Visual communication guides the essential understanding of a person and the experience they are interacting with. A holistic problem-solving process, visual communication aims on the one hand to adapt consumer goods to the users’ needs, and on the other to meet the demands of market and corporate identity for the business. In this course, students will learn what techniques are used to emphasize and develop a visual and verbal vocabulary. The teachings will present the fundamentals of line, shape, color, composition, visual hierarchy, word/image relationships and typography as building blocks for communicating with clarity, emotion, and meaning to their clients, colleagues, and partners. Students will develop their ability to analyze, discuss and critique their work and the work of the designed world to bring value to human experiences.

Expectations: With this in mind, students will be treated as industrial design professionals. developing their competence and gaining the tools necessary to communicate design thinking verbally and visually.

Class Structure: Class lectures will be structured as participatory conversations and workshops to understand the context of visual communication. Students are encouraged to ask questions. Lectures will be followed by project assignments that bring to life the lecture topic. Project assignments will be given as if from a client and should be treated not just as an exercise but as a deliverable that you would feel proud of sharing with a professional community.

Adobe Photoshop & Illustrator: All students will need to use Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator at a basic level to complete some assignments.

Class Absence: If absent for any reason, each student is responsible for connecting with Jen or Shaoying about the previous class’s materials and making up an assigned project.

COURSE SKETCHBOOK

Your sketchbook should be a faithful companion through the entire semester. You should use it to sketch out ideas and work through solutions. Keep your sketches quick to explore more variety and detailed to explore nuance. Test different techniques using a range of tools from pencil to marker. Cut sketches pasted into your sketchbook are not allowed.

Your sketchbook will be graded at random moments throughout the course.

CONTACTS

If you have questions, please reach out:

Jen Ashman: Jen_Ashman@epam-continuum.com
Shaoying Tan: tansyl@mit.edu
METRICS FOR EVALUATION

Readings: The readings are highly recommended, but not required. Each student is expected to attend all lectures and spend at least 10 hours per week on assignments and projects outside of class.

Attendance, Participation, and Engagement: You attend every class and actively engage in class discussions, group and individual activities. You share your work and provide inspiration or feedback to other students in the class. You complete classroom activities and homework on time.

Project Assignments: Most of the assignments in this course will be iterative in nature. Students will be expected to take risks, attempt new things, work in new ways, and play out a number of scenarios before arriving at the optimal solution. The design process takes work.

• You are expected to present substantial new work at each class. Make progress every week.
• The design process is progressive in nature. Late work is not acceptable and will affect grading.
• Students will be graded on originality of concept, quality of design work, clarity of communication, participation in class activities and lecture discussions, improvement during the course, ability to work as a team, and helpfulness to other students in class.

Self-Direction and Management: Your project is organized—you keep your work together in one place, so that it is easy to share. You are able to manage yourself effectively, in some cases creating your own timeline and protocol for completing your project work within the due dates. Your work is up-to-date with the course calendar; every week there is visible progress in your exploration. You incorporate student and instructor feedback as you evolve your work.

Trust in the Learning Process: Though ‘not knowing the answer’ is scary, you are able to suspend judgment and let your research insights evolve your topic and ideas. You are able to shed your biases and re-frame your thinking as you learn more about the topic and the chosen demographics. You are able to identify themes or patterns in your research, that help you focus and know where to take your project next.

Effort: You are excited about your project (since you are directing it, you are in control!). You try your hardest to master tools and methodologies covered in the class. Strategy and Industrial Design is hard, and there will be frustrating times but you push through it, and ask for help or additional one-on-one time when needed.

For students, the final grade is based on:

30% Class Attendance and Participation (Showing up and contributing to the course’s positive chemistry.)
30% Communication of Concepts and Ideas (Clarity of thought and communication.)
20% Conceptualization and Execution of Design on Project work (Great ideas rendered beautifully.)
10% Teamwork and Collaboration (Working well with others.)
10% Process and Idea documentation in a Sketchbook to be turned in at the end of the class.

Note: For assignments or projects requiring teamwork, each student will be graded individually based on their performance.
WEEK 1  
02.06.19

DEFINING VISUAL COMMUNICATION

LECTURE 1
In our first lecture, we will discuss and define what visual communication is today and envision where it is going in the future through a group interactive workshop from design thinking, empathy, and visual design tools to the implications on the industry and the interplay of physical and digital design.

PROJECT 1 | IDENTIFYING GOOD VISUAL COMMUNICATION
Bring in 3 images to next class for discussion:

• Find and print out three examples of visual communication. The examples must be of an experience you love and represent “good visual design”. Determine when the experience was launched and the intent of its communication.

• Be ready to pin up these 8” x 10” prints and share with the class during discussion.

