AN MFA IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION THAT GETS DOWN TO BUSINESS.

Empowering Visual Communication professionals seeking to achieve a higher level of proficiency in creative design innovation, design professional practice, and the pursuit of a career in design education.

CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES CLASSES
Exploring inventive creative processes to gain a heightened understanding of what makes an idea viable and sustainable.

MFA/MBA INTERDISCIPLINARY CLASSES
Empowering an individual's business innovation through professional practice leadership, strategy, process and product.

PEDAGOGY CLASSES
Preparing Design Educators for a robust job market need, with a terminal degree.

CONTACT VIRGIL SCOTT FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS.

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Program Description

The Advanced Texas A&M-Commerce Master of Fine Arts program in Visual Communication centers on meeting the needs of practicing professionals in the expanding field of Visual Communication who aspire to achieve a higher level of proficiency in creative design innovation, design professional practice and/or to pursue a career in design education.

The TAMU-C MFA program explores creative process innovation; design development; inter-disciplinary design community initiatives; design-professional practice leadership, strategy, process and product; and design-teaching methodologies grounded in a social perspective.

The MFA Visual Communication thesis is the capstone project that addresses an issue of social, educational, environmental or business significance utilizing research methods that yield new knowledge in the chosen field of study. The thesis culminates in a published scholarly thesis paper and thesis exhibition.

Creative Methodologies Classes (Creative Design Innovation)

ARTS 540, Studio 1, Creative Methodologies
ARTS 544 Studio 5, Design Research Methods
ARTS 546 Studio 7, Designing Through the Environment
ARTS 545 Studio 6, Thesis Topics
ARTS 518 Thesis Development
ARTS 548 Exhibition Development

MFA and MBA Interdisciplinary Classes (Professional Practice)

ARTS 542 Studio 3, Winning Audiences, Achieving Results
ARTS 543 Studio 4, Cross-Cultural Communication
ARTS 549 Studio 9, User-centered Design Experience
ARTS 550 Studio 10, Ideation, Process and Product
ARTS 551 Studio 11, Creative Promotion and Innovation 1

Pedagogy Classes (Design Education)

ARTS 541 Studio 2, Design Education Theory & Practice
ARTS 547 Studio 8, Design Teaching Mentorship
ARTH 507, The History of Graphic Design
ARTH 508, The History of Advertising & Consumerism
ART 502, Design Teaching Methods
ART 506, Design Teaching Environment

Note: MFA courses and sequence are subject to change based on program needs.
GRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Studio - 35 hours
ARTS 540 Studio 1: Creative Methodologies
ARTS 541 Studio 2: Design Education Theory & Practice
ARTS 542 Studio 3: Winning Audiences: Story Telling / Presentation
ARTS 543 Studio 4: Cross-Cultural Communication
ARTS 544 Studio 5: Design Research Methods
ARTS 545 Studio 6: Thesis Topics
ARTS 546 Studio 7: Design Grant Writing
ARTS 547 Studio 8: Design Teaching Mentorship
ARTS 549 Studio 9: User-Centered Design Experience
ARTS 550 Studio 10: Ideation, Process and Product
ARTS 551 Studio 11: Creative Promotion and Innovation 1

Art History - 6 hours
ARTH 507 Art History: The History of Graphic Design (Summer or May-Mini)
ARTH 508 Art History: The History of Advertising & Consumerism (Summer or May-Mini)

Seminar Practicum - 6 hours
ART 502: Design Teaching Methods / Pedagogy 1: Pedagogy Classroom
ART 506: Design Teaching Environment / Pedagogy 2: Pedagogy Campus

New Learning Context - 3 hours
ART 548: Exhibition Development

Thesis - 6 hours
ARTS 518: Thesis Development

Total Semester Hours: 62

Note: MFA courses and sequence are subject to change based on program needs.
GRADUATE COURSE SEQUENCE

YEAR 1
Year 1-Fall
ARTS 540 Studio 1: Creative Methodologies

Year 1-Spring
ARTS 541 Studio 2: Design Education Theory & Practice
ARTS 542 Studio 3: Winning Audiences: Story Telling / Presentation

Year 1-May-Mini / Summer 1
ARTH 507 Art History: The History of Graphic Design (Summer or May-Mini)
ARTS 549 Studio 9: User-Centered Design Experience

