

**Summer 2015**

**DES-660 Directed Research**

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

### **Basic Course Information**

Directed Research  
DES-660  
School: School of Design  
Department: Graduate Communications Design  
MS, Communications Design  
Wednesdays, 6:00 – 8:50  
Pratt Manhattan Center (PMC), West 14 th  
3 credits  
Chairperson Santiago Piedrafita

### **Instructor Contact Information**

Tom Klinkowstein  
Adjunct Professor  
Office Location: Pratt Manhattan Center (PMC), West 14th, office 701 ]  
Phone: 917 806 7460  
Appropriate times to call: 9 am to 5pm  
Email address: tklinkow@pratt.edu

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

#### **Bulletin Description**

This course involves individual or team investigations related to the thesis project. Problem-solving and research techniques are explored. The objective of the class is to identify a subject and to formulate a viable hypothesis, bibliography, and plan of action for the final thesis.

#### **Further Description**

Lectures, assignments and in-class presentation/discussion help students identify the realm of their thesis investigation. Other tools employed in the course include writing, design research and an exercise to externalize values, taste, and questions apropos to formulating the thesis topic.

As the semester progresses, students focus their research and clarify their subject area, ultimately creating three possible topics, a research methodology and one desk-based or field-based experiment that will further clarify the direction their work will take in Thesis I.

#### **Course Blog**

<https://directedresearchtk2015.wordpress.com>

#### **Required Reading**

Booth, Wayne, The Craft of Research, 1995  
(on course blog)

Lieberman, Nira, Shapira, Oren, Why Thinking About Distant Things Can Make Us More Creative,  
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/an-easy-way-to-increase-c/>, July 21, 2009

Shedroff, Nathan, Research Methods for Designing Effective Experiences, 2003  
(on course blog)

## 1)

Introductions

Review what is expected: Directed Research, Thesis I, Thesis II:

(Directed Research) I am studying\_\_\_\_. Because I want to find out\_\_\_\_.

(Thesis I) In order to\_\_\_\_.

(Thesis II) So that users\_\_\_\_.

What we will accomplish this semester:

Identify three possible thesis subject realms

Do one related experiment

Develop a research methodology that will be implemented in Thesis I

Create and deliver a slide presentation with the following specifications and contents, to be presented in the last week(s) of the course, most likely in tandem with the other sections of Directed Research taught by the other professors.

-Your name, my name, Directed Research on all slides.

-Indication as to the components in the slide show (i.e., "tabs" at the bottom)

-No more than 20 words per slide

-Consistent use of font, size and weight

-Images only in the experiment slides

Slide presentation contents:

-Title page

-One (or more) slide(s) for each subject: "I am studying\_\_\_\_. Because I want to find out\_\_\_\_.

Indicate "1, 2, 3" to show the three different versions.

-Research Methodology. One (or more) slide(s).

-Experiment documentation including what was learned and/or new ideas or questions raised relative to one of the research realms. One to five slides.

-One or more slides showing the changed "I am studying\_\_\_\_. In order to\_\_\_\_", based on inspiration from the experiment.

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For next class, do mind download exercise (see below).

For next class, create a blog to contain everything we do in the semester.

## 2)

Mind Download exercise (getting to know each other quickly and to begin to uncover thesis topic realms):

One little known film clip

One little known text (any subject)

One little known music clip

Any medium: an unknown political statement

Any medium: a surprising insight into personal behavior

Any medium: something significant regarding civic ("citizen") behavior

Any medium: something significant regarding the nature of entertainment

Any medium: a new question for you

Text (and images if available): your most exotic experience (be honest; surprise us)

For next class, read: Craft of Research; prepare one question for each page

**3)**

Finish Mind Download exercises presentation and discussion

Begin review Craft of Research

For next class (inspired by Mind Download exercise): list, three, one-sentence thesis subject realms

**4)**

Review three thesis subject realms

Continue Review Craft of Research

For next class: propose one experiment (desk-based or field-based) related to one of the subject realms.

**5)**

Finish Craft of Research review

Review experiment ideas

For next class: do the experiment and be prepared to present to the class

**6)**

Research methodology discussion

For next class: Prepare all three thesis subject realm statements in this format:

"I am studying\_\_\_\_. Because I want to find out\_\_\_\_."

**7)**

Review thesis subject realm statements in the format, "I am studying\_\_\_\_. Because I want to find out\_\_\_\_."

For next class: draft of entire presentation

**8)**

Review presentations and finalize.

**9, 10)**

Present presentations, most likely with other Directed Research sections.

### **Course Goals**

1. To identify problems, issues or concerns that will become the basis for thesis.
2. To acquire a fundamental understanding of research as it is applied to communications design.
3. To understand the use of desk-based research as an integral component of a design research methodology.
4. To understand the use of field research, such as ethnography in the process of developing thesis topics.

### **Student Learning Objectives**

1. Students will create a research methodology to be executed in Thesis I
2. Students will source and present a presentation for the purpose of externalizing values, tastes and tendencies relevant to an eventual thesis topic.
3. Students will write and maintain a blog documenting their concepts and processes in the class.
4. Students will report findings to the class in slide-assisted presentation.

### **Course Requirements**

**Textbooks, Readings, and Materials:** Readings and writings will be provided (see Required Reading above). Please also refer to the department MS Reading Resource List.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Process**

**Quality of Research:** Are the research methods used by the student effectively chosen and implemented to arrive at successful solutions, and do they cover all aspects of the problem, including historical background and functional concerns?

