

Major Studio Guidelines, Spring 2006

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Major Studio: Spring Concentrations

I. Overview

The goal of Major Studio: Spring Concentrations (Narrative, Interaction, Computation) is to introduce students to a body of knowledge specific to the studio's concentration topic, to develop the design process and the expand upon the studio and critique environment upon which most MFADT classes are based, to teach effective presentation skills, to help students develop a summer research plan in preparation for their thesis year, and to engage students in challenging and meaningful discussions about the dynamic relationship between design and technology practices. As a Major Studio, this course is *the core course* within the curriculum in the spring semester, and is designed as a stepping stone to a student's own investigations and interests, as well as a space for exploration and experimentation with alternative design processes and methodologies. The course is run in a studio format, which means all students are expected to participate in the making, discussion, and critique of work.

II. The Fine Print

The course meets for two, two-hour and forty minute sessions per week. As per University policy, 5 absences constitute grounds for failure. Two absences will result in an automatic academic warning. Arriving fifteen minutes after the start of class also constitutes an absence. There is no such thing as an excused absence; any failure to attend a class sessions shall be marked as an absence. In addition, all students are required to present at the two major critiques during the semester. Any student who does not participate in these scheduled critiques may receive a failing grade at the discretion of the instructor.

III. Studio Objectives

1. To build a common vocabulary
2. To learn and advance prototypeing skills.
3. To refine presentation and critique at the graduate level
4. To emphasize process and methods
5. To reinforce rigorous conceptual development and introduce a range of methods for the expression and articulation of ideas
6. To explore forms of writing, including but not limited to critical writing, design briefs, self-assessment, personal statements, scenarios, project reviews.
7. To establish your own voice as a creative author of works including text, performance, object making and evaluation
8. To understand analytical thinking, application of thought in design, and reflective thinking.
9. Instill deep knowledge of research methodologies in physical and digital libraries.
10. Introduction to the MFA DT Thesis process:

MFA DT THESIS SITE:

<http://a.parsons.edu/~thesis>

user: dtthesis

password: aeiou

IV. Criteria for evaluation

Students in the course will receive feedback on the following areas:

- 1. Communication:** How well is the student able to express their ideas, both verbally and in written form?

2. Critical Thinking: To what degree has the student demonstrated and developed critical thinking skills over the course of the semester? Is critical thinking evident in the visual work, in critiques and presentations, and in written assignments?

3. Design Process: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the student's design process? Is the student able to evaluate the work at different points in the process and to identify areas in their work for future development?

4. Contextualization and Connection: To what degree has the student been able to connect the themes and core concepts of the course to concepts introduced in other classes? Has the student been able to connect their work and ideas to historical and contemporary precedents, and to situate their work within the larger discourse surrounding ideas of “interface?”

5. Integration and Appropriate Use of Technology: Is the student making good choices about the form and type of technology they are using to express their design concepts? Is the student able to integrate technology into the conceptualization of their projects?

V. Graduate Grade Scale Descriptions

A	Work of exceptional quality
A-	Work of high quality
B+	Very good work
B	Good work; satisfies course requirements
B-	Below average
C+	Less than adequate
C	Well below average; lowest possible passing grade
F	Failure, no credit

VI. Course Components

While each instructor will choose to handle their course in different ways, all sections will include the following components:

1. Major Studio Assignments (including a self-defined final project)

Students will work on a series of studio assignments that may range from 1 week to 6 weeks in length. Projects may include a series of smaller related projects that add up to a single body of work, or a set of discrete projects exploring different concepts. In all cases, the course will include a self-defined Final Project, which serves as preparation for the thesis process, which begins in the third semester of work. Projects may be done individually or in groups, at the instructor's discretion.

2. Critique and Presentation

There are two major reviews: midterm review and final review. Guest critics are invited to both sets of reviews, and the final review is open to the public. Students should be able to present their work in a clear and concise manner, and should be exposed to a range of presentation strategies in preparation for the reviews. Final reviews are held the second-to-last week of classes.

3. Reading and Discussion

Students should be engaged in reading and discussion of material related to the course. Individual instructors will determine the reading material for their course. Students should be encouraged to discuss and critique the material, and are expected to develop a viewpoint that expresses their own ideas about the assigned texts.

Faculty may choose to formalize the reading/discussion process, assigning students to make presentations on particular texts, running seminars, or requiring students to submit written comments on the reading. Students can also be asked to maintain a blog or reading space on their websites.

4. Writing

Design writing represents one form of expression with the MFADT program. As a result, students in the Major Studio will be required to actively engage in writing as part of their overall studio experience. In addition to learning how to write a design brief, students will also be asked to produce a longer piece of writing associated with some aspect of their course work. This document can take many forms and should be tailored to fit the needs of the different instructors. The following presents a general outline.

