GD 62 Course Outline as of Fall 2026

CATALOG INFORMATION

Dept and Nbr: GD 62 Title: COLOR THEORY
Full Title: Color Theory for Designers
Last Reviewed: 3/10/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	1.50	Lecture Scheduled	1.50	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	26.25
Minimum	1.50	Lab Scheduled	0	6	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	1.50		Contact Total	26.25
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 52.50 Total Student Learning Hours: 78.75

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 the study of the principles, theories, and applications of additive and subtractive color in two dimensions.

Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended Preparation:

Limits on Enrollment:

Schedule of Classes Information:
Description: Students will be introduced to the study of the principles, theories, and applications of additive and subtractive color in two dimensions. (Grade or P/NP)
Prerequisites/Corequisites:
Recommended:
Limits on Enrollment:
Transfer Credit: CSU;
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 2019	Inactive:	
UC Transfer:		Effective:		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. Effectively select and pair colors within a design that work in harmony with the desired communication goals.
2. Identify and create color schemes and harmonies, with an awareness of color interactions.
3. Effectively work with color management tools and color systems in digital design software.

Objectives:
At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:
1. Identify the fundamental color schemes.
2. Create aesthetically complete designs and images that demonstrate a working knowledge of:
   a. Color systems and color organization
   b. Principles of color perception - light, vision, and the brain
   c. Value, hue, intensity (chroma), and color temperature
   d. Additive and subtractive color (digital color vs analog)
   e. Relationships between color and composition
   f. Color usage in contemporary art and design
3. Make individual aesthetic decisions and judgments related to their own artwork.
4. Skillfully use a variety of materials, techniques and tools.
5. Independently produce finished color assignments that demonstrate an understanding of color theory and principles within the context of design and art history.
6. Proof color to achieve desired communication goals.
7. Comprehend and describe how color is perceived biologically, psychologically, culturally, symbolically and intuitively.
8. Work effectively with digital color tools found Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign.

Topics and Scope:

I. History of Color in the Arts and Development of the Color Palette
II. How Color is Perceived - Light, Vision, and the Brain
III. Color Systems and Color Organization
   A. Value

B. Hue
C. Intensity
D. Additive and subtractive color
E. Primary colors
F. Secondary colors
G. Tertiary colors
H. Analogous
I. Complimentary
J. Split complimentary
K. Monotone
L. Color temperature

IV. Colors, Palettes and Materials
A. Paints (oil and water-based)
B. Color-aid
C. Color pencils
D. Digital screen

V. Color and Composition
A. Harmony
B. Interaction
1. Color effects on each other
2. Overlapping transparency
C. Contrast
D. Audience
E. Pairing colors
F. Identifying and understanding color mixtures

VI. Selection
A. Color and mood
B. Cultural influences on color usage
C. Color appropriateness
D. Color psychology
E. Spot colors: Global vs non-global
F. Pantone and other color systems

VII. Color and Technology
A. Screen vs print (RGB vs CMYK)
B. Adobe Photoshop
C. Adobe Illustrator
D. Adobe InDesign

VIII. Color Management Systems
A. Digital color vs analog color
B. Adobe Kuler (Capture)
C. Libraries

IX. Color usage in Contemporary Art and Design

X. Printing needs
A. Proofing colors
B. Paper and color
C. Inkjet vs Laser
D. Screen printing and other printmaking processes

Assignment:

1. Weekly reading assignments (1 - 50 pages)
2. Skill demonstrating in-class exercises (1-8), such as:

a. Exercises expanding on content
b. Create a color using color swatches pulled from the world around us
c. Color matching: Using primary paint colors to create color matches to swatches
d. Using prisms to create rainbows

3. Problem solving color assignments (1-4), such as:
a. An assignment that requires color matching across multiple media. Could include creating a 25 color, color wheel and reproducing it in multiple mediums (digital, color aid swatches, environmental swatches, paints, photographs)
b. An assignment that works with multiple target audiences. Must make the best color choice for the target audience and explain their choice in writing
c. An assignment created using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and/or InDesign, that ends as a printed piece, making apparent the difference between a printed design's end result and the design's appearance on the screen. As well as, how to best resolve color shifts
d. Identify poor color selections and pairing, then replace them with better solutions
e. Assignments in which a variety of color systems and application techniques, appropriate to a variety of art historical movements and styles, are used to create creative compositions and finished works
f. Basic design assignment that utilize the principles of color theory requiring a demonstration of knowledge and skill
4. Peer-to-peer critique and discussions to improve application and demonstration of vocabulary within the context of color theory (0-4).
5. Quiz(zes) (0-8)
6. Exam(s) (0-8)

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.

None, This is a degree applicable course but assessment tools based on writing are not included because problem solving assessments and skill demonstrations are more appropriate for this course.	Writing 0 - 0%

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

Color Assignments	Problem solving 20 - 60%

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

In-class exercises	Skill Demonstrations 10 - 40%

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

Quizzes, exams	Exams 10 - 40%

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

Attendance and participation: critiques, presentations, discussions	Other Category 5 - 20%

Representative Textbooks and Materials:
Applying Color Theory to Digital Media and Visualization. 2nd Edition. Rhyne, Theresa-Marie. CRC Press. December 2024
Instructor prepared materials