YEAR 2
Year 2-Fall
ART 502: Design Teaching Methods / Pedagogy 1: Pedagogy Classroom
ARTS 550 Studio 10: Ideation, Process and Product

Year 2-Spring
ART 506: Design Teaching Environment / Pedagogy 2:
ARTS 551 Studio 11: Creative Promotion and Innovation 1

Year 2-May-Mini / Summer 1
ARTH 508 Art History: The History of Advertising & Consumerism (Summer or May-Mini)
ARTS 543 Studio 4: Cross-Cultural Communication

YEAR 3
Year 3-Fall
ARTS 544 Studio 5: Design Research Methods
ARTS 545 Studio 6: Thesis Topics

Year 3-Spring
ARTS 546 Studio 7: Design Grant Writing
ARTS 548 Studio 9: Exhibition Development

Year 3-Summer 1
ARTS 547 Studio 8: Design Teaching Mentorship
ARTS 518: Thesis Development

Note: MFA courses and sequence are subject to change based on program needs.
Graduate Course Descriptions

Studio:

ARTS 540
Studio 1. Creative Methodologies, Four semester hours
Experimenting with both proven and experimental creative methodologies in a team based environment. An overview of innovative collaborative creative thinking processes. Pushing beyond one’s knowledge base through innovative role-play in self-problem solving techniques, gaining the knowledge and the tools to impart the creative process to others.

ARTS 541
Studio 2. Design Education, Theory & Practice, Four semester hours
Research and analysis through group discussion of design education theory, philosophy and methods. Examination and creation of teaching tools, assignments, and evaluation rubrics.

ARTS 542
Studio 3. Winning Audiences: Story Telling/ Presentation, Four semester hours
This course introduces students to basic skills surrounding persuasion and consensus-building. Students will learn to hone their oral and written presentations, and incorporate proven techniques for sharing ideas in a more coherent and compelling manner – effectively luring others (even skeptics) to listen, believe, and embrace a new vision.

ARTS 543
Studio 4. Cross-Cultural Marketing, Four semester hours
This course teaches advanced oral and written presentation skills within the context of a multicultural audience. Students will examine the forces at work in today’s global marketplace and fine-tune their ability to bridge the cultural divide in order to connect with audiences whose history, customs, and beliefs they do not share.

ARTS 544
Studio 5. Design Research Methods, Four semester hours
Understanding Human subject research testing (IRB) protocol and process necessary for data collection within the context of a thesis research paper. Conference abstracts and journal submission preparation. Gain knowledge in defining, developing and articulating new knowledge to be used in problem solving and thesis topic development. Experience the process of deep research into a single topic in individual and group settings.

ARTS 545
Studio 6. Thesis Topics, Four semester hours
Exploration and development of thesis topic pilots through research, abstracts, ideation, creative process and feasibility analysis. This course is designed to provide you with enlightenment, direction, feedback and focus as you embark your thesis discovery process. This class will function primarily as a think-tank dedicated to defining, examining, discussing and furthering the ideas that you bring to the table.

ARTS 546
Studio 7. Design Grant Writing, Four semester hours
Applying for a grant can seem like an overwhelming task. This grant writing class is designed to provide a foundation in the fundamentals of design-centric grant writing so that the task is easy and enjoyable. The class includes key components of a grant proposal, problem statements, developing goals and objectives, and writing a sample grant proposal.
Graduate Course Descriptions

Studio:

ARTS 547
STUDIO 8. DESIGN TEACHING MENTORSHIP, FOUR SEMESTER HOURS.
Pedagogy in-classroom undergraduate training experience. This course focuses on in-classroom observation and experience through the shadowing of a faculty member, and the creation and application of classroom assignments.

ARTS 549
STUDIO 9. USER-CENTERED DESIGN EXPERIENCE, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
An introduction to the understanding, development and implementation of user-centered design thinking and problem solving. Emphasis will be placed on user personas, ethnography and other observational approaches, along with rapid prototyping methods towards building insights into product and service development.

