miss four or more classes you will automatically fail the class unless you have communicated with me prior to the fourth absence.

## **engagement**

This course has an engagement policy instead of an attendance policy. Your engagement will affect your final grade (and, by extension, the quality of your work) for this course. You are expected to actively and passionately take part in this course in the following ways.

- Attend class meetings and be on time
- Create things and be prepared to show them on time.
- Make things thoughtfully, intentionally, and with intensity.
- Meet all deadlines for handing in work and process.
- Actively participate in critiques both in class and out of class.
- Be curious about making things and the things your classmates make.
- Care about yourself & your work, your classmates & their work, and this class

## **grading**

Grades will be based on engagement (25%), and projects (75%).

### **ENGAGEMENT (25%)**

This percentage will be based on your engagement in the class which is explained on above. Attend class and be engaged in this course and its content throughout the semester and this should be an easy 25%.

### **PROJECTS (75%)**

Each project will generate two different grades. One grade will be based on your week to week process and the second grade will be based on the final submission. At the end of the semester you will have 6 total project grades that are all weighted equally for this 75%.

## **late work**

Late work will be accepted for three weeks after a deadline with the exception of the final project which will be due at the end of the semester. There is a section on the rubrics showing how late work is factored into the assignment grade.

## **weekly schedule**

Class is on Thursdays from 10:30–1:10. Most days we will meet for the entire time but some weeks we will have individual meetings or end early. Some classes will be work days so make sure to bring things to work on each class. Unless otherwise specified, all work is due at the beginning of class.

A note—Time management is an important skill to master and should be worked on all your classes. Staying up all night working is not a badge of honor, it typically means you didn't budget your time correctly. Staying up all night isn't healthy and making sure you are keeping yourself healthy is your first priority.

## **semester schedule**

The schedule on the next page is an outline of what we will be covering this spring. It is subject to additions, subtractions, and shifts. The most current version is on the class website.

<b>WEEK 1:</b> 1/23	Course Overview InDesign 1 Type Refresher Book Covers P1: Book Design
<b>WEEK 2:</b> 1/30	Stillhouse Visit InDesign 2
<b>WEEK 3:</b> 2/6	InDesign 3 Cutting and Folding
<b>WEEK 4:</b> 2/13	Saddle Stitching Print Booklet Mockups
<b>WEEK 5:</b> 2/20	Packaging Files File Organization Magazines P1: Final Critiques P2: Start
<b>WEEK 6:</b> 2/27	Paragraph and Character Styles P1: Due
<b>WEEK 7:</b> 3/6	InDesign Review and Q&A
<b>WEEK 8:</b> 3/13	No Class: Spring Break
<b>WEEK 9:</b> 3/20	Crits and Work Day
<b>WEEK 10:</b> 3/27	Individual Meetings on Zoom
<b>WEEK 11:</b> 4/3	P2: Final Critiques P3: Start
<b>WEEK 12:</b> 4/10	P2: Due
<b>WEEK 13:</b> 4/17	Crits and Work Day
<b>WEEK 14:</b> 4/24	Crits and Work Day
<b>WEEK 15:</b> 5/1	Fill Out Course Evaluations P3: Final Critiques
<b>WEEK 16:</b> 5/8	Final Evaluations

## **rubrics**

Rubrics are used to grade exercises, projects, and checkpoints. The rubrics are at the end of this syllabus and tied to each submission on Canvas. The rubrics are here to allow you to understand how work is graded and to reference while working to self-evaluate.

## **mason exhibitions & visual voices lecture series**

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on four Thursday evenings from 4:45–6:30 pm, more details at [masonexhibitions.org](http://masonexhibitions.org).

Visit [masonexhibitions.org](http://masonexhibitions.org) for the full schedule of exhibitions.