PROJECT 1 DUE | 02.11.19

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

• IDEO.org. The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design http://www.designkit.org/resources/1

• Inge Druckery. Teaching the Eye To See http://teachingtosee.org/film/TeachingToSee.html

• Objectified. 2009 Trailer (rent the film for $3.99) https://vimeo.com/ondemand/objectified

WEEK 2  
02.11.19

DESIGN THEORY BY DECADE

LECTURE 2
We will understand gestalt and visual perception principles of visual communication by focusing on its history through the decades. Each decade will uncover how visual communication has evolved as well as the disciplines that emerged within the field from graphic design in the 1950’s to packaging in the 1980’s. After a class analysis of Project 1 through lecture, we will kick off Project 2 with an in-class brainstorm.

PROJECT 2 | MAKE IT BETTER
Transform the Aquarium’s membership card design using your knowledge of design gestalt and visual perception. Utilize tools like Exacto knives, printouts, and Bristol board, to craft the designed solution.

• Craft an inspirational mood board to direct your designs. Tailor it to leverage one of the 3 personas and their user experience needs.

• 10 ideation sketches of process and development towards 3 unique concepts

• 3 paper mockup membership card iterations derived from user's unmet needs in black and white at scale

• 1 final paper mockup membership card in branded color palette at scale

• Print out of color palette guide

PROJECT 2 DUE | 02.20.19 (mood board & sketches reviewed during lab 02.13.19)

RECOMMENDED READINGS:


• Dieter Rams 10 Commandments of Good Design https://www.vitsoe.com/us/about/good-design
LAB: DESIGN THEORY

LAB | PROJECT 2 | MAKE IT BETTER CRITIQUE

After group critique of in-progress Project 2 mood boards and sketches, students will hone in on 3 concepts for refinement within Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, bringing to life the key elements of their designs in black and white. Students will pick one concept to also craft in a branded color palette.

THE INFLUENCE OF COLOR

LECTURE 3

Changing the color of a concept can completely reverse the consumer reaction to it (think Macbook in gold vs black). We will discuss color, the emotional response it conveys, and its symbolism and meaning for people, clients and their product portfolio. After lecture, students will continue development of the branded color palette for their Aquarium membership card concept.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:


LAB: PROJECT 2 FINAL CRITIQUE

Print and pin each element of your aquarium experience design for group critique.

THE PERSONALITY OF TYPE

LECTURE 4

Typography has evolved historically first guided by technique and tool, then by persona leveraging elements from hierarchy to legibility to communicate design intent. After lecture, we will go on a walking tour to experientially audit type in context in a living case study that kicks off Project 3.

PROJECT 3 | TASTE THROUGH TYPE - THE MENU

Envision and design a café menu concept that synthesizes the café brand, space, and food through typography and other visual communication devices:

• Craft an inspirational mood board to direct your designs. Tailor it to leverage one of the 3 café brands
• 15 ideation sketches of process and development towards 2 unique concepts
• 2 paper mockup menus in black and white
• 1 final paper mockup menu in branded color palette and with real materials at scale

PROJECT 3 DUE | 03.06.19
LAB | PROJECT 3 | TASTE THROUGH TYPE – THE MENU CRITIQUE

After group critique of in-progress Project 3 mood boards and sketches, students will hone in on 2 concepts for refinement within Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, bringing to life the key elements of their designs in black and white. Students will pick one concept to also craft in a branded color palette.

LAB: THE PERSONALITY OF TYPE

THE POWER OF COMPOSITION

LECTURE 5

Composition has the power to make or break the way an audience visually digests, focuses, understands, or relates to a work. We will discuss scale, contrast, repetition, white space, and the designer’s favorite, the rule of thirds. After lecture, students will continue development of the branded color palette for their café menu concept.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

• Milton Glaser, To Inform And To Delight https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZtYHggZxGQ

LAB: PROJECT 3 FINAL CRITIQUE

THE PERCEPTION OF BRAND

LECTURE 6

Visual identity and branding are designed with intent, but their understanding by an audience is subject to nuances of metaphor, symbolism, and the recognition of what a logo means. After lecture, we will go on a walking tour to experientially audit type in context in a living case study that kicks off Project 4.

PROJECT 4 | PHYSICALLY BRANDING THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Envision an ideal experience and interaction with Cambridge across physical branded touchpoints:

• Identify a visual metaphor and 3 brand attributes for the city of Cambridge that will inform your logo design
• 10 ideation sketches of process and development towards 1 unique logo concept
• 3 paper mockup posters in black and white at scale
• 1 final paper mockup poster in branded color palette at scale
• 1 pithy brand mission statement for the city of Cambridge

PROJECT 4 DUE | 03.20.19

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

LAB | PROJECT 4 | PHYSICALLY BRANDING THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

After group critique of in-progress Project 4 metaphors, brand attributes, and sketches, students will hone in on 3 poster concepts for refinement within Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, bringing to life the key elements of their designs in black and white. Students will pick one poster concept to also craft in a branded color palette.

