

Course Development Project Grant  
Summer 2017  
Name

I teach graphic design courses in interaction design, specifically the emerging field of user experience design. User experience design is so called because it encompasses everything that contributes to a person's experience using products such as websites, mobile phone apps, or kiosks. For such interactive products, effective design cannot be limited to stylistic concerns alone. Good interactive designers are concerned with principles of organization, strategy, and anything that effects the services provided by interactive products. Since the field, as it relates to mobile phones specifically, is relatively new (the iPhone is only 10 years old) and continually changing, up-to-date materials are essential for teaching my courses.

As such, propose purchasing a number books about interaction design to help me better develop my courses. I propose the following as books that will help inform my classes (and my own research). See list below for the books.

In addition, as a way to help engage my students and teach them about the value of simple, essential ingredients, I purchase high-quality chocolate for students to eat. I've found this to be helpful in keeping students alert during our three hour classes. Typically, I purchase 2 bars per class per semester (roughly 50 dollars in chocolate).

Purchase list:

- **Learn to Code Now,**  
Rick Lomas, (Superhi.com), \$59
- **UX Strategy: How to Devise Innovative Digital Products that People Want,**  
Jaime Levy (O'Reilly), \$26.20
- **Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived,**  
Joyful Life, Bill Burnett & Dave Evans (Knopf, 2016), \$17.46
- **The Elements of User Experience: User-Centered Design for the Web and Beyond,**  
Jesse James Garrett (New Riders, 2010), \$26.14
- **The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone,**  
Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach (Riverhead, 2017), \$14.64
- **You May Also Like: Taste in an Age of Endless Choice,**  
Tom Vanderbilt, \$11.56
- **The Evolution of Type: A Graphic Guide to 100 Landmark Typefaces,**  
Tony Seddon (Firefly Books, 2015), \$29.93
- **Design Process Book Pack from A Book Apart,**  
*Practical Design Discovery*, Dan Brown (A Book Apart, 2017),  
*Design for Real Life*, Eric Meyer & Sara Wachter-Boettcher (A Book Apart, 2016)  
*Just Enough Research*, Erika Hall (A Book Apart, 2013)  
\$56.25+Shipping

**Subtotal = \$241.18 (not including shipping), i.e roughly 250.00 including shipping.**

- **Chocolate \$50.00**

**Total =300.00**

## **Preface**

At this juncture, it feels odd to make a self-assessment of my time at this university. Not because the process lacks value, but rather because I have only been employed since January. As such, I am only beginning to grasp an understanding of the duties, obligations, and unspoken patterns here.

I am not sure how to make an accurate self-assessment of my work as an assistant professor at Brigham Young. I welcome this opportunity to do so, however, because I believe that assessment is a crucial skill of a professor. Even though I have cultivated a critical eye in my research and professional life, it is still difficult to turn it inward. Assessment is different than introspection, where ideas can cast about in a sea of thought unmoored to concrete action. So, I will try to assess my work as a professor with an eye towards measurable goals and potential changes.

## **I. Self-Assessment**

### **Teaching**

I believe I am good teacher, but I would like to be an excellent one. As a teacher, perhaps my greatest strength is in working with students one-on-one, helping them with their work, and mentoring them. I enjoy helping students reach their potential. I try to weave gospel ideas into my lectures and make sure there is ample time for student discussion and conversation. I think my lectures are generally good, and my courses reasonably well-organized.

I give good critiques and feedback to students in class, but I am not great at giving speedy grades on projects. Perhaps I do not relish giving final evaluations on projects when I would rather continue to work with students to improve them. As such, I often write long feedback emails in addition to the grades themselves (I averaged 1,200 words per student for the final project during Spring Term). To give such long written feedback is not sustainable, nor is it as helpful as quick evaluative grades within a day or two of the original deadline. I believe some of my students will create better work and work harder if they know quickly how their work measures up.

I also think I could do a better job at facilitating classroom conversation, and deeper thought about projects. Since I teach studio classes, students mostly create projects instead of writing or taking tests. I sometimes fear that students fall into the trap of design mimicry and do not understand the thinking behind why they should do or not do something. I could do better at finding ways to evaluate thinking instead of just evaluating it in the final design projects or process books. Even though I offer

in-depth suggestions, critiques, and help in class, I would like to find ways better alert students to their grade throughout the process so they can connect their failures (or successes) in a final project grade to specific parts of the process.