## **school of art social media accounts**

IG: @gmusoa / FB: gmu.soa

## **writing center and library resources**

Students who need intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center. For Spring 2025, the Writing Center is holding sessions online and in-person. For online sessions, writers can choose between meeting their tutor in real time on Zoom or uploading a draft for their tutor's written feedback. Please send your questions to [wcenter@gmu.edu](mailto:wcenter@gmu.edu)

Provisions Research Center for Art & Social Change is in Room LOO1 of the Art & Design Building. This student resource assists students in exploring and engaging new models for artmaking that lead to a more inclusive, equitable, and connected society. Provisions is also a hub for developing art projects through Mason Exhibitions, the Mural Brigade, and art partners throughout the metropolitan area, and beyond. Contact Don Russell for more information: [drusse10@gmu.edu](mailto:drusse10@gmu.edu)

Art and Art History Librarian, Stephanie Grimm, will offer appointments and virtual office hours for the Spring 2025 semester: Schedule [https://infoguides.gmu.edu/prf.php?account\\_id=123393](https://infoguides.gmu.edu/prf.php?account_id=123393)

## **official communications via mason e-mail**

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University e-mail account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason e-mail account.

## **attendance policies**

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class (including sections that meet online) participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the entire class. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

## **honor code**

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. Office of Academic Integrity

## **responsible employee disclosure**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu)

## **diversity, equity, and inclusion**

Inspired by mass actions and worldwide protests demanding racial justice, CVPA’s Arts in Context continues the Kritikos Anti-Racist Reading Group this semester, moderated by Mason faculty members Jessica Kallista and Kristin Johnsen-Neshati, with help from co-organizers, Cynthia Fuchs, Jordan McRae, and Sang Nam.

Members of the community are called to meet in Spring 2025 for a 90-minute session once a week with a goal of long-term commitment to relationship building, awareness, reimagining, transformation, and action, around anti-racist practices, racial justice, and the creation of conversations as well as systems of compassion and healing. We continue to focus on anti-Black racism and its effects on society.

Grounded in the knowledge that it is not a question of whether we are racist, but rather, how racism is expressed and experienced in ourselves, our lives, our behaviors, and our institutions, we explore books, music, art, essays, podcasts, and documentaries that allow us to critically question and consider our roles as artists, thinkers, citizens, and creatives in a society founded on racist values and practices.

A schedule of sessions will be available in the link below.

<https://cvpa.gmu.edu/events/arts-context/kritikos-anti-racist-reading-group>

## **commitment to diversity**

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.

## **student support and advocacy center**

The Student Support and Advocacy Center assists students who are encountering a life crisis or significant barriers that impact their academic and personal success and/or overall functioning. Our goal through individual consultations is to best understand the student's situation, answer questions, provide guidance, and make connections to appropriate on and off-campus resources.

For more information, please visit this website: <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>

## **caps at mason**

CAPS provides a wide range of free services to students. CAPS offers crisis, counseling, and psychiatric services virtually, and limited services in person. Services are provided by a staff of licensed clinical psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed social workers, doctoral-level trainees, and a board-certified psychiatrist. Our individual and group counseling, workshops, and community education programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. For distance learners, please see our Resources for Distance Learning page. We also provide consultation to faculty and staff who have concerns about a student.

CAPS provides short-term mental health services for enrolled students. When a student's needs require a different level of care, CAPS works with students to transition care to community providers. If a student is currently seeing a professional in the community for therapy and can continue to work with them, we encourage the student to continue care with their current provider.

To begin services with CAPS, please call us at 703-993-2380 during our business hours. Due to the rise in COVID cases, we are only offering services via telehealth during this time.

If you are experiencing a crisis after our business hours or on weekends or holidays, please call us at 703-993-2380. Please select option 1 in our phone system to be connected to an after-hours crisis counselor.

If you are interested in connecting with a provider in the community for long term counseling, please visit our Find a Community Provider page for our database of community provider options and other options for connecting with a therapist. If you have student health insurance through Aetna, you may also choose to access services through TelaDoc.

## **students with disabilities and learning differences**

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester.

