



Final Project for Visual Media

English 302 | Fall 2006

This assignment asks you to build a collection of visual designs and make observations about the strategies that different designs use. In categorizing these strategies, you can start thinking about the design decisions you want to make in your own texts.

Step 1

Due November 2

Collect 40 design samples and bring them to class. By “design” I mean a mix of words and images on paper that are intended to stand alone and to serve some particular purpose. Your designs must include both images and words, OR just words designed in a particular way, but you may not use photographs or drawings that have no words. You can think about advertising, newspapers, pages in your textbooks, book covers, DVD covers, menus, etc. Bring a range of designs.

Only collect designs that fit onto one 8.5” x 11” page or smaller. If you can’t take the original design, make a copy of it. Bring the designs to class in a large envelope and try not to fold them. Write your name on the back of each design so that you can keep track of them when we use them in class.

Step 2

Due November 3 & November 7

In class on November 2 we will begin working to categorize your designs. Don’t worry if you don’t know what this means yet, we will discuss it in class. After class you will write down your observations of the compositional strategies used in the categories you’ve identified. **ONLY describe the categories that have 4 or more designs.** You may discard the rest. Bring this list of compositional strategies to your discussion section on November 3.

Write down any design strategies you see the designs in this category sharing. Anything strategies you see these designs sharing is worth noting. For example:

- Are there colors or typefaces the designs have in common?
- Are placements of elements similar?
- Are the same ranges of colors used in the same places? (say, a photo is always black and white whereas the header is often red or purple?)
- Do the designs use photos or drawings?

- Do the designs use similar amounts of open space?
- Is there similar spacing between elements on the pages?

Don't limit yourself to these questions, these are just ideas to get you going on your lists of strategies. Bring your lists to discussion on Friday, November 3 AND bring the revised list to class on Tuesday, November 7.

Step 3

Due November 17

Choose two categories from your design samples. For each category, write up a 2-3 page report (so you will have two, 2-3 page reports). Imagine you are giving this report to designers who are going to be creating a design that would be part of your category (so if you chose "watch advertisements" you would be giving this report to a design firm about to design a new watch advertisement). In this report you must:

1. Describe the category of design you observed (so that someone who didn't know what you had done could easily understand what you are doing).
2. Describe the strategies you found in common in your category and explain why you think these strategies are so often employed.
3. Describe any strategies that strayed from the norm, and describe what effect these outlying strategies had on the design.
4. Offer a list of strategies that the designers can use when composing their design. Think of this list like Williams' CRAP principles, in that you are offering a list of principles for a designer to use so as to achieve a specific purpose.
5. Attach your design samples to the report.

While you *may* decide to create your report with a 2-3 page double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt, 1" margins, I ask you to consider how your own design choices will affect the reception of your text. Consider this report a piece of professional and technical writing, and use design strategies in a way that you believe will best serve your purposes with the report. Don't be afraid to play with design.