

Intro to Digital Design | FA 2302

Sul Ross State University, Fall 2025

Instructor:

Shea Carley

sec18hp@sulross.edu

512-496-8917

Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to the fundamental concepts, tools, and techniques of digital design. Students will explore the principles of graphic design as they apply to digital media, including layout, color theory, typography, and image manipulation. The course emphasizes creative problem-solving and the development of technical skills using industry-standard software. Through a series of projects, students will gain hands-on experience in creating effective digital designs for various media platforms.

What to Expect

In this course, you will explore the essential principles of digital design, including typography, color theory, layout, and image editing. You will also gain hands-on experience with industry-standard tools such as Adobe Creative Cloud, which will be integral to completing your assignments and projects.

Course Goals

- Explore the fundamentals of graphic design
- Learn skills and techniques utilizing Adobe Creative Cloud
- Understand a variety of approaches to digital design
- Evaluate and create quality designs
- Develop and utilize technical vocabulary
- Critically analyze and provide feedback on digital designs

Course Structure

This is an asynchronous online course, meaning you have the flexibility to complete the weekly assignments and participate in discussions without the obligation of a formal meeting time. However, it is crucial to stay on track with the course schedule to ensure you are building on your skills each week. All course materials, including lectures, readings, assignments, and discussion forums, will be available on Blackboard.

Participation and Engagement

While we do not have scheduled class meetings, active participation is still an essential component of this course. Engaging in discussion forums and peer reviews will not only help

you refine your ideas but also allow you to learn from your classmates' perspectives. Your participation will count towards your final grade, so be sure to contribute thoughtfully and regularly.

Communication

My role is to support your learning journey, and I encourage you to reach out with any questions or concerns. I am available via email and will respond to inquiries as quickly as possible. Additionally, I offer virtual office hours by appointment, where we can discuss any challenges you might be facing or provide further clarification on assignments.

Class Environment & Student Support

This class is structured to be accessible to everyone. I am more than happy to work with you on your individual needs. My commitment is to help you meet the learning objectives of this course and support your academic journey. If you feel that your performance in class is being impacted by outside experiences, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me.

Even though we do not meet in person, I aim to foster an online environment that feels supportive, collaborative, and safe for all. There will be an emphasis on free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas in our projects and in our discussions. We must all help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. There will be zero tolerance for harassment, belittlement, or discrimination against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference.

Required Course Materials

- Adobe Creative Cloud (Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign)
- Adobe Learn
- Introduction to Graphic Design: A Guide to Thinking, Process, and Style (Ebook)
- Sketchbook/Notebook
- Digital Camera (the one on your phone should work)
- Scanner (recommended)
- Drawing tablet (optional)

Weekly Responsibilities

By Tuesday morning each week, a PowerPoint presentation will be posted on Blackboard under section "PowerPoints" presenting graphic design concepts and skill building techniques in Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, or InDesign. These will also include links to exercises in Adobe Learn. Required readings from your textbook or other sources and/or videos will be posted under the "Readings/Videos" section. Design assignments will be addressed in the PowerPoint presentation and under the "Assignments" section on Blackboard. Please read through all materials carefully.

Discussion Boards

Design Assignment Discussion Board:

Post completed digital art assignments in the weekly discussion board by midnight on Friday the week of the assignment's due date. Comment and provide feedback on at least three other students' work by midnight on the following Monday. Smaller assignments will be due the week they are assigned, while more time-intensive assignments will be due at a later date. Late assignments will be accepted through the weekend, but 1 point (one letter grade) will be deducted for every two days late. Late assignments will not be accepted after 6 days unless in the case of illness, emergency, or particularly challenging outside circumstances – you must reach out to the instructor if anything comes up that prevents you from being able to complete assignments.

Reading/Film Response Discussion Board:

You will occasionally be assigned readings or films. Post responses to each assigned reading/film in the Reading/Film Response discussion board by midnight the following Monday.

