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COMD1112
02/03/20

What I Learned In Our First Class

As a transfer student who is new to the City Tech Communication Design curriculum, I was pleasantly surprised to have learned quite a bit on my first day in the Digital Media Foundations course! We explored a bit of graphic design history, semiotics, and even the power of doodling!

Initially, we started off with basic graphic design history by looking at the graphic symbolism in 200,000 year old human-made markings found in Africa, which seemed to convey messages of spirituality and power. We also briefly explored the later 15th Century Gutenberg Bible, created in 1454 - of which 49 copies are known to have survived. This book was created as a product of another very important invention - The Gutenberg Press, which was created by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440.

We then went on to learn about semiotics. I didn't know that the images we take for granted as part of our everyday landscape were classified into 3 distinct types - icons, symbols, and indexes. We learned that icons are realistic representations of physical resemblance. Examples would include handicap parking signs and bathroom signs.

We then learned that symbols are Arbitrary signs with no apparent resemblance to the objects, events, or relationships they represent. Symbols like the Nike "swoosh" as well as the jockey and horse on Polo shirts are great examples of this.

Finally, we learned about indexes, which are much like symbols, except instead of representing people, places, or things, indexes actually reference them. An example would be a red circle with a diagonal line going through which implies "this is not allowed" ("this" being the object representing the forbidden action or thing placed inside the circle.)

Finally, we were pleased to learn that something that many of us were chastened for was actually very beneficial to our career: doodling! We watched as author Sunni Brown gave an interesting TedTalk on the power of doodling. Known for her crusade to get the power and value of doodling taken more seriously, Brown has re-branded doodling from a seemingly frivolous practice to a powerful tool, cleverly re-defining doodling as using spontaneous marks to help yourself think. Brown went on to reference studies showing that those who doodled while receiving information were 29% more likely to retain that information than those who did not!

In summary, our first session was packed with valuable information that we will be able to use throughout our careers, even if those careers don't end up being in graphic design.