GD 20 Course Outline as of Fall 2026

CATALOG INFORMATION

Dept and Nbr: GD 20 Title: INTRO TO TYPOGRAPHY
Full Title: Introduction to Typography and Letterforms
Last Reviewed: 5/12/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	3.00	Lecture Scheduled	3.00	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	52.50
Minimum	3.00	Lab Scheduled	0	4	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	3.00		Contact Total	52.50
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 105.00 Total Student Learning Hours: 157.50

Title 5 Category:	AA Degree Applicable
Grading:	Grade or P/NP
Repeatability:	00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP
Also Listed As:	
Formerly:	

Catalog Description:
Students will be introduced to typography for visual communication in graphic design. The class emphasizes the use of typography in the design process, including aspects of analytical and creative design through typical media, including: a brochure, poster, or magazine ad. Students will explore the evolution and classification of letterforms, as well as investigate features of structure, format, legibility, and expression. Exercises include both hand and digital skills, including hand lettering and experimental type, with an emphasis on the application of typography.

Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended Preparation:
Course Completion or Concurrent Enrollment in GD 51

Limits on Enrollment:

Schedule of Classes Information:
Description: Students will be introduced to typography for visual communication in graphic design. The class emphasizes the use of typography in the design process, including aspects of

analytical and creative design through typical media, including: a brochure, poster, or magazine ad. Students will explore the evolution and classification of letterforms, as well as investigate features of structure, format, legibility, and expression. Exercises include both hand and digital skills, including hand lettering and experimental type, with an emphasis on the application of typography. (Grade or P/NP)
Prerequisites/Corequisites:
Recommended: Course Completion or Concurrent Enrollment in GD 51
Limits on Enrollment:
Transfer Credit: CSU;UC.
Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:

AS Degree:	**Area**			Effective:	Inactive:
CSU GE:	**Transfer Area**			Effective:	Inactive:
IGETC:	**Transfer Area**			Effective:	Inactive:
CSU Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 2009	Inactive:	
UC Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 2009	Inactive:	

CID:

Certificate/Major Applicable:
Both Certificate and Major Applicable

COURSE CONTENT

Student Learning Outcomes:
At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:
1. Demonstrate understanding of basic terminology related to typography and graphic design.
2. Develop technical and creative problem-solving skills to conceptualize, design, produce, and present original applications of typography on graphic design projects.
3. Analyze the effectiveness of visual communications through typographic designs utilizing the critique process.

Objectives:
At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:
1. Create original typographic design projects, synthesizing the parameters of the assignment within a specific deadline.
2. Evaluate and defend their projects and typographic choices, and compare them to their peers during the critique process using critical thinking skills.
3. Utilize typographic terminology and measurements.
4. Design typographic layouts, synthesize their knowledge of other software, and build upon their knowledge of design principles and elements.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of letterform characteristics within the five classic typeface families.
6. Create a portfolio of finished typographic projects.

Topics and Scope:

I. Skills assessment and course orientation
II. History, Contemporary Trends, Language, Aesthetics and Emerging Media as they Relate to Typography
III. Anatomy of Letterforms
    A. Terminology including the internal grid structure, measurements and specifying type setting
    B. Origins of typographic letterforms and the five classic typefaces classifications, type families, and identification
IV. Fonts and Families
V. Review of Typographic Tools and Features used in Design Software Programs such as Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign
VI. Type Measurements: Points and Picas
VII. Type Layout and Formatting
    A. Letter-spacing, word-spacing, kerning, tracking, leading, line length, alignment, paragraph considerations
    B. Paragraph space and typographic consistency
    C. Intro to Grid Theory
    D. Text wrap
VIII. Design Principles
    A. Creating typographic appeal and hierarchy
    B. Page layout and compositional considerations: using the formal elements and principles of design as they relate to typography in design
    C. Expressive typography
    D. Optical considerations, punctuation, display initials, modifying color, spot colors, process colors, digital and projected colors
    E. Creating visual hierarchy and emphasis, grids
IX. Selecting and Mixing Typefaces
    A. Concord and contrast
    B. Mixing faces
    C. Designing with text and display fonts
X. Readability and Legibility
    A. Designing for maximum effectiveness
    B. Targeting particular audiences.
XI. Hand Lettering and Typeface Creation
    A. Brush pen and calligraphy pen
    B. Drawn letterforms
    C. Digitizing
    D. Converting into typeface
    E. Chalk
    F. Process
    G. Inking
XII. Using Type Effectively
XIII. Typographic Details
    A. Headlines and subheads
    B. Body copy, hyphenation, and line breaks
    C. Pull quotes and captions
    D. Web typography
XIV. Typographic Refinements
    A. Small caps and old-style numerals
    B. Ligatures and open type alternates
    C. Punctuation style and refinements

XV. Proofreading and Pre-Press
XVI. Preparing Files for Print
XVII. Creating Professional Quality Designs from Concept to Completion, avoiding Amateur Pitfalls
XVIII. Trends in Type
XIX. Type Options for Web Design
XX. Type across Software Platforms
XXI. Group and Individual Critiques of Typographic Design utilizing relevant Terminology and Concepts
XXII. Free and Commercial Font Sites:
A. Features, pros and cons
B. Common font formats including Truetype and OpenType
C. How to download a font for use in a graphic design project
D. Font copyright concerns
E. Comparison of commercial versus free font sites on the web
F. Different font types and basic techniques for downloading and using them

Assignment:

1. Weekly reading assignments (1 - 50 pages)
2. Exercises/activities centering around the use of type (6 - 16), such as:
a. A layout based project that focuses primarily on the use of type
b. A layout based project that examines type concerns under a variety of different types of constraints
c. A web based project that uses type effectively, taking into consideration type needs as related to digital environments
d. A print based project that explores, examines and repurposes type found in the student's everyday environment.
e. Advertising based project that explores the use of type while experimenting with different color modes (CMYK and gray scale)
f. Identifying and labeling the anatomy of typefaces
g. Matching typefaces with appropriate font families
h. Practice creating hand lettering
i. In class exercises that expands on weekly topics
3. Design based projects centering around the use of type (1 - 6), such as:
a. Based on an instructor selected topic, create two versions of a poster, one using hand lettering completed by hand and a second design digitally created
b. Create your typeface and use it in a digital design
c. Create a newsletter based on instructor selected topics
d. Locating type in everyday life, photograph it, then use the type to design cards detailing where the letter was found, what's its type category and more. This is a printed assignment
4. Oral or written critiques: Group and individual
5. Exam and/or Quizzes
6. Attendance and participation in in-class critiques

Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

Writing: Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

Construct newsletter(s) based on select topics within typography	Writing 0 - 10%

Problem Solving: Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

Exercises/activities centering around the use of type	Problem solving 20 - 40%

Skill Demonstrations: All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

Design based projects centering around the use of type	Skill Demonstrations 20 - 60%

Exams: All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

Exam and/or Quizzes	Exams 0 - 40%

Other: Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

Attendance, participation, critiques	Other Category 5 - 20%

Representative Textbooks and Materials:
The World's Best Typography 41 (2020). The Type Directors Club of New York. Schmidt Hermann Verlag. (2021).
Instructor prepared materials