

**GD 51 Course Outline as of Fall 2026****CATALOG INFORMATION**

Dept and Nbr: GD 51 Title: INTRO TO GRAPHIC DESIGN

Full Title: Introduction to Graphic Design

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:**

In this course, students will be introduced to visual communications in the field of graphic design. The course includes concept development, the creative design process, production, and presentation techniques through the development of design projects on various media, including beginning computer software skills. Emphasis will be placed on the application of basic design principles to graphic design problems in visual communications.

**Prerequisites/Corequisites:****Recommended Preparation:****Limits on Enrollment:****Schedule of Classes Information:**

Description: In this course, students will be introduced to visual communications in the field of graphic design. The course includes concept development, the creative design process, production, and presentation techniques through the development of design projects on various media, including beginning computer software skills. Emphasis will be placed on the application

of basic design principles to graphic design problems in visual communications. (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 2009 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. Analyze the effectiveness of visual communications on graphic design projects utilizing the critique process.
2. Create original design projects that define, analyze, and solve problems in visual communication.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of basic vocabulary related to the graphic design field.

**Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Evaluate graphic design career options and identify areas that match the student's interests, personality, and skills.
2. Demonstrate and employ conceptual thinking as the basis of the design process.
3. Analyze professional graphic design pieces and explain how design elements, principles, and techniques covered in the course have been applied.
4. Review and employ the fundamental theories and methodologies of visual communication.
5. Integrate design elements with an understanding of the intention with which elements are chosen, organized and created.
6. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of digital and traditional tools and techniques for design and production.
7. Critique their own and the work of others, offering constructive suggestions; while demonstrating knowledge of design vocabulary as well as the elements and principles of design composition through the critical evaluation process.

**Topics and Scope:**

## I. Design Process

- A. Understanding project and client requirements
- B. Brainstorming
- C. Thinking conceptually
- D. Research
  - 1. Strategies for organizing design examples for later reference
  - 2. High quality design blogs and design forums
  - 3. Commercial and free graphics/stock photo sites on the web
- E. Executing effective basic visual communications
- F. Thumbnail, rough, comprehensive presentation skills
- G. Production and presentation skills

## II. Principles of Design

- A. Unity
- B. Balance/harmony
- C. Rhythm
- D. White space/negative space
- E. Lines and shapes
- F. Simplicity
- G. Proximity
- H. Alignment
- I. Repetition
- J. Contrast
- K. Hierarchy/flow/focal point
- L. Grid/composition
- M. Characteristics of color in additive and subtractive color systems
- N. Typography terms, classification, and application considerations. For example: fonts, style, size, placement, case, alignments, and attributes.
- O. Graphic Resonance. Use of tone and denotative & connotative communications in graphic design.

## III. Graphic Design and the Computer

- A. Tools in industry standard design software
- B. Traditional and digital roles in the design process
- C. Introduction to production best practices
  - 1. Use of menus and windows to create, store and retrieve documents
  - 2. Document management
  - 3. Input and output procedures
- D. File Management

## IV. Analyzing Graphic Design career options

- A. Overview of Graphic Design business
- B. Career and education resources

## V. Industry standards and best practices

## VI. Resources for Designers

- A. General introduction to Graphic Design resources and online tools (including plug-ins, tutorials, and online bookmarking sites)
- B. Software sites on the web:
  - 1. Freeware
  - 2. Shareware
  - 3. Commercial
- C. Portfolio sites and design galleries valuating the quality of online information

## VII. History and Contemporary Trends

## VIII. Class Critiques

## Assignment:

1. Written career paper and/or presentation with notes
2. In class exercises (6-16), such as:
  - a. Worksheets, exercises, or assignments that explore the fundamental design principles and elements
  - b. Hands-on visual communications problem solving and process for projects including: research, strategy, objectives, concept and design development, production and implementation.
  - c. Create a human color wheel used to explore a variety of color schemes and color principles: each participant represents 1 -2 colors on the wheel
3. Graphic design project(s) (1-4), such as:
  - a. Creating graphic design projects from concept to a finalized design that are effective visual communications
  - b. Assignments focusing on the conceptual development in project-based digital images and/or time-based works
  - c. Creation of designs through various digital media input and output methods using vector or raster-based software
  - d. Using client criteria, design a icon that effectively communicates to a specific target audience
4. Class participation and attendance, such as
  - a. Group and individual critiques in oral and written formats
  - b. Participating in, in-class learning activities
5. Quizzes and/or exams

## 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.

Written career paper and/or presentation with note

Writing  
5 - 20%

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

In class exercises

Problem solving  
5 - 40%

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

Graphic design project(s)

Skill Demonstrations  
40 - 60%

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

Quizzes and/or exams

Exams  
5 - 15%

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

Class participation and attendance

Other Category  
5 - 15%

**Representative Textbooks and Materials:**

Graphic Design School: The Principles and Practice of Graphic Design (7th). Dabner, David; Stewart, Sandra; Vickress, Abbie. Wiley: 2020. (classic).

Instructor prepared materials