



DD 601. Graphic Design and Color Theory

Semester

Instructor: Thomas John Carlson

Email: thomas.carlson@njit.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

*I will respond to all emails within 48 hours.

Table of Contents

General Course Information	2
Course Description	2
Prerequisites/Co-requisites.....	2
Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)	2
Required Materials	2
Course Modality	4
Course Work	4
Weekly Expectations	4
Learning Activities and Assessments	4
Kepler.....	5
Feedback	5
Grading Policy	5
Letter to Number Grade Conversions	5
Exam Information	6
Late Work Policy	6
University Policies and Resources	6
Academic Integrity.....	6
Generative AI	6
Netiquette.....	7
Accessibility.....	7
Requesting Accommodations	7
Resources for NJIT Online Students	7
Course Schedule.....	7

General Course Information

Course Description

Introduction to principles of graphic design and 2D composition with additional emphasis on color use and color theory. Introduction to computer graphics as applied to design. Students are introduced to traditional media (watercolor and collage) and digital raster graphics (painting, image processing, and compositing). Applications from the physical and digital worlds (e.g. architecture, interior design, animation/motion pictures, game design, product/industrial design, advertising, web design, and painting) are discussed. Concepts include ordering systems and hierarchy, color models and mixing, color interaction, physical and psychological response to color, typography, printing, etc. Emphasis on synthesizing knowledge and skills through creative projects.

Prerequisites/Co-requisites

None

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

You will notice throughout the course that many pages are marked with "CLOs". These refer to the Course Learning Outcomes. These markers are in place to help you clearly identify the relationship between learning outcomes (what you should be able to do at the end of the course) and the learning materials and activities.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe key color relationships in color theory.
2. Explain how humans perceive color within the visible spectrum.
3. Apply appropriate color harmonies to create visually balanced compositions.
4. Describe the psychological effects of specific colors and how they influence design choices.
5. Demonstrate principles of color theory and design using traditional media, including watercolor and collage.
6. Use traditional and digital tools to express ideas and create cohesive designs.
7. Apply principles of color theory to complete design projects, such as posters, branding materials, or layout designs.
8. Communicate design decisions clearly and engage in constructive dialogue about designs.
9. Reflect critically on your own work and the work of others to improve future designs.
10. Apply composition principles, including perspective, dynamic points, alignment, and balance, to establish visual hierarchy and create structured, visually compelling designs.
11. Use typography principles, including type classification, anatomy, spacing, and legibility, to enhance clarity and communication in design projects.

Materials

Textbooks

No required textbook

Supplemental Texts (These texts are suggested but not required.)

- [Interaction of Color by Josef Albers](#)
- [Color and Light: A Guide for the Realist Painter by James Gurney](#)
- [Color Right From the Start by Hilary Page](#) (You can make a free account on Internet Archive to view this book for free).

Materials

- Watercolor Set - Half Pan
 - Example - [Winsor & Newton Cotman](#) - 8, 12 or 16 color set
 - Colors - Make sure you have a variety of warm, cool, and earth tones
 - Example colors - Chinese White, Lamp Black, Payne's Gray, Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna, Sap Green, Viridian, Turquoise, Cerulean, Ultramarine, Dioxazine, Purple, Permanent Rose, Alizarin Crimson, Cadmium Red, Cadmium Yellow, Lemon Yellow
- Gouache - 1/2-Ounce Tube Gouache Paint, Titanium White
 - Example - [M. Graham 1/2-Ounce Tube Gouache Paint, Titanium White](#)
- 140 lbs watercolor paper Cold Press - 20-30 sheets for the semester
- Watercolor Brushes - elite brushes or synthetic watercolor brushes
 - Examples - [Transon 8pcs Round Watercolor Paint Brush Set](#) or [ZEM Brush Golden Synthetic Rounds Brushes Set](#)

Computer Requirements

- A computer or tablet with digital art capabilities. Examples include:
 - A Mac or PC with a drawing tablet (e.g., Wacom tablet) and digital art software such as Adobe Photoshop or similar program.
 - An iPad with drawing applications such as Procreate or Adobe Fresco.

