

► Layout design explores the relationship of text, images and shapes in space (pages and screens) to help us communicate (and tell stories) appropriately¹ and well.

<i>Why</i>	The ability to arrange, make sense of and tell effective stories with complex ² information and its relationships—both internal and with other elements within	and outside its composition—is an essential skill in the making of a visual communication designer.
<i>What</i>	The course explores—broadly—these three aspects of layout design: defining visual order and hierarchy, meaning-making and making sense of complex sets of information. Additionally, the course focuses on good use of typography, grids and reading-slash-writing for design. ³ We shall refresh our learning of composition, semiotics and working with images as tools for working with elements in a layout. We start with	simple exercises in composition with a focus on making and breaking order and move on to using images and text to shape pages (or screens). We discuss grids and their use as tools ⁴ in information architecture and in building a consistent visual language. We will also read and respond to short and significant texts on design over the weekends and whenever time permits.
<i>What For</i>	To be able to conceive and execute a plan for arranging parts ⁵ of a composition to communicate specific messages.	To be conversant in making complex relationships in such arrangements <i>visible</i> and easily read.
<i>How</i>	Exercises and discussion of the work we do in the studio Reading and reflection (daily notes and notes on the essays we read)	Demonstration of concepts and tools we discuss in the studio (mostly in one-on-one sessions where these will be looked at <i>in context</i> and as a <i>means to an end</i> ; so, be around to discuss other people's work)
<i>Evaluation</i>	Concept comprehension and the ability to communicate <i>what</i> one has learnt. (Discussions with the faculty and showing the learning put to use in your work—both are valid ways of doing this.) Openness to exploration and the diversity of materials, methods and concepts explored. (Work beyond what is strictly required of you in class. This doesn't mean quantity so much as variety and a readiness to get things wrong, even occasionally. ⁶)	Contribution to classroom discussions and the ability and inclination to learn from peers. (Be <i>present</i> ?) Learning new skills and updating existing ones. (Also, when we see all your work from day 1 to day 20, do we see more consideration for content and the reader/viewer?)

Layout Design

Notes

1 We will keep considering (and writing down, even) the communication goals before we attempt exercises.

2 Not to be confused with *complicated*. Complications we shall perhaps deal with at the *content* level. See Don Norman's *Design of Everyday Things*.

3 Mostly because those are the things I am interested in and are aspects of visual design I consider essential.

4 This is where we look at the organisation of information and use of grids as a deliberate act. Any imposed order (and one argues that use of grids is imposing order) ought to be—well—*imposed with intent*.

5 From the definition on the cover of Ambrose-and-Harris's *Basics Design: Layout*. (Available at the Woxsen Library.) It is then—perhaps—a good opportunity to arrive at our own definitions to *what is design*, in relation to the definition of the term *layout*.

6 In the sense that we will value the *scenes-from-the-journey* more than the destination in most cases. There is a beautiful poem called *Ithaka* by C P Cavafy that is in the same vein. There is also a set of *Ten Rules for Students and Teachers* put together in 1967 by John Cage and Sister Corita Kent. The sixth rule says “Nothing is a mistake. There is no win and no fail, there's only make.”

7 In more ways than one

8 Updates on most days with notes and links and exercise briefs. Force-refresh (us a question-mark at the end of the URL) the page to clear cache and load new stuff.