Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Project Visual Communication 2.c
Course Code	97158
Course Title Additional	What's a Tool?
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	NN
Language	Italian; English; German
Degree Course	Bachelor in Design and Art - Major in Design
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	Sig. Thomas Kronbichler, Thomas.Kronbichler@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/49553 Dott. Giacomo Festi, Giacomo.Festi@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/40076
Teaching Assistant	Dott. Andreas Trenker
Semester	Second semester
Course Year/s	2nd - 3rd
CP	19
Teaching Hours	90+60+30
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	260
Planned Office Hours	93
Contents Summary	The course provides students with knowledge and skills on in the operational aspects approaches of designwork, methods and theories of visual communication for various functional and experimental fields of application with a focus on the role of the digital media.
Course Topics	"I hardly understand how people can think without a pencil,

	without their fingers." Wim Crouwel (Helvetica, 2007) This course centers around the investigation of Tools; what they are, what they do, and what they make possible. A tool is never neutral. It shapes the hand that holds it as much as the work it produces. From the pencil to Chat GPT, from brainstorming to meditation, from a single gesture to a piece of software with hundreds of commands and combinations so vast they defy counting, tools are the foundation of creative practice. This course asks: how is our creativity changed with our tools? What can we learn by using different tools, and can we teach these tools to others? Each student will choose 3 to 4 tools and work with them independently over two to three weeks each. The work unfolds in these phases: – research (understanding the tool's history, logic, and limitations) – mastery (learning to use the tool with intention and skill) – provocation (creating something with the tool that breaks an expectation, challenges a convention, or surprises – explanation (the creation of one explainer video for each tool) The final output of each investigation is a short explainer video that explores the tool while being entertaining, crazy, poetic, thought-provoking. Alongside the video, each student writes a text reflecting on their tool and their experience with it. Together, these videos form a collection: a portrait of tools as seen through the eyes of designers. Students can learn from these videos and teach each other new skills. Course Structure – Tool Investigations: Each student selects one tool and moves through research, mastery, provocation and explanation independently, with feedback given at various points. Tools may be analog or digital, practical or "philosophical" — a pencil, a constraint, a ritual, a piece of software. Tools should be precisely chosen and not be too complex for the time constraint. – Critique as a Tool: Feedback and discussion are themselves treated as tools in this course, something to be chosen, shaped, designed. Sessions may take the form of one-on-one

	conversations, peer critique, speed-dating formats, or open group reflection. Students are encouraged to notice the difference in how they receive and find out what works best for them. – Practical Input: Key topics will be introduced through workshops and lessons, covering areas such as specific tools in design, video production basics, and the basics of visual communication. – Publication: The course will produce a collection of videos, each an explanation and provocation centered on one tool. The videos and texts form the foundation of a Toolbox. Objectives – To develop deep knowledge of a self-chosen (design) tool – To encourage creative provocation and the willingness to test the limits of established methods – To treat critique and discussion as active design tools rather than evaluation – To contribute to a collective understanding of how tools shape creative practice.
Keywords	Module 1: tools, creative tools, visual investigation, visual research, explainer video, critique as a tool, graphic design, typography, grid systems, colour palettes, graphic composition, analogue media, digital media. Module 2: Digital Media, Typography, Techniques and Modes of Digital Publishing, Animation, Visual Storytelling Module 3: Cognitive semiotics, material turn, science and technology studies, software studies.
Recommended Prerequisites	To have passed the Project Visual Communication 1; to have certified the language level proficiency B1 in the course language in years following the first.
Propaedeutic Courses	
Teaching Format	Module 1: Lectures, workshops, guest talks, group discussions, in-class exercises, experiments, different review/feedback modalities, mutual learning/teaching. Module 2: Lectures, workshops, guest talks, group discussions, in-class exercises, experiments, micro-excursions, different review/feedback modalities, mutual learning/teaching. Module 3: Lectures, group discussions, in-class exercises, student presentations.
Mandatory Attendance	not compulsory, but recommended

Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	Knowledge and understanding have acquired their own project methodology in the field of visual communication, from the phase of planning to the phase of realisation of the project. have acquired the basic practical and theoretical knowledge necessary to realise a project in the field of visual communication. have acquired the basic knowledge to be able to turn a critical eye to their own work and to deal with contemporary complexity. have acquired the basic knowledge necessary for further Master's studies in all components of project culture as well as in theoretical subjects. Applying knowledge and understanding plan, develop and realise a project in the field of visual communication. be able to finalize the creation of an accomplished project in the field of visual communication, thanks to the basic knowledge acquired in the practical, scientific and theoretical fields. recognise the main phenomena of contemporary society, to observe them critically, also from an ethical and social point of view, and to elaborate appropriate solutions at the level of a design proposal/response. make use of the skills acquired during the course of study in the event of continuing studies in a Master's degree programme in the field of visual communication and to develop them further. Making judgements be able to make independent judgements for the purpose of developing their own design skills and in relation to all those decisions that are necessary to bring a project to completion. be able to make independent judgements, both in the critical evaluation of their own work and in their ability to use the right interpretative tools in those design contexts in which they will work and/or continue their studies, also considering ethical and social aspects. Communication skills present an independently realised project in the field of visual communication in the form of an installation, orally as well as in writing in a professional manner.

	to professionally communicate and substantiate one's own decisions and justify them from a formal and theoretical point of view. communicate and present your own project at a professional level in another language and correctly in a third language in addition to their own language. Learning skills have learned a work methodology at a professional level - in the sense of being able to identify, develop and realise solutions to complex problems by applying the knowledge acquired in the practical and theoretical fields - in order to start a professional activity and/or continue their studies with a master's degree program. have developed a creative attitude and learned how to enhance it and develop it according to their own inclinations. have acquired basic knowledge in theoretical and practical subjects as well as a study methodology suitable for continuing studies with a master's degree program.
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	
Assessment	Module 1: Students' work will be assessed based on – Active participation in assignments and discussions – Progress in creative skills – Contribution to group activities and the final publication – Ability to reflect on and articulate their design processes and outcomes Module 2: Throughout the module, students will participate in hands-on workshops to design and produce a range of visual works. Adherence to assignment deadlines, as outlined during the semester, is crucial to ensure consistent progress. Assessments will be conducted through presentations, where students will explain their conceptual, formal, and technical choices for their final projects. Additionally, students are required to submit one physical copy of each artifact created during the course. The submission of

	a well-executed documentation of the design work is a fundamental part of the assessment. Module 3: - quality of the participation to the didactic activity - in class presentation - mid-term test - final dossier N.B. ALL THE STUDENTS ATTENDING THE EXAM AS NON-ATTENDING STUDENTS MUST AGREE UPON THE CONTENTS WITH THE TEACHER.
Evaluation Criteria	Module 1: – Quality of design and presentations – Independence and critical ability of developing and arguing the design work in accordance with the given themes – Knowledge, understanding and ability of discussing the references proposed during the semester – Presence and engagement during the semester. Module 2: - conclusiveness of the design concept - conclusiveness of the formal aspects of the design work - quality of the technical execution - clarity of the presentation - quality and thoroughness of the project documentation. Module 3: - quality of the conceptual understanding, visible in the final dossier - commitment in following course journey and requests
Required Readings	**Module 1:** Readings related to the topic of the project will be communicated during the course. **Module 2:** Pater, Ruben. CAPS LOCK: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from It. Valiz, 2021. Pater, Ruben. The Politics of Design: A (Not So) Global Manual for Visual Communication. BIS Publishers, 2016.

	Goldstein, Mitch. How to Be a Design Student. Princeton Architectural Press, 2023. Lupton, Ellen. Extra Bold: A Feminist, Inclusive, Anti-racist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers. Princeton Architectural Press, 2021. Dunne, Anthony & Fiona Raby. Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming. MIT Press, 2013. **Module 3:** A precise reader of mandatory readings will be presented at the beginning of the course, including a semiotic vademecum and a reader of academic essays about the atelier topic.
Supplementary Readings	**Module 1:** Supplementary readings related to the topic of the project will be communicated during the course. **Module 2:** Further readings will be provided during the course. Students are expected to participate and debate about the topics presented during the lectures. Drucker, Johanna. Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production. Harvard University Press, 2014. Lorusso, Silvio. What Design Can't Do: Essays on Design and Disillusion. Set Margins Press, 2023. Chris Lee. Designing History: Documents and the Design Imperative to Immutability. Set Margins, 2025 Dirk Vis. Research For People Who Think They Would Rather Create. Onomatopee, 2025. **Module 3:** Akrich, M. (1992). The de-scription of technical objects. In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping technology/building society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 205–224). MIT Press. Berlage, T. (1994). A selective undo mechanism for graphical user