Students are encouraged to use equivalent tools and software that suit their preferences and meet the course requirements.

Adobe Creative Cloud

As an NJIT student, you have access to Adobe Creative Cloud applications for use on your personal device. Follow the steps below to download and install the software:

How to Install Adobe Applications:

1. Go to [Creative Cloud](#) website
2. Click "Sign in" in the upper right corner of the screen.
3. When prompted, enter your NJIT email address (yourUCID@njit.edu).
4. If you are given the option, choose "Company or School Account" and log in using your UCID and password.
5. Once signed in, follow the instructions to download and install the Adobe applications you need.

If you run into any issues with access or installation, contact [NJIT's IST Service Desk](#) for support.

Course Modality

This is an online course, which will be conducted fully online, asynchronously via Canvas. For more information on using Canvas and other supported learning tools, visit the IST Service Desk [Knowledgebase](#).

Course Work

Weekly Expectations

Course Workload: This course values your time and effort and aims to provide a rewarding learning experience. You can expect to dedicate approximately 7.5 hours to the course per week.

Learning Activities and Assessments

Final grades will be based on the following percentages:

Category	Percent of Final Grade
Discussion Forums	20%
Assignments	35%
Final Project	45%
Milestone 1 = 5%	
Milestone 2 = 5%	
Milestone 3 = 10%	
Milestone 4 = 10%	
Milestone 5 = 10%	
Showcase = 5%	

Discussion Forums: (20% of grade) You are expected to participate in discussion forums in Canvas. When all students participate in a discussion, it creates an active learning environment that will help you better understand the materials and be more successful in the class. You will post your initial response to the prompt by Thursdays at 11:59 pm and respond to two classmates by Sunday at 11:59 pm of the week they are listed.

Assignments: (35% of grade) Assignments will be given to give you an opportunity to apply course concepts. These activities are designed to help you practice and prepare for the project. These assignments will be listed under a Design category on the module overview pages. You'll submit these assignments to Canvas and upload them to Kepler.

Project: (45% of grade) There will be one project with regular milestones. You will have opportunities to iterate and revise your work based on peer and instructor feedback.

Milestone	Deliverable	Description	Due
Milestone 1	Proposal	Outline your chosen project type, medium, and concept.	Module 5
Milestone 2	Sketches	Explore composition ideas with sketches.	Module 7
Milestone 3	Final Comp	A near-complete version of your design that demonstrates your overall layout, visual hierarchy, and design direction.	Module 9
Milestone 4	Color Roughs	Color variations that explore distinct emotions or moods.	Module 12
Milestone 5	Final and Presentation	Completed final project with 2-3 minute video recording.	Module 14

Kepler

Kepler is the Hillier College of Architecture and Design's (HCAD) online repository for all undergraduate and graduate work. During this course, you will be required to submit assignments to Kepler in addition to Canvas. For guidance on logging into and using Kepler, please see the [Using Kepler](#) article in the IST Knowledge Base. If you encounter any issues, please submit a request to the [IST Service Desk](#).

Feedback

Feedback will typically be provided within 7–10 days of submission. This feedback will be provided in Canvas.

Grading Policy

[NJIT Graduate Grades](#)

Letter to Number Grade Conversions

Grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number before being assigned according to the following scales.

The following grades are used for graduate courses:

- **A:** 90-100
- **B+:** 85-89

- **B:** 80-84
- **C+:** 75-79
- **C:** 70-74
- **F:** Below 70

Note: There is no D grade for graduate courses.

Exam Information

This course does not have any exams. Per the NJIT [Online Course Exam Proctoring Policy](#), this course will use authentic assessment, meaning you will be assessed and graded on your ability to deliver real-world outputs as well as your participation and feedback to other students.