WEEK 7 | 03.13.19

LAB: THE PERCEPTION OF BRAND

LAB | PROJECT 4 | PHYSICALLY BRANDING THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

After group critique of in-progress Project 4 metaphors, brand attributes, and sketches, students will hone in on 3 poster concepts for refinement within Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, bringing to life the key elements of their designs in black and white. Students will pick one poster concept to also craft in a branded color palette.

WEEK 7 | 03.18.19

LAB: THE PERCEPTION OF BRAND

LAB | PROJECT 4 | PHYSICALLY BRANDING THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

After group critique of in-progress Project 4 metaphors, brand attributes, and sketches, students will hone in on 3 poster concepts for refinement within Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, bringing to life the key elements of their designs in black and white. Students will pick one poster concept to also craft in a branded color palette.

WEEK 7 | 03.20.19

LAB: PROJECT 4 FINAL CRITIQUE

Print and pin each element of your city of Cambridge physical identity design for group critique.

WEEK 8 | 03.25.19

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9 | 04.01.19

UI, UX, & DESIGN FOR WEB

LECTURE 8

Experiences rarely live in isolation today. Often the trigger to a larger digital experience, it is essential that digital design speaks immersively to people. Students will dive into understanding the tools for digital translation from wireframing to information architecture. We will then break into small groups to brainstorm digital concepts for each student’s city of Cambridge design kicking off Project 5.

PROJECT 5 | DIGITALLY BRANDING THE CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Envision an ideal experience and interaction with Cambridge across digital branded touchpoints:

• Leverage and translate your visual metaphor, 3 brand attributes, and logo for the city of Cambridge into a single sketch wireframe flow that addresses a citizen’s need and a home page design.

• Wireframe sketches of process and development towards 1 unique interaction concept in black and white

• Translate your wireframes into an interactive prototype in color. Be ready to demo it for in class critique

• Design a persona mood board that would use your experience to build concept narrative

• Create a sonic brand, or audio signature, that represents your experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 9</th>
<th>LAB: UI, UX, &amp; DESIGN FOR WEB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04.03.19</td>
<td>LAB</td>
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<tr>
<td>After group critique of in-progress Project 5 wireframe sketches, students will focus on one element of the digital experience to prototype sequence, flow, and interaction.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK 10</th>
<th>INFORMATION VISUALIZATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>04.08.19</td>
<td>LECTURE 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conveying complex, deep data and knowledge in a single glimpse to keep up with the pace of today’s world can be a challenge. Cue the principles of visual communication. After lecture, students will continue development of their digital experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK 10</th>
<th>LAB: UI, UX, &amp; DESIGN FOR WEB</th>
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<tr>
<td>04.10.19</td>
<td>LAB</td>
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<tr>
<td>After group critique of in-progress Project 5 demo flows, students will continue to refine their concept and persona mood board designs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK 11</th>
<th>MULTI SENSORY DESIGN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04.15.19</td>
<td>LECTURE 10</td>
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<th>WEEK 11</th>
<th>LAB: PROJECT 5 FINAL CRITIQUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>04.17.19</td>
<td>Print and pin each element of your city of Cambridge digital and physical identity design for group critique. Be ready to demo the final digital UX/UI flow and audio signature for your experience.</td>
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LECTURE 11

Channeling all the principles and skills students have gained from the course, one last challenge remains, the final project. We will begin class as a walking tour at a to be determined public community space to assign the final project to be completed in groups of 3.

PROJECT 6 | CREATING COMMUNITY

Working in groups of 3, envision and design a community space concept that synthesizes Cambridge’s brand as a city, people, and culture through visual communication devices:

• Experientially audit Cambridge, siting where your community space would be located
• Interview one Cambridge native on community space needs
• Craft an inspirational mood board to direct your design
• 15 ideation sketches of process and development towards 1 unique final concept
• Share your story, design, and thought process from audit to final concept in a live class demonstration

LAB: CIVIC MINDFULNESS

LAB | PROJECT 6 | CREATING COMMUNITY

After group critique of in-progress Project 6 experiential audit and interview findings, students will continue to hone their mood board and explore sketches.

LAB | PROJECT 6 | CREATING COMMUNITY

After group critique of in-progress Project 6 mood board and explorative sketches, students will continue to explore sketches and refine into a final concept to demonstrate for the class.

LAB | PROJECT 6 | CREATING COMMUNITY

After one on one critique of in-progress Project 6 final concept and demonstrations, students will continue to work together to refine their narrative.
LAB: CIVIC MINDFULNESS

LAB | PROJECT 6 | CREATING COMMUNITY
Students will critique individual progress as a group and continue to work on Project 6

WEEK 14
05.08.19

FINAL PRESENTATION ROUND 1

WEEK 15
05.13.19

No Lecture
Students to present Project 6, Creating Community.
Last class day.

FINAL PRESENTATION ROUND 2

WEEK 16
05.15.19

No Lecture
Students to present Project 6, Creating Community.
Last class day.