**Concept and Conceptual Development:** Are concepts inventive and appropriate, show initiative on the part of the student, and do they satisfy the objectives of the stated problem? Is there a sufficient amount of conceptual work, such as sketches and drafts?

**Attention to Detail:** Does the solution reflect an appropriate and effective choice of medium, use of tools, techniques and materials, and is it presented in a professional manner?

**Syntactic Quality of Work:** Are all syntactic concerns — such as form, composition, and visual hierarchy — clearly and effectively articulated? Does the application of color support the message and satisfy aesthetic concerns? Is there an effective application of typography when appropriate? Does the student demonstrate the ability to represent shape and form in two, three, and four dimensions at an acceptable skill level?

**Semantic Quality of Work:** Does the solution present an effective message—one that is appropriate for the intended audience?

**Pragmatic Quality of Work:** Does the solution function appropriately, and as intended?

**Motivation:** Does the student stay consistently motivated throughout the process?

**Meeting the Objectives of the Assignment:** Does the student follow the project assignment in an appropriate manner, and does the solution meet the state objectives?

**Participation in Critiques and Discussions:** Does the student actively participate in critiques and discussions on a regular basis?

## **Professionalism**

**Verbal Articulation:** Is the student able to critically address the work orally, and respond to ideas discussed in class?

**Written Articulation:** When required, does the student document work clearly, concisely, and accurately? Is the student articulate and does the student use correct grammar in writing assignments?

**Overall Attitude:** Does the student present a positive demeanor and outlook on his work, and towards the work of the other students and instructor? Was the student reluctant to do the expected work?

**Collaboration:** When called upon to work collaboratively with peers, does the student demonstrate collegiality and professional behavior? Does the student contribute equally?

**Class Attendance / Punctuality:** Did the student adhere to the stated attendance policy?

**Deadlines / Class Preparation:** Were the intermediate and final deadlines met? Did the student arrive to class with work prepared as assigned, on time, and without excuse?

## **Grading**

- **75% Process + Realization**
- **25% Professionalism**

## Individual Course Grades

**A**            **Excellent without exception**

**A–**          **Excellent**

The student displays an exceptional perspective in critique participation, response to criticism, professional conduct, an advanced understanding of course material, and is able to achieve remarkable results above and beyond suggested project parameters. (Numerical Value: A = 4.0; A– = 3.7)

**B+**          **Above average**

**B**            **Average**

**B–**          **Acceptable**

The student displays a positive perspective in critique participation, response to criticism, professional conduct, a competent understanding of course material, and is able to achieve above average results while fulfilling suggested project parameters. (Numerical Value: B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B– = 2.7)

**C+**          **Acceptable**

**C**            **Acceptable (C is the lowest passing grade for graduate students)**

In some instances the student displays a positive perspective in critique participation, response to criticism, professional conduct, an understanding of course material, and applies it to assigned problems satisfactorily, meeting basic expectations but not pushing beyond suggested project parameters. (Numerical Value: C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0)

**F**            **Failing (any grade of C – or below is a failing grade)**

The student has failed to meet the minimum standards for the course. (Numerical Value: 0.0)

**INC**        **Incomplete**

A grade of incomplete may be given if due to non-academic reasons the student finds it impossible to complete all assignments. If a student wishes to receive an incomplete for a course, they must request it in writing no later than the last scheduled meeting for the course. Failure to meet this deadline will result in a failing grade for the course. All work must be completed within 8 weeks of the last class meeting or the INC will convert to a failing grade (F).

## Overall Program Standing

All student's records are reviewed at the end of each semester to determine whether students who have failed to remain in good standing may continue in the program. To be in good standing, all graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0 (equivalent of a B). A graduate student who's GPA falls below a 3.0 at any time may be subject to dismissal. The specific conditions under which this policy will be invoked are as set forth by the dean of each school. Written notification will be furnished to the student by the dean.

## POLICIES

**Institute-wide policies listed in the "Community Standards" section of the bulletin:** Please acquaint yourself with the Institute-wide policies listed in the Bulletin under "Community Standards" and which include policies on attendance, academic integrity, plagiarism, computer, intellectual property, and network use.

**Policy on students with disabilities:** Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must obtain clearance from the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. They should contact Mai McDonald, Disability Services Coordinator, in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Main Building, Lower Level: 718-636-3711.

**Any additional applicable school, departmental, or personal course policies**

**Attendance & Conduct:** The continued registration of any student is contingent upon regular attendance, the quality of work and proper conduct. Irregular attendance, neglect of work, failure to comply with Institute rules and official notices or conduct not consistent with general good order are regarded as sufficient reasons for dismissal.

If a student has any unexcused absences during the semester, upon the discretion of the instructor the student's final semester grade may be reduced by one letter grade. If a student has more than two unexcused absences during the semester, upon the discretion of the instructor the student may receive a failing grade (F) for the course.

Tardiness and early departure will not be tolerated.

Students are allowed excused absences in certain circumstances: illness or observance of religious holidays. In cases of illness, documentation proving the illness must be provided to the instructor; in cases of religious holidays, the student must notify the instructor in writing at the beginning of the semester when those days will occur.

**Religious Beliefs:** Pratt Institute recognizes and respects the diversity of its students and their respective religious obligations and practices. The Institute will therefore make every effort to afford all individuals appropriate opportunity to fulfill those religious obligations and practices. With the concurrence of the appropriate deans and academic administrators, students will have the opportunity to make up examinations that are missed because of religious obligations and practices.