EXAMPLE:

Final Project Document

As part of the final project students will be asked to develop a written project document. This document will be written during the course of the project, and is due the day of final reviews. There is no required length for this document but it will probably run between 5-10 pages.

I. Document Objectives

1. Present a clear and concise overview of the project concept;
2. Situate the project within historical and creative contexts;
3. Provide a set of criteria used to evaluate the project;
4. Provide self-assessment of the project's strengths and weaknesses;
5. Give an overview of the design process;
6. Present a list of related resources.

II. Guidelines

This document will be composed of the following sections:

Questions: a list of 2-4 primary questions that explain what it is that you are trying to discover. Your primary questions may contain a set of sub-questions as well.

Domains: what are the domains with which your project engages? What relationships exist between these domains?

Summary: a narrative description of the project. What is it, who is it designed for, what is it designed to do, what kind of technology does it explore, etc.

Precedents: What are examples of work that share something in common with your project? These precedents can be contemporary or historical, can be drawn from the realms of design, technology, sociology, psychology, etc. In preparing this section of your document, please include the following information for each precedent discussed:

- title of work and author/designer/artist

- brief description of project
- relevance of the project to your own work

Process: a narrative description of your process, key methods and discoveries, sample sketches, storyboards, diagrams, etc.

Evaluation: the Evaluation section of your document has two parts:

- a narrative summary that outlines your thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of your project.
- a list of criteria that you are using to evaluate the quality of your project. These criteria will be shared with the critics during your final presentation, and will serve as the basis for feedback during your review.

Bibliography, References, Resources: a list of important works used to guide your project. Bibliographic information should include the title of the work, author(s), publication date, publisher, and pages cited.

VII. Failing Grades

Failing grades are given for required work that is not submitted, for incomplete final projects or for examinations that are not taken (without prior notification and approval). Final semester grades are determined by averaging grades received throughout the semester. Make-up work or completion of missed examinations may be permitted only with the approval of the instructor and the major department Chair.

VIII. Incompletes

A grade of I (Incomplete), signifying a temporary deferment of a regular grade, may be assigned when coursework has been delayed at the end of the semester for unavoidable and legitimate reasons. Incomplete grades are given only with the written approval of the instructor and the major department Chair. **The Request for an Incomplete Grade form must be filled out by the student and instructor prior to the end of the semester.**

For graduate students, the deadline for completion of an incomplete is one year. A grade of I will automatically convert to a permanent unofficial withdrawal (WF) after a period of four weeks. Faculty may not post an Incomplete ("I") in ALVIN unless they have first completed the incomplete approval process. Please contact your department for complete instructions and approval forms for awarding an incomplete. Students who have not been attending your class should have already been reported to your department.

IX. Changes of Grade

Errors on final grades may be revised by the instructor with the approval of the major department Chair up to one semester following completion of the course. After that semester has elapsed, all grades become a permanent part of the academic record and no changes will be allowed unless authorized by a Dean. Faculty can not submit a change of grade through ALVIN.

X. Grade Appeals

Students may petition for an academic grade review by following the procedure outlined below within sixty days after the grade was issued. Before deciding to appeal for a grade change, the student should request a verbal explanation of the basis of the grade from the instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the explanation, the student may appeal the grade as follows:

- The student submits a letter outlining any questions and/or objections directly to the faculty member, with a copy to the department Chair or Director. If the faculty member is also the Chair or Director, the copy will be sent to the Senior Associate Dean.
- The instructor submits a written response to the student's letter within one month of receipt, with a copy to the department Chair, or the Senior Associate Dean if the faculty member is also the Chair or Director.

If the student is still unsatisfied after the faculty member's written response, the department Chair will review both letters, clarify any outstanding questions or issues and make a determination about the grade. Some cases may also be reviewed and evaluated by the Senior Associate Dean, whose decision will be final. The review will test the fairness and effectiveness of the grading procedure used. Actual coursework will not, under normal circumstances, be reevaluated by the Senior Associate Dean.

XI. Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy

The purpose of the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy is to protect the rights of authors, artists and fellow members of the academic community as well as to support the education of the individual student, who derives no educational benefit from cheating. Studio faculty are expected to educate students about the legal and ethical restrictions placed upon creative work and about the consequences of dishonesty in the professional world. Faculty assigning papers are expected to educate students about the appropriate incorporation of quoted material and other thinkers' ideas. Most important, students are expected to keep themselves informed on these matters, to seek clarification from instructors regarding academic honesty and its relationship to specific assignments, and to conduct themselves accordingly. All incoming students are required to sign an Academic Integrity Statement declaring that they understand and agree to comply with this policy.

