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Course website:
www.christianmarcschmidt.com/NYU2009

Course Description

Information sources that have the power to impact our day-to-day lives on topics such as global and domestic politics, health, the economy, and the environment, are now readily available online. The best information design work is still primarily relegated to obscure journals and websites, and asks too much comprehension from the viewer. This workshop aims to bring information sources we all care about into the mainstream. Our goal will be to explore how selective streams of information can be sited and expressed in a way that not only creates engagement on the part of the viewer, but inspires action.

Students will work on a semester-long design project based on an information source of their choice. Basic programming (Processing or Actionscript) skills are required.

The class will be conducted as a design studio with bi-monthly critiques. It will include some seminar discussions and guest visits by experts in the design profession.

All aspects of visual communication will be addressed, with an emphasis on typography, layout, color, and motion. Students need not have any formal design training, but should come with a particular interest in and commitment to honing their design skills.

Recommended reading

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson
Metaphors We Live By

Janet Abrams & Peter Hall
Else/Where: Mapping — New Cartographies of Networks and Territories

Ellen Lupton
Thinking with Type

(For other texts and resources, see the course website: www.christianmarcschmidt.com/NYU2009/resources.php)

Semester Project

Curtis Wong, director of Microsoft's Next Media Group, has developed a model of experience in 3 levels: *engagement*, *context*, and *reference*. The first (or highest) level of interaction between a viewer and an object such as a work of art or a source of information is *engagement*. After the viewer is engaged, he is predisposed to receiving contextual information about the work of art or source of information. And only after the viewer has reached the *context* level of interaction, is he receptive to deeper and more thorough *reference* content.

The most successful information experiences out there today seem to fall in the reference category. The viewer is launched into a sophisticated information application with a vast resource of data, but does not know how to connect to the data or how to make it relevant to his life. Our goal for the semester will be to achieve such a high level of engagement in our information experiences that our target audiences will understand how the

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information connects to their lives and will be inspired to take some kind of related and constructive action.

This semester, each student will select a source of information to work with that he or she cares about. The information source should be related to a specific time-based event. During the course of the semester, students will create a compelling expression of that information that effectively tells a story about the selected source. Special consideration will be given to the form and siting (or location) of this representation. Possibilities for the form are open. They can be anything from a screen-based interactive, to a series of print pieces, to a haptic device or lighting installation.

Assignments

Assignment 1 – Due by Week 2

The class will collect examples of “jaw-dropping” statistics that highlight a particularly surprising situation or trend. Students will present their examples during class, articulating the rationale behind their choices, followed by a group discussion on the role of visualization in relation to the statistic, both in answering questions centered around its cause and credibility, and as a call-to-action.

Assignment 2 – Due by Week 4

Create an initial semester project proposal in form of a visual presentation to communicate your idea to the class. This should include a description of a desired direction for an information experience as well as some initial research about what sources exist online or elsewhere.

Mainstreaming Information
Interactive Telecommunications Program
NYU Tisch School of the Arts
Spring 2009

Course Syllabus

January 26, 2009

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Class Schedule

Class 1 - Jan 26

Introductions and course overview

Class 2 - Feb 2

Discussion of first assignment

Lecture: *Survey of Information Visualization*

Class 3 - Feb 9

Field trip (TBD)

Class 4 - Feb 23

Presentation of semester project proposals

Lecture: *History of Information Visualization*

Class 5 - March 2

Individual project reviews

Class 6 - March 9

Class review of semester projects

Class 7 - March 23

Individual project reviews

Class 8 - March 30

Design workshop

Class 9 - April 6

Mid-review of semester projects with guest critics

Class 10 - April 13

Individual project reviews

Class 11 - April 20

Individual project reviews

Class 12 - April 27

Final review of semester projects with guest critics