COURSE DESCRIPTION

This five-week Verbal and Visual module introduces urban planning students to methods and tools for visual storytelling using information graphics, while reflecting on the roles of planners in communicating information. Each week’s lesson will split focus between discussing key components of design practice and introducing a format for representing information. In-class exercises will demonstrate techniques for creating information graphics using Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign. Students will present on selected case studies of information design projects and publications of relevance to the course goals. Through the course, students will complete a five-part assignment to generate a visual narrative using information graphics.

Resources

Class presentations, demonstrations, course readings, assignment and syllabus materials are available on the course blog: http://prattinfographics.wordpress.com. Materials for case studies are available on reserve in the Pratt Institute Library (Brooklyn Campus), except when noted in the Course Plan on the following pages. The five-part assignment is explained in detail in a separate brief.

Course Goals

The primary goal of this module is to develop the ability to visually communicate narratives about urban planning effectively. The course focuses on three interrelated skill sets:

1. Critical: Develop capacities to evaluate and discuss the effectiveness and suitability of different approaches to representing information.

2. Communication: Develop the ability to use information graphics to synthesize various sources of information and to formulate argumentative narratives about the built environment.

3. Technical: Develop a design process incorporating some advanced methods and tools for making graphics, and integrating the tools of Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign.
COURSE PLAN

Before Session 1


Assignment: Submit via email to the instructor a jpeg of an information graphic you think is effective or interesting [it should be high enough resolution for any text to be legible on-screen]

(DUE BY 9AM THE DAY OF SESSION 1)

Session 1 – Course Principles / Introductions

An introductory discussion about information graphics and visual storytelling; a demonstration of data collection from the U.S. Census American FactFinder; a course and assignment review; a demo of techniques for editing and formatting photo-documentation, as well as exporting PDFs and JPEGs, in InDesign and Photoshop.

Case Studies: Previous student work

Lesson: Overview of visual storytelling and key graphic principles

Demonstration:
• Utilizing American FactFinder to gather U.S. Census data
• Photoshop and InDesign techniques for formatting photo-documentation

Assignment # 1:
• Visit an assigned census tract/area and document a countable phenomenon related to your narrative
• Format photo-documentation of this phenomenon for presentation in a slide deck

Session 2 – Design tools / Single-dimension comparisons

An introduction to the basic principles of graphic design; an introduction to information graphics used for single-dimension comparisons—charts, graphs, and icons; and an introduction to techniques for generating these graphic types with Illustrator and InDesign.

Case Studies / Student Presentations:
• Edward Tufte, The Visual Display of Quantitative Information
• Florence Nightingale, “Worth a Thousand Words,” The Economist, December 2007 (Online)
• Otto Neurath, The Language of the Global Polis

Lesson: Principles of graphic design; Single-dimension comparison

Demonstration: Illustrator techniques for creating charts, graphs, and icons

Assignment # 2: Create two sets of charts or graphs, at least one using an existing institutional data set and at least one using information you collected in your assigned area, to support your ongoing narrative
Session 3 – Design process / Sequence, flow and connection
A deeper look at design process; an introduction to information graphics used to communicate ideas about process, change or linkage; and a demonstration of techniques for generating flow charts and small multiples in Illustrator.

Case Studies / Student Presentations:
- Kate Ascher, *The Works*
- Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles*
- Mark Lombardi, *Global Networks*

Lesson: Design process; Sequence, flow and connection
Demonstration: Illustrator techniques for creating flow charts and small multiples
Assignment #3: Create a diagram that visualizes sequence, flow or connection in your ongoing narrative

Session 4 – Design discretion / Evaluative and synthetic graphics
A discussion about considering audience, context and narrative when making design choices; an introduction to information graphics used to evaluate the built environment; and a survey of format and layout of information graphics across print and digital media.

Case Studies / Student Presentations:
- Edward Tufte, *Envisioning Information*

Lesson: Design discretion; Evaluative and synthetic graphics
Reading: Edward Tufte, “The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint” [Distributed by email]
Demonstration: Integrating Illustrator, Photoshop, & InDesign to generate continuum diagrams & matrices
Assignment #4: Create an evaluative or synthetic graphic to support your ongoing narrative

Session 5 – Constructing a Visual Narrative
A discussion about planning for a visual story; a review of presentation materials that synthesize various information graphic types in order to communicate an argument or narrative; and a survey of storytelling approaches and methods for formatting slide presentations and board layout in InDesign.

Case Studies / Student Presentations:
- Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature*
- The Design Trust for Public Space, *Taxi07: Roads Forward* [Distributed by email]
- NYC Economic Development Corporation, “Fordham Plaza” [Distributed by email]

Lesson: Storyboarding
In-class: Story revision; storyboarding; feedback
Assignment #5: Build a slide deck (and, for extra credit, a poster board) that tells a coherent, 3-part story about the phenomenon you are investigating, using your work from Assignments 1-4, as possible
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings
The two assigned readings will be made available as PDFs.

Assignments & Grading
The five-part assignment will be distributed during Session 1. Each week, students will email to the instructor (either by attachment or using WeTransfer) 1) their current slide deck as a 10” x 7.5” PDF, and 2) a JPEG of a single, compelling page from the deck. Assignments are due by 9am the day of class. The instructor will upload all submitted assignments to the course blog by that evening’s session. Students are asked to review submitted assignments and to offer feedback, based in part on the instructor’s prompts, on at least three posted submissions by midnight the Thursday after each session (four weeks out of a possible six—the other two weeks are available as extra credit). The instructor will offer in-depth comments on each assignment by the end of the week.

Also during Session 1, students will be assigned to four groups that will present each of the subsequent four weeks’ case studies. Case study preparation should focus on clarity of presentation, intellectual engagement with design concepts, and facilitation of discussion.

Due dates for the assignments are:
- Pre-assignment: Monday, 4/10/17
- Assignment 1: Monday, 4/17/17
- Assignment 2: Monday, 4/24/17
- Assignment 3: Monday, 5/1/17
- Assignment 4: Monday, 5/8/17
- Assignment 5: Monday, 5/14/17
  (NOTE: this is six days after the last course meeting)

Assignments and class participation will be weighted for the final grade as follows:
- Assignment 1: 10%
- Assignment 2: 10%
- Assignment 3: 10%
- Assignment 4: 10%
- Assignment 5: 20%
- Case Study Presentation: 10%
- Online Participation: 10%
- In-Class Participation: 20%

Evaluation of assignments will be based on clarity and coherence of narratives constructed (4 pts); thoughtfulness, suitability and/or creativity in representation (3 pts); engagement with and evaluation of different representational strategies (as evidenced in the slide deck by sketches, precedents, notes and finished work) (2 pts); and deployment of software tools demonstrated in the course, as appropriate (1 pt). 10% of the possible total will be deducted for late submissions each day submitted past due.

POLICIES

Community Standards: All students must adhere to Institute-wide policies in the student handbook and Institute Bulletin under “Community Standards.” These include policies on attendance, computer, and network use.

Academic Integrity: Sources for work that is not your own should be cited and documented appropriately.

Policy on students with disabilities: Students requiring special accommodations for disabilities must register with the Office of Disability Services at beginning of semester. They should contact Disability Services Director, first floor Willoughby Hall, adjacent to Health and Counseling Services, 718.636.3711.

Safety: All students are expected to adhere to the specific Health & Safety and Environmental Protection Guidelines of Pratt Institute.