
GD405 Design Seminar

Fall 2017

John McVey, instructor

Tuesday & Thursday, 8:30-11:10, Hardie 309

<http://workwerks17.blogspot.com>

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office hours : Wednesdays, 9:00-11:00am, other days/times by appointment

Design Seminar focuses on

- 1 the projects/initiatives of each seminarian; and
- 2 discussion of that work and of readings that are for the most part pertinent to that work, around the seminar table.

Seminar participants (including the instructor and occasional guests) are the support group for each individual. Participation in Design Seminar goes two ways: each student helps the rest, but also, each student must find ways to usefully involve her/his fellow seminarians in her/his process.

The course blog is an important extension of the seminar table, room and crit wall.

Students have access to work space in the studio area behind the seminar room; keys can be obtained at the front security desk in Hardie. Keys are to be returned when a student completes seminar.

how it works —

Design Seminar encourages reflective practice in the exploration, development, design and production of content. Studio work is complemented by one-on-one and group crits and discussions (some involving guest participants); discussions of and presentations relating to research and readings; blogging and continuing documentation of process; and an exhibition in the 301 Cabot Gallery (ordinarily in the Spring, for Spring graduates; sometimes mixed shows of graduating seniors also run in the late Fall).

Two faculty panel reviews are scheduled during the course of the Fall semester, typically late September and late October or early November. Students intending to continue on to a second semester of Seminar will participate in the end-of-semester evaluations in December, as well.

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 is appropriate. The professional career considerations of Seminarians also are taken into account, particularly with regard to development of a body of work “*indicative of an ability to participate [in design] as a professional.*” Students should reflect on how their project might, in combination with other portfolio work, position them for work (and life) beyond Montserrat.

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 multiple approaches, channels, iterations to the same material.

Visiting designers, design alums and others may also join us, for discussion of work in progress, or the visitor’s own work, experience, etc.

Design Seminar can be taken for either one or two successive semesters. Two semesters need not be devoted to the same project.

completion —

Work done for each semester becomes complete with the submission of documentation of that work. The purpose of the documentation is two-fold : (1) encourages precision, method and reflection; and (2) provides a record for future seminarians. The documentation is a designed document and, for the second of a two-semester sequence, is produced by Blurb.

project design	<input type="checkbox"/>	title
	<input type="checkbox"/>	thesis statement / proposal
	<input type="checkbox"/>	personal, educational and professional objectives
	<input type="checkbox"/>	overview (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 and/or abandoned
	<input type="checkbox"/>	evaluations
physical description	<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g., tools used, applications, style sheets, paper, etc.
conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	evaluation
	<input type="checkbox"/>	questions one is left with at conclusion of project
	<input type="checkbox"/>	advice to future seminarians
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	bibliography

Process (documentation) books going back several years are archived in the Seminar Room; an annotated index is available on paper and at <http://studio.montserrat.edu/gd/405/index.htm>.

evaluation —

The FINAL GRADE is based on (1) the student's studio work (in some instances in consultation with faculty reviewers), and (2) the student's seminar work. Studio work may involve, in addition to (a) the student's own work developed in consultation with the course instructor; (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; willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of discussion with others.

student's independent project	25	quality of exploration (evidenced by multiple iterations, research, willingness to consider and pursue suggestions, alternate strategies)
	15	presentation, technical and craft
	20	documentation
seminar work	15	attendance, active participation in crits, discussions
	10	other assigned work (e.g., note-taking), senior design show
	15	writing, blogging
total	100%	

Seminar (non-studio) work consists primarily of (a) constructive participation in crits and discussion of assigned readings, both in class and on blogs; (b) participation in group exhibition (where this happens).

learning differences, writing and study issues —

It is an absolute commitment of this instructor to make Seminar a good experience for everyone. If you anticipate that you have learning differences that could be a challenge, see or contact the College's Writing Studio and/or its Disability Services Office, both on the second floor of 248 Cabot Street.

Colleen Michaels
Writing Studio Director (colleen.michaels@montserrat.edu)

Meagan Grant
Disability Services Coordinator (meagan.grant@montserrat.edu)

details for both at <https://www.montserrat.edu/academic-advising-and-support/>

Let me reiterate, Design Seminar must work well for everyone. I am happy to meet individually with anyone where there are challenges to address; if you are registered with the Disability Services Office and approved to use accommodations, we can discuss what those could mean for this class.