Students who cheat in any way primarily cheat themselves; but they also compromise the academic climate for all members of the Parsons community. Dishonest students, whether directly or indirectly involved in an act of cheating, will be held accountable for violations of the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy. "Academic dishonesty" is defined as:

- cheating on examinations, either by copying another student's work or by utilizing unauthorized materials.
- any act of plagiarism, that is, the fraudulent presentation of the written, oral or visual work of others as original.
- theft of another student's work.
- purchase of another student's work.
- submitting the same work for more than one course.
- destruction or defacement of the work of others.
- aiding or abetting any act of dishonesty.
- any attempt to gain academic advantage by presenting misleading information, making deceptive statements or falsifying documents.

Guidelines for Studio Assignments

Work from other visual sources may be imitated or incorporated into studio work if the fact of imitation or incorporation and the identity of the original source are properly acknowledged. There must be no intent to deceive; the work must make clear that it emulates or comments on the source as a source. Referencing a style or concept in otherwise original work does not constitute plagiarism. The originality of studio work that presents itself as "in the manner of" or as playing with "variations on" a particular source should be evaluated by the individual faculty member in the context of a critique.

Incorporating ready-made materials into studio work as in a collage, synthesized photograph or paste-up is not plagiarism in the educational context. In the commercial world, however, such appropriation is prohibited by copyright laws and may result in legal consequences.

Guidelines for Written Assignments

Direct quotations and references to the statements and ideas of others in written work do not constitute plagiarism if the fact of quotation or reference and the identity of the original source are properly acknowledged.

Written work from other sources may be directly quoted so long as (1) the source is identified before the quotation or in a subsequent citation, footnote or endnote and (2) the fact that the passage is directly quoted is indicated by quotation marks, if a phrase or sentence, or by indentation, if more than one sentence.

Any student who paraphrases the statements of another or brings in ideas or information from a published source must attribute the paraphrased content, ideas or information to the original source, either by using an introductory phrase like “Mr. Smith argues that” or “According to The New York Times” or by identifying the origin in a citation, footnote or endnote. A bibliography listing the sources used in any written assignment should be appended.

Students should ask faculty members for detailed instructions or recommended reference materials on proper formats for quotations, citations, footnotes, endnotes and bibliographies.

Procedures and Penalties

Any violation of the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy is a matter for disciplinary action. When a faculty member suspects that cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty has occurred, the faculty member should first inform the student privately that he or she suspects a violation of the Policy. The instructor should explain the alleged violation clearly, concisely and specifically and should advise the student to review the Policy in the Student Handbook. The instructor should schedule a second meeting with the student to discuss the accusation fully following the student’s review of the Policy. Whenever possible, this full discussion should take place within 72 hours of the initial meeting. If a violation comes to the instructor’s attention during finals or a school break, the discussion should take place as soon as possible, but no later than a month after the incident or before the start of a new semester. Each party may elect, but is not required, to have an impartial advisor present at the meeting. The instructor should select the Chair or Associate Chair of the department that offers the course. The student should select an Advisor from the Office of Advising or from his or her major department.

The role of the department Chair or Associate Chair is to help facilitate discussion between the student and the instructor by calling all parties to the meeting, providing a private meeting space and allowing the different points of view to be expressed. The role of the Advisor is to help the student to understand the Policy and the alleged violation.

During the discussion, the student should be prepared to present the work in question, along with any supporting drafts, sketches, digital files or other documentation. The instructor may ask the student to reconstruct the process involved in creating the work.

After the discussion, the faculty member, in consultation with the department Chair or Associate Chair, will consider the facts and determine whether the charge is valid and, if so, will recommend what penalty ought to be imposed. The penalty for academic dishonesty should take into account the severity of the violation. The department Chair will refer in writing all violations to the Director of Advising for disciplinary consideration. The Director of Advising will convene a committee to determine the appropriate penalty for the course and the appropriate disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action may include Disciplinary Warning, Probation or, in severe cases, even for a first offense, Expulsion from the program. A record of disciplinary action may impact future educational and employment opportunities.

In cases where the student confesses to the violation, the procedures and penalties for academic dishonesty may be altered at the discretion of the department Chair or Associate, and the Director of Advising.

In cases where the work in question is submitted at the end of the semester and/or the faculty member is unavailable, the department Chair or Associate will discuss the incident with the

student.

Appeals

A student found guilty of academic dishonesty may appeal the Committee's decision to the Senior Associate Dean, whose decision will be final. The appeal review will test the fairness and effectiveness of the procedure used to determine the facts. If disciplinary action was taken, the student has the right to appeal the decision in accordance with the New School University Code of Conduct appeal procedures.