## **anti-racism statement**

The School of Art plays an integral role in building an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist

approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities. It strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background. An anti-racism approach is an active and ongoing, long-term process. In all our efforts, we uphold a commitment to creating honest, respectful, supportive, and healing spaces where members of our community can meaningfully dialogue and learn from each other's lived experiences for the betterment of our entire community.

## **land acknowledgment**

Land acknowledgment engages all present in an ongoing indigenous protocol to enact meaningful, reciprocal relationships with ancestors and contemporary tribal nations. As a state university, we have a responsibility to include and support indigenous communities and sovereign tribes in our work.

At the place George Mason University occupies, we give greetings and thanksgivings to these Potomac River life sources, to the Doeg ancestors, who Virginia annihilated in violent campaigns while ripping their lands apart with the brutal system of African American enslavement, to the recognized Virginia tribes who have lovingly stewarded these lands for millennia including the Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Upper Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Nansemond, Monacan, Mattaponi, Patowomeck, and Nottaway, past, present, and future, and to the Piscataway tribes, who have lived on both sides of the river from time immemorial.

## **technology requirements**

We do not have any Enterprise Adobe Creative Cloud licenses available for students. However, Adobe Creative Cloud can be found in many computer labs available for student use. Adobe Software is available in our labs and can be used for free by students. Please create an Adobe account using your personal email address. Please do not use your Mason email to create your Adobe account unless you are purchasing a student subscription.

Students may also purchase Adobe Creative Cloud subscriptions for personal use with student discounts directly from Adobe. Details for student pricing can be found on Adobe's Creative Cloud for Students page. Eligibility for student pricing requires proof. If a student provides a school-issued email address during the purchase, they are instantly verified.

The School of Art, Digital Design Studio (Room 1023) has open studio hours each semester. Our lab offers computers (with Adobe Creative Suite), scanners, photo printers, and 2 risograph machines with 14 colors. Our open studio is available to all active AVT students. We also have large surfaces to assemble work. Please check our website for open hours each semester.

The Collaborative Learning Hub (CLUB) supports effective teaching and learning with technology to enhance learning experiences and the quality of work-life at



the university for current students, teaching faculty, instructional support staff, and academic units seeking to improve instruction. The CLUB provides training and support for instructional improvement and technology to enhance student learning, to support the use of technology-based courseware in classrooms, and to support instructional initiatives university-wide. Reservations are strongly encouraged, but walk-ins will still be accepted. To reserve collaborative space or the sound space online, select the Reserve Resources button or visit the web checkout portal and log in with your NetID and Patriot Pass Password. Alternatively, you may call the CLUB during open hours to make a reservation. At this time, email reservation requests will not be accepted. Upon entering the lab, guests are required to sign in. The information you supply helps provide the best service possible.

## important dates

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 School of Art 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 being processed), LATE ADD fee will apply. Requests for non-selective 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 in College Hall.

**JAN 21** First Day of Spring Classes  
**JAN 21** Last Day to Submit Domicile  
Reclassification Application  
**JAN 28** Last Day to Add: All Individual Sections  
Forms Due  
**FEB 4** Last Day to Drop: With 100% Tuition  
Refund  
**FEB 11** Last Day to Drop: With 50% Tuition  
Refund  
**FEB 12–25** Unrestricted Withdrawal Period:  
100% Tuition Liability  
**FEB 17–MAR 21** Mid-Term Evaluation Period:  
100-200 Level Classes Grades Available via  
patriotweb  
**FEB 26–MAR 31** Selective Withdrawal Period  
Undergraduate Students Only (100% Tuition  
Liability)  
**MAR 10–16** Spring Break (Classes Do Not Meet)  
**MAR 28** Incomplete Work from Fall 2024 Due to  
Instructor  
**MAY 2** Dissertation/Thesis Deadline  
**MAY 5** Last Day of Class  
**MAY 6** Reading Day  
**MAY 7–14** Examination Period  
**MAY 15** Spring Commencement  
**MAY 16** Degree Conferral