	interfaces based on command objects. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction, 1*(3), 269–294. https://doi.org/10.1145/196699.196721 Clark, A., & Chalmers, D. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis, 58*(1), 7–19. https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/58.1.7 Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton Mifflin. Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the wild*. MIT Press. Kittler, F. (1995). There is no software. *Stanford Literature Review, 9*(1), 81–90. Latour, B. (1992). Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts. In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping technology/building society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 225–258). MIT Press. Lesage, F. (2015). Keeping up through teaching and learning media software. *Canadian Journal of Communication, 40*(2), 259–277. Lesage, F. (2016). Reviewing Photoshop: Mediating cultural subjectivities for application software. *Convergence, 22*(2), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856514545711 Malafouris, L. (2013). *How things shape the mind: A theory of material engagement*. MIT Press. Mendoza-Collazos, J. (2024). Enhanced agency and the visual thinking of design. *Cognitive Semiotics, 17*(1), 1–22. Norman, D. A. (2013). *The design of everyday things* (Revised and expanded ed.). Basic Books. Pickering, A. (1995). *The mangle of practice: Time, agency, and science*. University of Chicago Press. Suchman, L. A. (1987). *Plans and situated actions: The problem of human–machine communication*. Cambridge University Press. Suchman, L. A. (2007). *Human–machine reconfigurations: Plans and situated actions* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. Zhang, X., et al. (2023). Understanding collaborative practices and tools of professional UX designers. In *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM.
Further Information	
Sustainable Development	Quality education

Goals (SDGs)	

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Visual Communication
Course Code	97158A
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	CEAR-08/D
Language	German
Lecturers	Sig. Thomas Kronbichler, Thomas.Kronbichler@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/49553
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	Second semester
CP	8
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	90
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	75
Planned Office Hours	60
Contents Summary	The course should provide fundamentals, skills, working methods, theories and practices of Visual communication in diverse functional and experimental scopes.
Course Topics	This course centers around the investigation of Tools; what they are, what they do, and what they make possible. A tool is never neutral. It shapes the hand that holds it as much as the work it produces. From the pencil to Chat GPT, from brainstorming to meditation, from a single gesture to a piece of software with hundreds of commands and combinations so vast they defy counting, tools are the foundation of creative practice. This course asks: how is our creativity changed with our tools? What can we learn by using different tools, and can we teach these tools to others? Each student will choose 3 to 4 tools and work with them independently over two to three weeks each. The work unfolds in these phases: – research (understanding the tool's history, logic, and limitations)

	– mastery (learning to use the tool with intention and skill) – provocation (creating something with the tool that breaks an expectation, challenges a convention, or surprises – explanation (the creation of one explainer video for each tool) The final output of each investigation is a short explainer video that explores the tool while being entertaining, crazy, poetic, thought-provoking. Alongside the video, each student writes a text reflecting on their tool and their experience with it. Together, these videos form a collection: a portrait of tools as seen through the eyes of designers. Students can learn from these videos and teach each other new skills. Course Structure – Tool Investigations: Each student selects one tool and moves through research, mastery, provocation and explanation independently, with feedback given at various points. Tools may be analog or digital, practical or "philosophical" — a pencil, a constraint, a ritual, a piece of software. Tools should be precisely chosen and not be too complex for the time constraint. – Critique as a Tool: Feedback and discussion are themselves treated as tools in this course, something to be chosen, shaped, designed. Sessions may take the form of one-on-one conversations, peer critique, speed-dating formats, or open group reflection. Students are encouraged to notice the difference in how they receive and find out what works best for them. – Practical Input: Key topics will be introduced through workshops and lessons, covering areas such as specific tools in design, video production basics, and the basics of visual communication. – Publication: The course will produce a collection of videos, each an explanation and provocation centered on one tool. The videos and texts form the foundation of a Toolbox. Objectives – To develop deep knowledge of a self-chosen (design) tool – To encourage creative provocation and the willingness to test the limits of established methods – To treat critique and discussion as active design tools rather than evaluation – To contribute to a collective understanding of how tools shape

	creative practice.
Teaching Format	Lectures, workshops, guest talks, group discussions, in-class exercises, experiments, different review/feedback modalities, mutual learning/teaching.
Required Readings	See main project description.
Supplementary Readings	See main project description.

