

Document Design Final Reflective Letter- Kristine Hall

I started this course with a bit of apprehension. I know I'm creative and use Publisher often to create simple digital designs for family functions or for work events, but I had never had anyone evaluate my work for a grade.

Professor Martin made this class feel warm and welcoming, which not all teachers can do (believe me...I took my entire undergraduate coursework online.) So once the class made our introductions, we were tasked with creating a personal logo. Well, it was as if my mind went blank, where was the creative person who lived inside of me?

The first week was all about studying the principles of CRAP...Contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity, learning how to make the right design choice, and how our logo design should be able to meaningfully reflect me as a person.

The assignment was to create a personal logo that combined color, shape, and typography to express our developing professional identity that would crossover to professional documents. I can still see my first draft logo in my head...BORING and unimaginative, so not me, I just kept thinking where was my spark of imagination going to happen?

As I watched my classmates knock it out of the park with their design logos, I finally found my muse...my tattoo. I am on the fence about how my personal logo turned out, it's not bad, but it's not the best I have seen either. I especially loved Natalie Shelton's design...the use of coffee rings with her initials on the inside, represented her as an inspiring writer. I think what I was drawn to was her design was aesthetically pleasing to the eye, and to quote Lidwell from our first set of readings "Aesthetic designs are more effective at fostering positive attitudes than unaesthetic designs, and make people more tolerant of design problems."

The memoir book cover project during week two was to me the most meaningful, as the topic was heartfelt and personal. I love, love, love, how my book cover turned out, as well as the inspiration for the design. The summers I spent as a young girl with my mom and dad trucking all over the country is priceless. The landmarks as well as the stories are imprinted on my soul just like a vintage roadmap.

The readings that coincided for week two were highly informative; my two favorites were S.J. McElroy *Assemblage by Design—The Postcards of Curt Teich and Company* and NPR "How Kodak's Shirley Cards Set Photography's Skin-Tone Standard." In "The Postcards of Curt Teich" the design principles related well to my book cover design and the vintage feel I was striving for. To quote McElroy "Indeed, all postcards, as legally and culturally defined, shared similar compositional standards and common textual elements. Second, it demonstrates the fact that there was more than meets the eye with postcards: within their designs were traces of productive practices that were inextricably linked with their historical contexts."

In NPR "How Kodak's Shirley Cards Set Photography's Skin-Tone Standard," I was intrigued at how technology evolved in developing film, and the nostalgia lover in me was taken with the fact to this day the ladies in the photos are still called "Shirley's."

The memoir book design was a great way for students to investigate genre conventions and create a colorful design with a specific audience in mind. Learning about shades and tints, along with warm colors versus cool tones would become useful tools in future projects, and to me the most important. From choosing what to wear each day, picking a color palette to redecorate a room, to purchasing gift wrap, knowing what colors work well together is a skill that will crossover into numerous aspects of everyday living.

In week four the assignment was to design an Event Poster that would communicate the communication goals to our audience via both in digital and print environments. I was giddy to try my hand at something outside my comfort zone, in this project I wanted to create a grungy pub poster featuring The Cure in a make-believe concert to benefit healthcare workers fighting Covid-19. I choose to go with a triad of colors...Black, white and red. I also used the Chiller font instead of my typical go to's: Times New Roman or Calibri typefaces. My poster was designed for a target audience of punk/goth music lovers and the local pizza/pub crowd that converges at Vino's Pizzeria in Little Rock

In my design rationale for the Event Poster project assessment, I utilized Foss' "Theory of Visual Rhetoric" from the graduate reading "A Rhetorical Schema for the Evaluation of Visual Imagery" which states "Conceptualized as a communicative artifact, visual rhetoric is the actual image rhetors generate when they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating. It is the tangible evidence or product of the creative act, such as a painting, an advertisement, or a building and constitutes the data of study for rhetorical scholars interested in visual symbols."

