

Graphic Design Principles I

When I started this course, I expected to study design, color, and content through the use of digital technology. I soon learned that in fact the course is about helping designers develop great visual perception *without* the aid of technology. Projects were done with only simple materials such as pencils, markers, and rulers. We had to draw squares, rectangles and circles. We had to measure and position them perfectly on a white sheet in order to create perfect tension—the space around them had to feel perfect. The course also taught us draftsmanship. Great draftsmanship helped the detail of designs look better. Our drawings had to have perfectly straight lines and no bleeding edges when coloring and painting. At first my draftsmanship was decent but it became better after I learned from even the slightest mistakes and a lot of practice. The course also helped us with critiques. We learned to tell which designs work and which do not. Our visual perception was trained. We could find the smallest mistakes in each other’s designs, such as slanted lines, transitional mistakes or slight measurement errors. The critiques helped us evaluate magazine ads. I thought technology was going to be the primary means for making art, but in this course we really gained hands-on experience. We developed good visual perception.

—Taquan Tatum

Before it started, I suspected this course would include assignments like doing a color wheel. I had little clue as to what it would teach me and how it would help me develop sensitivity for the different aspects of design. On the first day I saw some squares and colored squares in a pile. I realized this class was nothing like what I had expected. The first assignments dealt with tensions and proportions—tensions were a challenge since I had never thought of them. I had no sense of the tensions created by a square on page. I had trouble creating them because at first I could not sense them. However, the critiques permitted me to see clearly what the tensions were and how to make them work perfectly. The assignments dealing with perspective, pattern, rhythm, and color were taught following the Bauhaus method of “less is more” and with the concept that “form follows function.” These design principles were applied to the final project. I understand now when a design works or does not work and why. I also learned how to be professional when presenting my work.

—Nathalia Tello

During our first week, I thought our class would talk about a certain image or technique, but I was wrong. We started out with “pictorial balance with a focal point,” and I had no idea what that meant. We simply drew a black square on an 11 x 14” paper. Correction, we struggled and anticipated to draw a well-drafted

proportional square on an 11 x14” 2-ply Bristol pad. I began to understand what Professor Nicolaou wanted: time consumption. We would need time to do things right. Continuously re-doing every assignment, I noticed that my draftsmanship, and my patience, were improving. I was actually impressed; without my thinking about it, my professor was having a positive impact on me. In the beginning, the work of re-doing every non-A project was pure annoyance and frustration. All I thought about was receiving a grade, rather than the actual work and lesson that came with it. As classes went on and my grades were still not what I expected, the more determined I was to get an A. Everyone knows “time is everything” but will you use it wisely? My draftsmanship was horrible, and my measurements were not proportional. Fortunately, the more I re-did my B- and C+ projects, the more my draftsmanship was starting to get sharper and I saw how to manage my time wisely. As we approach the final section of the course, I’ve learned that a thirty-second of an inch can make all the difference in a rewarding piece; I also learned the wrongs of being uncouth in the classroom and the real world. Professor Nicolaou always says, “I want to teach you everything all my professors taught me.” We’ve learned plenty but we still have a long way to go.

—Michelle My

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