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INFO

Guerrilla Graphic Design (DSC-3219-A)  
School of Visual Art  
Summer 2017  
6/7–8/2/17, Wed 6:30–9:30pm  
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DESCRIPTION

This course provides an opportunity for students to learn, develop, and apply visual communication skills in various areas — from research to critical and conceptual thinking to typography — through the design, production, and execution of public-facing, intervention-based graphic works.

Over nine classes that meet once per week, students will make three projects:

- 1 *Manifesto*: a visual and/or verbal message that clearly articulates a mission for positive change.  
(2 weeks)
- 2 *Détournement*: an appropriation and reconfiguration of an existing form of communication, in which the new form takes on new meaning and/or scope.  
(2 weeks)
- 3 *Site-specific intervention*: a space or context in which a graphic intervention is created in order to change the perception of that space or context.  
(4 weeks)

Projects should be realized as the forms that best communicate and circulate their ideas within the given constraints, including posters, flyers, pamphlets, booklets, signage, projections, websites, GIFs and other digital meme formats, videos, social media handles, etc.

Each project must live in the real world, in the public domain — either physical or digital, or both — for all to view and/or experience. The presentation of final projects for in-class critiques must be accompanied by the documentation of the projects living in the real world.

All work must have a positive and helpful intention, yet also be ephemeral and non-destructive: no graffiti or other vandalistic work will be permitted.

Students will be responsible for the production and documentation of their projects. Production and documentation methods and resources will not be part of the instruction.

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PARTICIPATION

This class will demand active participation and engagement. You must prepare for every class: please bring the necessary tools and materials that will allow you to fully participate; and the proper attitude and professionalism that will enable you and your fellow students to fully engage. Please refrain from using your phones or devices for any extra-curricular purposes during class time.

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SCHEDULE

This is a tentative schedule and is subject to change. More granular scheduling will be included with project descriptions and class emails.

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| Week 1, June 7   | Week 6, July 12  |
| — Introduce class  | — DUE: presentation of initial research and ideas for site-specific installation |
| — Review syllabus  | — Full-class critique  |
| — Introduce projects 1–3 and present precedents and references |  |
| Week 2, June 14  | Week 7, July 19  |
| — DUE: 3 ideas for manifesto and sketches for how it will live | — DUE: rough sketches of installation ideas and designed materials               |
| — Full-class critique  | — Individual crits   |
| Week 3, June 21  | — In-class work session for rest of class  |
| — DUE: presentation of final manifesto project                 | Week 8, July 26  |
| — Full-class critique  | — DUE: presentation of final draft of materials and walk-through of installation |
| — Introduce and discuss project 2                              | — Full-class critique  |
| Week 4, June 28  | Week 9, August 2   |
| — DUE: presentation of in-progress work for détournement       | — DUE: presentation of final site-specific installation                          |
| — Full-class critique  | — Full-class critique  |
| Week 5, July 5   |  |
| — DUE: presentation of final détournement project              |  |
| — Full-class critique  |  |
| — Introduce and discuss project 3                              |  |

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PROJECT 2  
DÉTOURNEMENT

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DESCRIPTION

The Canadian experimental poet, non-fiction writer and cultural critic Darren Wershler has coined the term “conceptualism in the wild” to denote the widespread practices of people employing creative techniques that are normally deployed by the avante-garde of conceptual art and literature — appropriation and reframing, for instance — without having the slightest knowledge of them or awareness of what they’re doing. Wershler here is basically talking about memes.

For your second project, you will make a meme. But unlike these naive contributors to conceptualism in the wild, you’ll follow in the footsteps of the predecessors and the origins of the form: the Situationaists and their *détournements*. According to the Situationaists, a *détournement* possessed two fundamental criteria:

“The two fundamental laws of *détournement* are the loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element — which may go so far as to completely lose its original sense — and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect.” \*

A couple things to keep in mind:

- 1 By detourning something, you are negating the value of that previous something, so choose what you want to detourn thoughtfully.
- 2 “*Détournement* is practical because it is so easy to use and because of its inexhaustible potential for reuse.” As graphic designers we are also experience designers, so be sure to keep the user in mind when designing your *détournement*.

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FURTHER READING

- *Détournement as Negation and Prelude* by SI (1959)  
<http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/315> (\*)
- “The Meme Museum” by Kenneth Goldsmith  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/the-meme-museum/>
- *A User’s Guide to Détournement* by Guy Debord and Gil Wolman (1956)  
<http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm>

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PROJECT 3  
SITE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTION

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DESCRIPTION

When one intervenes with something, they are interacting with that something — an existing space, context, condition, form of communication or expression, etc. — in order to change the perception of it, and ultimately to change the way the audience thinks (about it).

In a way, this project is conflating two forms: a site-specific installation and an intervention. While the latter is often the former, a site-specific installation isn't necessarily an intervention, as it can exist neutrally — without the intention to subvert, critique, or change the perception of something.

Your intervention is “by definition, a challenge, or at the very least a comment, related to the earlier work or the theme of that work, or to the expectations of a particular audience.”\* Pushed further, as mentioned above, it can be a subversion or critique — a disruption of an existing condition, a violation of an established convention, and so forth.

Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that while this class explicitly requires that all work be ephemeral and non-destructive, due to the inherent nature of this project, it will most likely be viewed by many as a violation, and almost certainly be viewed by authorities as unwelcome, if not vandalism.

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FURTHER READING

- *Institutional Critique* (Artsy)  
<https://www.artsy.net/gene/institutional-critique>
- *Art Intervention* (Wikipedia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art\\_intervention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_intervention)
- *Art Intervention* (Tate)  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/i/art-intervention>