The article went on to say not every visual object is visual rhetoric, the visual object must include these three markers to qualify as visual rhetoric: Symbolic Action (symbols, shapes, and color), Human Intervention (human action of some kind, process of creation or in the process of interpretation), and Presence of an Audience, (the visual rhetoric must appeal either to a real or an ideal audience. Even if the only audience for an image is its creator, some audience-and thus the implied act of communication, is present in visual rhetoric." I wanted to make sure my event poster followed Foss' theory and incorporated the biohazard symbols, color, and an intended audience, which I believe I accomplished, even if it wasn't a design I would normally create.

Week four's Modest Digital Booklet was the biggest challenge for me from a design point of view. I considered taking the easy route and revising a design I had previously used for another class, but when pulling apart the design to update the images and incorporate what I had learned in this class, I quickly realized sometimes revising works, and other times it's best to set it aside and start anew. In this case I decided to start completely over because to be honest the previous design was a bad design.

Let me describe why...First off, in my initial design I had started with a template and tried to cram as much information regarding the subject matter as I could into preset text boxes, and to make matters worse the font wasn't aligned. Looking at it further, the colors seemed to clash, and I had also failed to acknowledge copyright rights for my images, I just took them off the internet without giving any consideration to permissions. The design was scrapped...then the oh shit moment happened...What do I design now?

It is funny because inspiration comes to me at the weirdest times and places. For my memoir book cover it was while I was taking a nap, for the booklet it was while I was taking a shower. Crazy I know...but I think it's because as a mom I am constantly distracted, it's when I am finally alone that my

mind is free to brainstorm. For my fourth and final project I decided to create a pamphlet for the Write to Law Project for the Independent Study course I am taking with Dr. Matson. Yes, as the adage goes, I was “killing two birds with one stone,” but it also gave me a pretend client with a color scheme already in place in which I needed to adhere to. (Nothing like giving yourself an extra set of parameters...lol.)

I started my pamphlet design by locating graphics that I felt maintained the same color theme and creative feel as Dr. Matson’s original WTL poster (retro/muted...aka my fav color theme.) I also cropped her poster to be able to give a little more information from her conference agenda, which presented a new challenge. The cropped images were distorted because I had used an enlarged PDF to snip the images. I knew from our learning objectives that when a graphic is distorted it can cause accessibility issues with audiences that may already suffer from eye disorders, and the images would need to be revised.

I looked to remedy the issue by emailing Dr. Matson and asking if she had an original image of the poster I could use, thankfully she produced the file I needed to update the images. I also researched a correlating article from USNews.com regarding 1st year students in Law School to add extra content. Hopefully, the final design would be an education piece Dr. Matson could utilize in her WTL Survey academia discussions, but first I would have to tackle the math related to booklet design...ugh, another design challenge...lol.

In an excerpt from Alexander Charchar’s “The Secret Law of Page Harmony” he states “ratios...be aware it’s a part of the design process in books and booklets,” and he could not have been more correct. Even after watching the template videos I was still unsure of the math but moved forward with my design.

The best part of the Document Design course is the team feedback each week. By sharing and receiving peer review, along with the professor’s critiques, the revision process becomes easier and less stressful. What I realized is, even though we all have our own idea of what the perfect image is, we all usually comment on the same area to make subtle changes to make the design more aesthetically pleasing.

Luckily for me, by week four, the class had become comfortable with sharing their thoughts more openly. I held my breath and waited to see if anyone commented on the ratios, but my classmates only made suggestions on the font choices and colors. I happily revised my gradient colors on my pamphlet pages as my team suggested and I admit it does look great. I was beyond please when I submitted my final project yesterday. I also submitted it to Dr. Matson for her feedback as well.

When looking at the scope of my work, I can see a growth from week one to week four. I found the readings, videos, and projects fun and engaging, but still introduced enough new design elements to be challenging. I began this class with the goal to learn new techniques that would benefit my career in the future, and I know (and can prove...lol) that my skills have improved.

As I conclude my reflection, all I can say is...this course went by way too fast!! Just when I really felt like the entire class was starting to become awesome designers, sadly the class came to a close. My only suggestion (if it’s possible) is to give more time between week four project and week five's final reflection to give students a chance to revise or make a new personal logo utilizing everything they

learned in the course. Maybe it could be part of the reflection or maybe for extra credit, but it would be interesting to see the growth changes.

Thanks for making this course a great learning experience!!