Exercises Discussion Board:

After completing the Adobe Learn exercises as assigned in the weekly PowerPoint, post the resulting document in the Exercises discussion board.

Questions Discussion Board:

If you have any questions related to concepts or techniques, feel free to post them under the Questions Discussion board. While you are always welcome to email me individually, when it comes to design-specific questions, it will be more productive for all of us to be able to read resolutions and contribute ideas towards inquiries. The more brains at work, the better – let's learn together.

Assessment & Grading Criteria

Design Assignments: 5 points each (40 points total)

Exercises: 10 points

Reading/Film Responses: 10 points

Class Participation (Responses to Classmates Work): 10 points

Final Project: 30 points

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources unless permission is expressly given for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

ADA Statement:

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartz@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to expressively communicate an original idea or concept visually through an original artwork.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in writing within the art discipline.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of professional practices pertaining to their area of specialization.

Marketable Skills

Creating ideas with independence of thought

- Students will learn to produce work in a timely manner.
- Use of original concepts and non-clichéd ideas.
- Demonstrate the ability to create and curate a cohesive professional exhibition of well-crafted and thematic work with a defined technique or personal style.
- Ability to produce professional documentation including advertising (posters & postcards), artist statement, press release, resume, digital records.
- Faculty will integrate the information into lectures, workshops, etc.

Communicating professionally through written and spoken presentation

- Students will demonstrate the ability to create a cohesive capstone with a defined technique or personal style.
- Ability to produce a professional portfolio that meets current industry standards.
- Faculty will integrate the information into lectures, workshops, etc.

Solving problems through critical thinking

- Students will learn to produce work in a timely manner.
- Use of original concepts and non-clichéd ideas.
- Demonstrate the ability to create and curate a cohesive professional exhibition of well-crafted and thematic work with a defined technique or personal style.
- Ability to produce professional documentation including advertising (posters & postcards), artist statement, press release, resume, digital records.
- Faculty will integrate the information into lectures, workshops, etc.

Tentative Class Schedule

Week 1

Course Overview

Assignments:

- Introductions on discussion board

Week 2

Introduction to Adobe Illustrator

Basic Principles of Graphic Design

Assignments:

- Collecting: Graphic Design is All Around Us (Due Friday)

Week 3

Creating a Flat Image in Illustrator

Tracing an Image in Illustrator

Assignments:

- Artwork Renderings (Due Friday)

Week 4

Introduction to Color Theory

Turning hand drawings into digital illustrations

Assignments:

- Hand Drawn to Digital in Color: Portrait or Landscape (Due Week 5)

Week 5

Introduction to Typography

Assignments:

- Hand Drawn to Digital (Due Friday)
- Postcard Design (Due Week 6)

Week 6

Visual Hierarchies

Masks, Textures, & Effects

Assignments:

- Postcard Design (Due Friday)

Week 7

Introduction to Photoshop

Workspace Basics

Photo Adjustments and Corrections

Assignments:

- Basic Photo Editing and Retouching (Due Friday)

Week 8

Getting to know Layers, Selections, Color, Layer Masks

Free Use Images

Assignments:

- Digital Collage (Due Week 9)

Week 9

Adding Text and Shapes

Assignments:

- Digital Collage (Due Friday)
- Concert Poster or Book Cover Design (Due Week 10)

Week 10

Introduction to InDesign

Trifold Brochure

Assignments:

- Concert Poster or Book Cover (Due Friday)
- Trifold Menu or Brochure (Due Week 12)

Week 11

Designing a book, magazine, or catalog

Creating an EBook

Final Project - Zine

Assignments:

- Trifold Menu or Brochure (Due Friday)

Week 12

Visiting Designer

Assignments:

- Submit proposal for Final Project (Due Friday)

Week 13

Visiting Designer

Assignments:

- Final Project - Zine

Week 14 – Thanksgiving Break!

Assignments:

- Final Project - Zine

Week 15

Visiting Designer

Assignments:

- Final Project - Zine

Week 16 – Final Project Due & Critique