Late Work Policy

All assignments must be submitted in a timely manner and by the due date. Late work will be accepted up to 24 hours after the due date with no penalty. Assignments submitted in excess of 24 hours late will receive a reduction of 50% of the assignment's total point value each successive day they are late (i.e. 50% at 48 hours, 100% at 72 hours). Please note, if you miss an assignment for a legitimate medical reason or other emergency, this must be documented with the Dean of Students (dos@njit.edu). Once documented, you will be excused from the missed assignment (it will have no weight on your grade). Please be proactive in communicating such situations with your instructor.

University Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the [NJIT academic code of integrity policy](#).

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

Generative AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be used as a tool for preliminary work, such as brainstorming or idea generation. However, AI-generated images, compositions, or designs, whether created entirely by AI or modified by the student, may not be submitted as a final form of creative assignments or projects. This policy ensures that you develop your creative problem-solving abilities, refine your technical expertise, and build a personal design voice.

If you have any questions about AI's role in your work, please consult with the instructor before incorporating it into your process.

Netiquette

Throughout this course, you are expected to be courteous and respectful to classmates by being a polite and active participant. Please respect opinions, even those that differ from your own, and avoid using profanity or offensive language. For discussion forum assignments, respond promptly to give others time to reply.

Accessibility

This course is offered through an accessible learning management system. For more information, please refer to Canvas's [Accessibility Statement](#).

Requesting Accommodations

The Office of Accessibility Resources and Services collaborates with administrators, faculty, and staff to offer reasonable accommodations and support for students with disabilities. To receive services, students must provide medical documentation.

If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability, please contact the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) to discuss your specific needs.

Resources for NJIT Online Students

NJIT is dedicated to your success. Various academic support centers and services are available to help you excel in your course and program. For more information, visit the "Student Services" page in Canvas, which also includes technical support details.

Course Schedule

Note: All due dates are in Eastern Standard Time (EST/EDT).

[Change your Canvas settings to show due dates in your local time zone.](#)

Module	Topic(s)	Activities and Due Dates
1	Introduction to Graphic Design & Color Theory	<p>Student Information Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Module 1 Discussion: Introduce Yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
2	Color Wheels	<p>Module 2 Assignment: RYB Color Wheel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 2 Discussion: Color Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm

Module	Topic(s)	Activities and Due Dates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
3	Composition & Visual Hierarchy	<p>Module 3 Assignment: Simple Collage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 3 Discussion: Exploring Your Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
4	The Psychology of Color	<p>Module 4 Assignment: Exploring Emotion and Color</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 4 Discussion: Reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
5	Hue, Saturation, & Value	<p>Module 5 Assignment: Monochromatic Emotion Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 5 Discussion: Monochromatic Design Reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Milestone 1: Final Project Proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Sunday 11:59 pm
6	Digital Media	<p>Module 6 Assignment: Digital Color Expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 6 Discussion: Digital Color Expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
7	Anatomy of a Project	<p>Milestone 2: Final Project Sketches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Module 7 Discussion: Reflecting on Your Creative Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
8	Classical vs. Romantic Lighting	<p>Module 8 Assignment: Value Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 8 Discussion: Classical vs Romantic Lighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm

Module	Topic(s)	Activities and Due Dates
9	Perspective	<p>Module 9 Assignment: 2-Point Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 9 Discussion: Observing Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Milestone 3: Final Comp</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Sunday 11:59 pm
10	Typography & Logos	<p>Module 10 Assignment: Vector Logo Design + Typography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Thursday 11:59 pm <p>Module 10 Discussion: Vector vs. Raster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
11	Typography	<p>Module 11 Discussion: Typography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
12	Color for Branding & Identity	<p>Module 12 Discussion: Logo, Color, and Brand Loyalty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Milestone 4: Color Roughs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Sunday 11:59 pm
13	Perceptions of Color	<p>Module 13 Discussion: Color Across Cultures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm
14	Final Project	<p>Module 14 Discussion: AI in the Creative Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Thursday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Milestone 5: Final Project Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due by Sunday 11:59 pm <p>Final Project Showcase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post due by Sunday 11:59 pm • Replies due by Tuesday 11:59 pm