## project rubric (100 points total)

	UNSATISFACTORY (0)	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (4–6)	SATISFACTORY (7–9)	EXEMPLARY (10)
<b>COMPLETION</b>	None of the requirements of the project are met.	Few of the requirements of the project are met.	Most of the requirements of the project are met.	All requirements of the project are met.
<b>CONTENT</b>	Images are pixelated, text is not real, and glaring typos.	Some images are pixelated, some duplicate or dummy text exists and typos present.	Images are large enough, text is all real but certain parts feel out of place. Text has a few obvious typos.	All images are high enough resolution, text is real and considered, no typos present.
<b>CRAFT</b>	Hastily put together with no care for craft.	Several major craft issues present that show a general lack of care for details.	A few minor craft issues present that could have been addressed.	No craft issues present. Work is put together and finished well.
<b>EXPLORATION</b>	There is no evidence of exploration. Concept doesn't offer anything new.	Very little exploration is evident. The project doesn't exhibit any exploration in concept, layout, or typographic choices.	Some exploration present. The design exhibits explorations in concept, layout, or typographic choices that could be pushed further.	Exploration of concept, layout, and typography are clear, innovative, and effective.
<b>FORM</b>	The design is inconsistent, unorganized and incoherent. The design interferes with meaning.	The design is standard, default, unsurprising. The content and the design are at odds with one another.	The design is clear and organized. The design fits the content and does not distract from it.	The design is compelling and inventive. The design responds to the content, enhances meaning, and takes advantage of its media/format.
<b>GRID &amp; SPACE</b>	No apparent grid is used. Inconsistent spacing between elements, no use of white space.	A grid is present but not used. Elements are spaced but inconsistently, use of white space is minimal.	A grid is used with occasional elements not aligned. Spacing between elements is generally consistent. Use of white space is apparent.	The design uses a grid and all elements are aligned to it. Elements spaced consistently and appropriately. White space well integrated into the design.
<b>OVERALL</b>	Project is incomplete, hastily done, and missing requirements.	All requirements are present but the form and execution of the project are basic.	Project fulfills requirements but there is still room for improvement.	Project exceeds requirements and the design is well executed showing care for details and concept.
<b>PROCESS</b>	The project was completed without any real process from beginning to end. The project was submitted with little feedback given along the way.	Little process evident through the project. The initial ideas and designs were not pushed very far for the final submission.	Process is evident and minor improvements happened week to week.	Strong process with a commitment to improving and pushing the project throughout the duration.
<b>SUBMISSION</b>	Over a week late.	Up to a week late.	Up to two days late.	Early or on time.
<b>TYPOGRAPHY</b>	No hierarchy to the typography. Typeface choices conflict with the content and are illegible and/or unreadable. Principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) do not exist.	Basic hierarchy to the typography with minimal differences between elements. Typefaces choices are default and uninspired. Some principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) are apparent.	Clear hierarchy to the typography on the page with some overlap between elements. Typefaces choices are safe and do not take away from the overall design. Most elements follow principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) with a few exceptions.	Clear hierarchy to the typography with identifiable differences between elements. Typeface choices are smart and add to the overall design. Principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) are followed.

project checkpoint rubric (general idea, varies project to project)

	UNSATISFACTORY (0%)	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (25%)	SATISFACTORY (50%)	EXEMPLARY (100%)
EXPLORATION (25%)	Submission not relevant to checkpoint or repeat submission.	No noticeable exploration.	Some exploration.	Noticeable exploration.
IMPROVEMENT (25%)	Submission not relevant to checkpoint or repeat submission.	No noticeable improvement from previous week.	Some improvement from previous week.	Noticeable improvement from previous week.
REQUIREMENTS (25%)	None met, submission not relevant to checkpoint, or repeat submission.	Few met.	Some met.	All met.
SUBMISSION (25%)	Over a week late.	Up to a week late.	Up to two days late.	On time.