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COURSE SYLLABUS - Information Design for Public Action

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Information Design for Public Action

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Course Description

This course explores the principles and practices of information design as a tool for effective communication in the context of public action. Students will learn to create visually compelling and accessible designs that convey complex information to diverse audiences. Through a combination of theory and hands-on projects, students will develop the skills needed to design and present information for public understanding, engagement, and decision-making.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the fundamentals of information design and its role in public communication.

2. Analyze and evaluate information design in various public contexts.

3. Develop proficiency in using design software and tools for creating visualizations.

4. Gain knowledge of user-centered design principles to create accessible and inclusive information.

5. Apply design thinking processes to solve real-world public communication challenges.

6. Collaborate effectively in design projects and provide constructive feedback to peers.

7. Develop a critical awareness of ethical considerations in information design for public action.

Required Texts and Resources

- Center for Civic Design (n.d.) Information Design: Using Information Design to Express Election Messages Clearly [Google slides]. https://civicdesign.org/topics/information-design/.
- Berger, R. 2020. "All Models Are Wrong: Information Design in a Posttruth World." In *Ethics in Design and Communication: Critical Perspectives*, L. Scherling and A. DeRosa eds., 14–27. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Golombisky, K, and R. Hagen. 2017. *White Space Is Not Your Enemy: A Beginner's Guide to Communicating Visually through Graphic, Web, and Multimedia Design* (3rd ed.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Plain Language Action and Information Network. 2011. Federal Plain Language Guidelines. https://www.plainlanguage.gov/media/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf.
- Ware, C. 2012. *Information Visualization: Perception for Design* (3rd ed.). Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufman.

Major Assignments

1. ## QUIZZES (20%)
   Quizzes on readings, design principles, and other course content will be administered throughout the semester.

2. ## INFORMATION DESIGN ANALYSIS (15%)
   Evaluate and critique a selected public information design, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Use the course texts as evidence to support your analysis.

3. ## INFOGRAPHIC PROJECT (15%)
   Create an infographic that effectively communicates a complex issue to a general audience. Write an accompanying memo to explain your design decisions.

4. ## INTERACTIVE DATA VISUALIZATION (20%)
   Develop an interactive data visualization using appropriate tools to engage users in exploring a public issue. Write an accompanying memo to introduce the public issue, share your analysis of the rhetorical situation, and explain your design decisions.

5. ## FINAL PROJECT AND PRESENTATION (30%)
   Design an information campaign addressing a public issue of your choice, incorporating visualizations, written content, and interactive elements. The campaign should include a minimum of four design pieces, and at least three of those pieces should use different methods/forms of information design. In lieu of a final exam, you will present your designs and your design justifications to the class in a 10-minute presentation.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment Deadline
1-2	Course introduction Introduction to information design	• Golombisky and Hagen, ch. 1, 2, 3, 4 • Ware, ch. 1, 2	
3-4	Understanding data and information	• Ware, ch. 8, 9 • Plain Language PDF	Information design analysis
5-8	Principles of design for effective communication Design tools skills lab—Adobe	• Golombisky and Hagen, ch. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 • Ware, ch. 3, 4	Infographic project
9-10	Interactive data visualization tools	• Berger PDF • Ware, ch. 10	
11-12	User-centered design and accessibility	• Golombisky and Hagen, ch. 13 • Ware, ch. 11	Interactive data visualization
13-14	Workshopping, peer reviews, and project work		
15	Final Project Presentations		Final Project