ARTS 550
STUDIO 10. IDEATION, PROCESS AND PRODUCT, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
This 16 week course will be centered around innovation focused on creating value through ethnography, research, ideation and strategy in a marketing frameset. Students will explore radical ways of design thinking to create new business models, or harness compelling value for products or services that do not currently exist in the marketplace. Projects will be collaborative and centered around the application of innovation through segmenting, brand positioning, target marketing, and the 4Ps (Product, Pricing, Promotion and Place).

ARTS 551
STUDIO 11. CREATIVE PROMOTION AND INNOVATION 1, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
This 16 week course will empower students to take their innovations and marketing plans to the next level and implement them into a viable and fundable enterprise. Students will create a prototype to be presented as a proof-of-concept with a compelling presentation to an angel investor. In addition, students will be introduced to issues related to the patent process and angel investment process as it relates to their innovations.

Art History:

ARTH 507
THE HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
This course focuses on the evolution of Graphic Design from the invention of writing and alphabets to the computer revolution. Topics include: medieval manuscript books, the origins of printing and typography, the Arts & Crafts movement, Victorian and Art Nouveau graphics, the influence of modern art on design, visual identity and conceptual imagery.

ARTH 508
THE HISTORY OF ADVERTISING & CONSUMERISM, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
This course is designed to give a broad overview of the nature of a consumerist society and how it drives and is driven by advertising. Lectures will explore the types and causes of consumerism, the things consumed by society and the promise of the "good life." Advertising impact will be discussed from the aspect of target markets and positioning of goods and services, and the pros and cons of a consumerist lifestyle.
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Seminars Practicum:

ART 502
DESIGN TEACHING METHODS, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
Pedagogy Classroom. Understanding the classroom through teaching method exploration role-play and design curriculum development. This course includes the creation of an entire university design curriculum, syllabi, assignments and grading rubrics.

ART 506
DESIGN TEACHING ENVIRONMENT, THREE SEMESTER HOURS.
Pedagogy Campus. This course deals with job-seeking skills, applications materials and the

New Learning Context:

ARTS 548
EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT, THREE SEMESTER HOURS
A self-directed study and development of a thesis exhibition, and research paper directed by a designated major professor and a selected thesis committee.

Thesis:

ARTS 518
THESIS EXHIBITION, SIX SEMESTER HOURS
Final thesis exhibition/execution process and final paper. A self-directed final study and development of a thesis exhibition, and final research paper directed by a designated major professor with feedback from a selected thesis committee.

Note: MFA courses and sequence are subject to change based on program needs.

This study resulted in a set of easy-to-use, at-home communication tools that helped ADD children develop their attention skills and improve task management / task completion during the morning and evening hours in the absence of medication. These tools provided a road map for structure and achievement by empowering the kids to make decisions regarding task prioritization and time allocation, and by providing documented positive reinforcement.

James Bell: “The Intuitive Association of Color and Sound”

This study explored and demonstrated the collective unconscious, intuitive association of color and sound; created color palettes based on musical scales; and developed, and subsequently demonstrated, a process to systematically convert the color of visual art into corresponding musical compositions.


Through a methodical and integrated program of business strategy, targeted communication and online networking, this study sought to build support for a national U.S. professional certification in graphic design. Undertaken in the earliest days of social media, this thesis demonstrated how now-common channels such as Facebook, twitter, blogging, and Web-based information could build a coalition and reenergize a movement that had languished for decades.

William D. Ward: “Common Ground for Religion Using the Language of Business”

This study translated the tenets of the world’s major religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, plus acknowledgment of Agnosticism and Atheism) into the language and context of business. By doing so, it removed the religious text and symbolism that can often be divisive and, instead, illuminated the many beliefs, principles and messages that these faiths and philosophies have in common. By presenting this new framework as an interactive online survey, it delivered a non-threatening experience of discovery, versus dogmatic preaching.

Thomas Anthony: “Universal Disaster Relief Symbol System: The Study of Communication Techniques in Crisis Situations”

This thesis addressed the problematic effect of language barriers in international relief operations and proposed a new, more culturally agnostic, symbolic communication system to facilitate the organization and delivery of services such as shelter, food, medical care, and more.

Suzanne Larkin: “The Potential of a New Multi-Sensory At Home Learning Reinforcement for Second and Third Grade Dyslexic Students”

This study is a uniquely designed multi-sensory at-home language learning reinforcement that can potentially increase learning outcomes for elementary students with dyslexia. Utilizing a visual language of words, definitions, stories, and experiential activities which are aligned with Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children’s fluency program Take Flight, students can achieve and maintain better word recognition, reading fluency and reading comprehension.
Clayton Rivenbark: “Symbolic Communication in Multiple-Hazard Mapping”

This study resulted in a new lexicon of graphic symbols (and a design methodology for creating additional symbols) for use on electronic hazard maps generated by Geographical Information Systems software. The new, more intuitive icon system was created to help emergency managers view, understand, respond to, and mitigate natural and man-made crises (e.g. earthquakes, hurricanes, aviation accidents, crime, etc.) faster, more efficiently, and with greater preparedness.

Josh Ege: “Pawsitive Method: Adopting Dogs Based on Lifestyle”

Making the decision to adopt a dog is a life-long commitment. When taking that step it is important to consider what type of dog is right for you. Many people relinquish dogs to animal shelters for reasons that could have been considered if the adopter had learned a bit more about the breed or breed mix before allowing a puppy’s cuteness convince them to take the animal home. For this study, a method was created to find a match based on the lifestyle of the adopter. As a part of that method, a redesigned cage card was tested to help adopters understand why certain breeds are a better match for them.

Rick Gavos: “The Sustainable Design Office: LEED-type Certification for Graphic Design”

Environmentally responsible practices in the graphic design profession are critical today with the current emphasis on waste accumulation, resource depletion, and global warming trends. Graphic design is often called upon to address cultural issues, cause-related interests, environmental concerns, and corporate social responsibilities, and yet designers and design firms are not held accountable for the artifacts they produce or the environmental impact of their production. This study attempts to define the parameters and guidelines for “green,” sustainable graphic design practices.

Broc Sears: “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Multimedia Information Graphics in the Learning Environment”

The purpose of this thesis is to measure the effectiveness of multimedia information graphics in a learning environment by identifying variance in recollection between static and animated formats and determining if certain data, when strategically emphasized, is recalled more successfully from the multimedia presentation. The results of the study could be used to guide those developing digital textbooks, training programs, business presentations and national and international news platforms when seeking alternative and concise communication solutions. Content creators can also benefit from the study’s research with regards to the performance and preferences of specific demographic segments.

Saul Torres: “Micro Donation Strategies for University Environments”

While non-profits look for new ideas to help them survive the current economy, it is also difficult to introduce unproven fundraising tactics when budgets have been scaled back. This thesis explores the potential for promoting micro donations, identified as donations between one and five dollars, within a university environment. Using North Texas area students and local food banks as test subjects, research results measure the effectiveness of five new ideas. These results are intended to prove that the power of social networks and large numbers can create a viable new strategy, while also creating the food bank advocates of tomorrow.
**2013  Lane Baker: “Encouraging Technological Interaction for Older Adults”**

By the year 2030 almost 20% of the US population will be over age 65. Right now this group is significantly underrepresented in the use and adoption of technology. Many studies have indicated that, within this age group, technological interaction can have many positive benefits. These benefits range from simply increasing social interaction to slowing the rate of cognitive function decline. This study will look at categories such as hardware, software, environment and the individuals themselves to determine what is and what is not working to encourage technological adoption in an ever growing and important segment of our population.

**Mark Rogers: “Citizen Photojournalism”**

Today’s newspaper industry is in chaos. Declining advertising revenue, dropping circulation, and the current recession has lead to severe problems in the newspaper industry. On top of that the Internet has provided many new ways for news consumers to get their news fix. The result is a severe loss of revenue, which has led to a contracting of newsroom staffs resulting in less and less news content. Smaller photo departments produce less news photography. What’s the solution? Millions of people carry high-resolution smart phones and have the ability to provide a new and legitimate source of news photography to our newspapers. They are Citizen Photojournalists.

**Marvin Gorley: “The Importance of Local History Education in Texas Public Schools”**

Many people know little about the history of their community. They were taught state, national, and world history in school but little, if any, local history. Significant local historical facts are being forgotten in communities all across Texas, because no consistent effort is being made to preserve them. Through a series of local history exhibits and a voluntary anonymous survey, this graduate study is researching the level of public support for teaching local history in public schools. If there are significant statewide positive results, the Texas State Board of Education will be requested to include local history courses in the state’s social studies curriculum.

**Mike Norton: “Photography Workshop Credential: A Universally Accepted Credential for Photography Workshops in National Parks”**

The National parks see workshops as part of their mandate to educate while the workshop leader sees beautiful scenery. The two groups should be on the same page but they are not. Each park sets the price for the issuance of a Commercial Use Authorization (CUA), which gives the workshop leader authorization to operate in the park. Because a CUA must be obtained from each park many workshop leaders ignore the CUAs. This study examined the feasibility of developing one universal CUA for photography workshops.
Rick Gavos, Visual Communication MFA graduate student, will be presenting his poster design of The Sustainable Design Office: LEED-type Certification for Graphic Design at the UCDA Design Education Summit - Catch 22. The event will be hosted by Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia on May 21-22, 2012.

His presentation will address the development of a “green” and sustainable certification program for graphic design utilizing certain tenets of the (LEED) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification program currently employed by architects. A unique methodology will be applied and tailored for graphic designers and design firms.

Congratulations Rick!

Suzanne Larkin, graduate student in the Visual Communication MFA program in Art, will be presenting at the 43rd Annual International Visual Literacy Conference Sept. 28th - Oct. 2nd at Seaview, in Galloway, New Jersey.

Her presentation will be focused on topics related to the interdisciplinary field of visual literacy in the arts, sciences, education, communication, design, and instructional technology.

Suzanne’s talk will address her thesis topic, Multi-Sensory At-Home Learning Reinforcement for Elementary Students with Dyslexia resulting from her collaborative effort with Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

Suzanne Larkin, 2011 Visual Communication MFA graduate, has been invited to speak at the 2012 Design Research Society Conference to be held this July at Chulalongkorn University.

DRS, founded in 1966 is the multi-disciplinary learned society for the global design community.

Suzanne’s thesis research topic, Multi-Sensory At-Home Learning Reinforcement for Elementary Students with Dyslexia resulted from her collaborative effort with Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

Congratulations Suzanne!

Victoria Clary, graduate student in the Visual Communication MFA program in Art, will be presenting at the International Conference on Design Principles and Practice’s 5th International Conference in Sapienza University of Rome in Rome, Italy, February 2 - 4.

Victoria’s talk will address her thesis abstract pilot study on The Creative Process in Photography: A Pre-Visualization Methodology.

Congratulations Victoria!
VisCom MFA Student, Yinan Wang, invited to speak at Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts in China.

Visual Communication MFA student Yinan Wang was invited to speak at the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts on January 9, 2013. Her presentation focused on the similarities and differences in the undergraduate graphic design education in China and the United States.

She contrasted the undergraduate Graphic Design programs in China with programs in the United States, and provided examples of typographic and design projects assigned to students in both countries, as well as the differences in teaching philosophies in China and the United States.

VisCom MFA Student, Danny Rix, invited to present his thesis topic: The Elusive African American in Graphic Design.

Visual Communication MFA student Danny Rix will be presenting his research thesis topic: The Elusive African American in Graphic Design at the 25th Annual National Black Graduate Student Association Conference March 6 - 10, 2013, in Detroit Michigan.

His presentation will address the possible professional and social implications of the lack of African Americans in the field of graphic design. He will address the need for diversity in an industry that is responsible for communicating to a wide-ranging audience.

VisCom MFA Student, Mike Norton, invited to present his thesis topic: A Photography Workshop Credential: A Universally Accepted Credential for Photography Workshops in National Parks.

Mike will be presenting at the 2013 National Outdoor Recreation Conference. The event will be hosted by the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals on May 19-22, 2013, in Traverse City, Michigan.

His presentation will address the creation of a new credential for photography workshop leaders that would be accepted at all national parks in the U.S. and would replace the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) that is currently issued for each park.

VisCom MFA graduate, Rick Gavos, was recognized at the AIGA (Re)design Awards! with the submission of his thesis topic: The Sustainable Design Office.

The competition honored sustainable design solutions and the designers, educators and students who use their creative influence to create a positive impact on our environment and society.

Rick’s thesis defines parameters and guidelines for “green” sustainable graphic design practices and a certification program tailored for designers.