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Digital media
Course Code	97158B
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	CEAR-08/D
Language	Italian
Lecturers	Dott. Andreas Trenker, Andreas.Trenker@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/31479
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	Second semester
CP	6
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	60
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	90
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	The lecturer should teach fundamentals, skills, working methods, theories and practices of diverse forms of digital publishing and social media marketing.
Course Topics	This course module provides students with a comprehensive understanding of Digital Media through a blend of practical and theoretical units that support the main project topic and individual students' work. The practical modules aim to expand students' visual skill sets by introducing unconventional and open-source design tools, exploring digital publishing, and encouraging

	experimental approaches. Students will learn to apply tools and technologies such as modular type design, animation, 3D scanning and photogrammetry through small exercises and personal projects. One workshop adopts a collaborative approach, culminating in a joint design proposal. The theoretical modules critically examine the power dynamics in the production and distribution of digital media. Lectures encourage reflection on the graphic designer's role in creating visual artifacts, with occasional guest talks by internationally recognized designers contributing to the discussions.
Teaching Format	Lectures, workshops, guest talks, group discussions, in-class exercises, experiments, micro-excursions, different review/feedback modalities, mutual learning/teaching
Required Readings	Pater, Ruben. CAPS LOCK: How Capitalism Took Hold of Graphic Design, and How to Escape from It. Valiz, 2021. Pater, Ruben. The Politics of Design: A (Not So) Global Manual for Visual Communication. BIS Publishers, 2016. Goldstein, Mitch. How to Be a Design Student. Princeton Architectural Press, 2023. Lupton, Ellen. Extra Bold: A Feminist, Inclusive, Anti-racist, Nonbinary Field Guide for Graphic Designers. Princeton Architectural Press, 2021. Dunne, Anthony & Fiona Raby. Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming. MIT Press, 2013.
Supplementary Readings	Further readings will be provided during the course. Students are expected to participate and debate about the topics presented during the lectures. Drucker, Johanna. Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production. Harvard University Press, 2014. Lorusso, Silvio. What Design Can't Do: Essays on Design and Disillusion. Set Margins Press, 2023. Chris Lee. Designing History: Documents and the Design Imperative to Immutability. Set Margins, 2025 Dirk Vis. Research For People Who Think They Would Rather Create. Onomatopee, 2025.

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Theories and languages of visual communication
Course Code	97158C
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	PHIL-04/B
Language	English
Lecturers	Dott. Giacomo Festi, Giacomo.Festi@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/40076
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	Second semester
CP	5
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	30
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	95
Planned Office Hours	15
Contents Summary	The integrated theoretical module provides fundamental overview about scientific methods of contemporary semiology and communication theory.
Course Topics	The conceptual definition of a tools, between agency and practices (Gibson, Suchman). The tool as a distributed agency, between delegation, prosthetics and interface (Latour). The tool as part of a cognitive system (Clark, Chalmers). The tool as a co-builder of thinking (Malafouris). Case studies about software and digital tools (Photoshop, Firma, undo, CAD). On the background: cognitive semiotics (Paolucci) for visual communication and the relationship between media and languages.
Teaching Format	Lectures, group discussions, in-class exercises, student presentations.
Required Readings	A precise reader of mandatory readings will be presented at the beginning of the course, including a semiotic vademecum and a reader of academic essays about the atelier topic.

Supplementary Readings	

Akrich, M. (1992). The de-scription of technical objects. In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping technology/building society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 205–224). MIT Press.

Berlage, T. (1994). A selective undo mechanism for graphical user interfaces based on command objects. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction, 1*(3), 269–294. https://doi.org/10.1145/196699.196721

Clark, A., & Chalmers, D. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis, 58*(1), 7–19. https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/58.1.7

Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton Mifflin.

Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the wild*. MIT Press.

Kittler, F. (1995). There is no software. *Stanford Literature Review, 9*(1), 81–90.

Latour, B. (1992). Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts. In W. E. Bijker & J. Law (Eds.), *Shaping technology/building society: Studies in sociotechnical change* (pp. 225–258). MIT Press.

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Lesage, F. (2016). Reviewing Photoshop: Mediating cultural subjectivities for application software. *Convergence, 22*(2), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856514545711

Malafouris, L. (2013). *How things shape the mind: A theory of material engagement*. MIT Press.

Mendoza-Collazos, J. (2024). Enhanced agency and the visual thinking of design. *Cognitive Semiotics, 17*(1), 1–22.

Norman, D. A. (2013). *The design of everyday things* (Revised and expanded ed.). Basic Books.

Pickering, A. (1995). *The mangle of practice: Time, agency, and science*. University of Chicago Press.

Suchman, L. A. (1987). *Plans and situated actions: The problem of human–machine communication*. Cambridge University Press.

Suchman, L. A. (2007). *Human–machine reconfigurations: Plans and situated actions* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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	tools of professional UX designers. In *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM.