

GD 405 Senior Design Seminar Fall 2009	
6 credits meets in Hardie 309 Monday and Wednesday, 8:30-11:10	John McVey, instructor OH : after class, or by appointment (Tuesdays) jmcvey@montserrat.edu 617 661 4276

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1 course summary

Senior Design Seminar focuses on the independent design projects of each student; this focus is complemented by crits, readings, discussion and writing. In a way, that focus runs counter to professional practice, which tends to be in the service of some else's communication : in this class, students are at once client and designer, as demanding of ourselves and each other as we can be.

Seminar consists of one-on-one and group crits and discussions (some involving guest participants); three sets of reviews involving a panel of design (and invited other) faculty; discussions of and presentations relating to research and readings; and exhibitions in the 301 Cabot Gallery (recently in the Spring semester). This six-credit course is scheduled to meet only for two three-hour meetings per week: *class time is not normally used for studio work.*

The instructor seeks to make seminar a valuable learning experience for every participant. It is up to the individual student and the instructor to determine how much structure — even assignments — is appropriate. The professional career considerations of Seminararians also are taken into account, particularly with regard to development of a body of work (a “portfolio”) “indicative of an ability to participate [in design] as a professional.” Students should be thinking how their project might lead them to what they want to do in future.

Seminararians document their work, and submit a printed and pdf version of a process book at the conclusion of Seminar.

Design Seminar can be taken for either one or two successive semesters. The project that is the focus of one semester, can be changed to another topic in the second.

2.1 studio, crits

Studio work should be thought of to some degree as “directed” study, meaning that it is directed by a thesis statement and set of inquiries developed in the context of the class, including students, instructor, advisors if any, and panel reviewers. It is important that projects reflect and propel the interests and skills of the student, and also that they be conceived to complement or extend on the student's previous body of work.

Studio work needs to be located within a context of ideas, inquiry, testing. It should involve stretch — of imagination, technical skills, ability to articulate and argue for a solution or solutions — and it should reflect a commitment to perfection but also to exploring more than one approach to a single situation.

2.1.1 faculty panel reviews

Typically, three review panels are scheduled during a semester. The first will be late in September, followed by panels in late October/early November, and third in December. They are scheduled to accommodate the reviewers, who are invited by the Seminar instructor. All design faculty are encouraged to participate; faculty from other departments may also be invited.

Each review lasts 20-30 minutes.

Explain clearly what you hope to achieve in your work, and where you are in that process; demonstrate that you know your terrain (i.e., relevant material and models); and show evidence of deep investment in your work, exemplified by sketches and iterations, research, thoughtfulness and willingness to engage in discussion.

The reviewers provide comments on work, including suggestions for development, and also consult with the Seminar instructor with regard to student progress.

2.2 readings, presentations, discussions

There are occasional writing assignments. In general, papers need to argue a point, are analytical not evaluative, are specific and exhibit an understanding of the issues (e.g., the points being made by an author treated in your essay). First and second drafts of essays are due when due; participants are expected to have read and thought about assigned readings, and to bring relevant materials, examples and counter-examples, etc., into seminar.

In some years, seminarians assigned a reading, made a presentation (potentially including projected images), and led a seminar discussion on a designer or a design issue pertaining to their projects.

2.2.1 guests

Our small number (three students) in Fall 2009 may affect whether and if so how we bring guests in. As in the past, recent and not-so-recent graduates may come in to discuss their trajectories out of school.

2.3 the public realm

There is no slot available in the 301 Cabot Gallery; we might book space on a second or third floor Hardie wall, or perhaps find an alternative. You can certainly exhibit in the Spring.

Students are required to maintain a blog for their Seminar project. I suggest Google's Blogger. I will create a basic course website presenting thesis proposals, and links to all three of the blog. Alternatively, I could create a single blog that all three students would use. We will discuss this in class.

2.4 documentation

Work done for each semester becomes complete with the submission of documentation of that work. The purpose of the documentation — which is maintained in the Design Department archives — is two-fold : (1) encourages precision and method; and (2) provides a record for future seminarians. A guide to the projects is posted in the seminar room; please feel free to ask for any of the process books.

They should contain

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|----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| project design | <input type="checkbox"/> | title |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | thesis statement / proposal |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | personal, educational and professional objectives |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | project design (stages, schedule; one or two semesters, etc.) |
| progress | <input type="checkbox"/> | description and discussion of each stage of project |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | rationales for approaches taken |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | evaluations |
| physical description | <input type="checkbox"/> | tools used, applications, style sheets, paper |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | typefaces |
| conclusion | <input type="checkbox"/> | evaluation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | questions one is left with at conclusion of project |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | advice to future seminarians |
| appendix | <input type="checkbox"/> | bibliography |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | PDF of documentation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | PDF of work (of digital publication), or other digital record of work (e.g., if installation, 3D, etc.) |

Some students have maintained websites on their projects, which constituted documentation.

3.1 seminar and studio room procedures

Design seniors have privileged access to H-309 — Senior Design Studio / Seminar Room. It is the instructor’s hope that Seminar students use this room for their work.

Leave the room cleaner than you found it. Maintain the room like a professional design studio — clean and organized, except at crisis times. Don’t lose your key; be sure the room is never left unlocked if no one is present.

3.2 library

Holdings in the Paul Scott Library are supplemented by a small library of design and other books in H-309. Books may be removed only with express permission of the instructor (and owner of most of the materials), and borrowings noted on a sheet provided for that purpose.

A guide to design resources on the web can be found at <http://delicious.com/designstories>.

College library catalog is accessible here :

<http://www.montserrat.edu/academics/library.php>

4 prerequisites (includes approval by review panel, technical skills)

Participants will have completed 90 credits of course work, including the core Design sequence (GD 1-2-3, Typography 1, and Using Images); they may also have taken the required Typography 2 and Design Stories, and studio and other electives that would support their intentions for Seminar.

Acceptance into Design Seminar is determined by a faculty panel; applicants may be required to revise and resubmit their proposals, for approval to be granted.

5.1 attendance

Students are expected to attend all meetings and to be on time. More than three absences is sufficient grounds for no credit. Failure to present work on assigned date (or to have arranged alternate date with other student and instructor) constitutes one half of an absence.

5.2 criteria for credit

The final grade is based on (1) the student’s directed studio work (independent design project), judged by the instructor in consultation with the student’s individual advisor (if any) and review panels, and (2) the student’s seminar work.

student’s directed studio work (thesis project)

quality of exploration (evidenced by multiple iterations, research, willingness to consider and pursue suggestions, alternate strategies)	25%
presentation, technical and craft	25%
documentation	10%

seminar work

attendance and active participation in crits, discussions	15%
other assigned studio work, participation in work-in-progress show	10%
writing exercises	15%
	100%

Studio work has two components: (a) the student’s own directed work, being work on his or her theme, pursued in consultation with the course instructor; and (b) exercises assigned in the seminar component of the class. Evaluation of studio work takes into account the following factors: exploration (various iterations), attention to typographic and other detail, bringing work to completion, craft, and appropriateness of the chosen solution/s to the proposal, documentation of process (see below); willingness to incorporate input from others is also considered.

Seminar work consists of (a) readings assigned by instructor, or by students in consultation with instructor; (b) writing responses to readings, regular revision of thesis statement to keep it current; (c) participation in themed show; and (d) participation in exercises directed by seminar guest designers and others.

Senior Design Seminar Reviews

Tues/Weds dates pending 09

6:30 Kate Davidson
7:00 Sarah Surette
7:30 Daniel Stewart

John Colan
 Justin Gagne
 Mary Bucci McCoy
 John McVey

comments