The three classes that I have taught during my current appointment have all been new classes that have required new lectures, exercises, and syllabi. Thus far, I feel like I have had to devote a lot of time to class preparation. I look forward to being able to finesse classes rather than just prepare them for the first time.

Finally, although I generally think of myself as a good teacher, I recognize that since teaching is about helping students, ultimately my own self-evaluation is less important than that of my students. No student views teaching as an intrinsic characteristic. Am I good teacher to them? In reviewing all of my student reviews (both as a full-time faculty member, and as an adjunct here and at other universities), it is clear to me that I reach most of my students, but not all—and not all perfectly. In particular, I notice that all of the aspects of teaching are interconnected. For example, a student who doesn't like my attendance policy might rate me as a poorer overall instructor compared to one who liked the class projects.

For me, success is not just reaching the student who would always like my class—the enthusiastic, design-loving, and hard working that are easy to work with. Success is having a student tell me that even if they didn't like the subject, they appreciated it; that even if they did not get a top grade in my class, that they now understand clearly how and why they did not. And that they felt like they had every opportunity to succeed and learn in my class. As such, I would like to be better at adapting to the one, to the struggling student, to the one who “doesn't get it” or who feels like they are not measuring up; as well as pushing the excited and hard-working to even greater heights. Above all, I want to be able to help my students integrate what they learn as designers with service in the kingdom, so they live lives of integrity. For all my students, I want them to know I care about them as designers, but even more as people.

### **Scholarship**

I see myself as a good scholar. I had strong mentorship in research and writing at both the University of Chicago and the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Through my mentors, I learned how to create research agendas, dive into the archives, how write more engaging prose, and develop book projects. I believe I am a strong researcher. While at MICA, I set a weekly archival research schedule that I kept for a year and half. I set and meet monthly and yearly reading goals both to stay up on my field and to think broadly. If I have a weakness, it is that I have not mastered the ability to write consistently every day. I would almost always rather return to the archive to do more research than I would stop and write about it. This desire to get a more complete picture of a subject before writing hampers my research output. It is a significant failing that I am a more vigorous researcher than I am writer, since this results in lost research or thinking since many of ideas are not adequately documented in my writing.

Similarly in visual design projects, I sometimes can over think by continuing to research more parameters, seek out other modes of creating, rather than just making things. My experiences at MICA (and as a professional) have helped me overcome this weakness, and seek out design solutions through making and not just

planning, researching, and thinking. In both designing and writing, I hope to be better at creating something regularly, even if it is just to keep my skills sharp, or to create frequent components of larger projects.

Since graphic design defines itself as a discipline (in part) by commercial design work, it also encompasses design created on behalf of others. Because of that, some of my research is completed at the behest of corporate clients across the country. It is easy to find time to do this type of work since this work is completed in collaboration with others and have frequent deadlines. The downside to this work, is that I do not always get to set regular schedules or timetables since those are set in part by my corporate collaborators. I will need to be selective in choosing clients, and save time for my own work.

### **Citizenship**

As a citizen, I believe I am doing good work, but could be doing more. I attend all of my committee meetings, and try to contribute my best thinking in collaboration with others. I foresee significant ad-hoc and formal committee work, given that our department and our graphic design area are in the midst of a period of fluctuation. Currently we have large proposals on the table to change our Minor, and possibilities of changing our BA degree to make it distinct from our current BFA in Graphic Design. These proposed changes directly affect my classes, and research specialties. Even without these proposals, the sub-field where I teach most of my classes, user experience design, continues to change very rapidly and requires active collaboration with other disciplines. Because of the changes, there is need to update curriculum, improve student outcomes, and build bridges with faculty across campus. I feel the need to meet often with faculty in associated disciplines, or with leading professionals to facilitate collaboration and new curriculum. If I have a weakness in citizenship, it is that I fear I might too readily agree to participate in collaboration, since I find thinking about systems and working with people very rewarding. I do believe that this work could lead to better teaching, and in some cases to research projects. I want to make sure I have time for my research, and do not take on more than I can successfully accomplish.

## **II. Professional Goals**

### **Citizenship**

I want to play an active role in my department; I want to help shape our future as a department. I want to serve diligently on every committee I am assigned to. I want to be a dependable colleague, provide valuable feedback, and attend department, area, and college meetings. Above the department role, however, I also aim to participate in and build connections with our local professional association, the AIGA. BYU's participation in the association has not been as strong as past years, and I hope that I could help improve the collaboration: both to promote student attendance at events, but also to speak out for better types of activities and services from the organization for our students. Finally, I also hope to build bridges with fellow scholars and professors at other universities, both by collaborating on new projects and pooling resources to bring in visiting lecturers.

I also see design as an indispensable part of serving the community, since good graphic design gives legitimacy and clarity to good ideas and worthy causes. Towards that end, I want to continue some of the pro bono projects that I do each year for various organizations I believe in.

### Teaching

In order to better improve my teaching, I want to work with the Center for Teaching and Learning to film my classes and evaluate my course materials. I would also like to continue to read and study pedagogy, since my teaching abilities have been mostly learned informally. Towards that end, I also hope to talk with and observe fellow teachers in my department, across the university, and at other schools. I believe that there will be good techniques and processes that I can learn or improve through observation.

I want to be better at addressing the needs of each student. To help do that, I plan to send out a simple questionnaire to each of my students before the first day of class so that I can better get to know them, and help serve their specific needs.

In improving the spiritual aspect of my teaching, I want to try opening classes with prayer this upcoming semester. Thus far, I have not had done it in my classes, and I would like to see how it affects the class. Personally, I would like to prepare myself spiritually to a greater degree, in part by praying over my classes, and praying for each of my students by name. In doing so, I want better care for them and receive promptings on how to tailor topics and ideas to their understanding.

I want to continuously improve my teaching. To do so, I want to take ten minutes at the end of each class to jot down short notes about what I observed, what went well, and what I could improve, so that I can better update course materials, slides, and project sheets at the end of the semester. Then, at the end of semester, notes would give the sharp clarity of immediate feedback uninhibited by fogs of forgetfulness. Since most of my teaching as an adjunct has been done one course at a time, I haven't needed this sort of formal approach to remember almost every class or each student. But as I teach more courses, and continue to teach multiple classes a day, it will be essential to my improvement. At the end of each semester, after turning in grades, I want to evaluate each of my own classes and write down my own assessment of them—building on these shorter notes for better improvement each and every semester.

### Scholarship

I see good scholarship as the engine to great teaching. My enthusiasm for ideas and projects should flow out and engage students. I also see good citizenship as essential to good scholarship, since good thinking is rarely done in a vacuum. As such, I want to find and create as many collaborative projects as possible, since mentoring students and working with fellow faculty will greatly expand my scholarship potential.

I have several projects that are ongoing and that I hope to complete before my CFS review:

1. Never Use Futura (Princeton Architectural Press, 2017): I finished the manuscript and design of the book during Winter Semester 2017, but will continue building a better website, and tools for teachers wanting to use my book in the classroom. Additionally, I hope to publish associated articles based on the premise of the book—either excerpts with expanded research, or publishing a few chapters that were not published in the book:

a. *Political Design and the Electoral College: Branding for 270 Electoral Votes* (on the unique design of Donald Trump in the 2016 election, as well as the myriad of congresspeople who use Futura in campaigns).

b. *Futura Systems: On the Sameness of Tech-Company Branding and UX* (covering the near ubiquity of geometric sans serifs in Silicon Valley companies, and the corresponding similarity of user interface typefaces for Google, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft).

c. *Back to the Futura: Reincorporating Futura in 1980s and early 1990s Design* (the resurgence of Futura in advertising and design alongside the Memphis movement, and other resurgent neo-modernist designs).

Each of these essays have their beginnings in extensive research that I completed for my book. None of them were completed for the book, mostly because of space and time considerations. I finished other stories first—so they got in the book. I think B would be especially relevant to my UX work. I have one other that would require additional research in Spain:

d. *Grotesca Radio: Origins of the First Geometric Sans* (on a design completed two years before Futura in Barcelona, Spain). This is completely untouched by English, German, and French scholarship. I found an article on this subject in Spanish that is factually inaccurate and woefully inadequate. If it is truly the first geometric sans, this would radically change the history books.

2. Essays: In addition to the above essays that touch on research that was related to the book *Never Use Futura*, I have a few other papers that are in various stages of work:

a. *Franklin as Designer* (on Ben Franklin as a designer in the modern world, even though he was a self-described printer in his, the piece would comment on his media strategy, and the essential nature of his type selection for uniting his media empire).

b. *Facebook and Flattening Truth: On the Typography of Trust* (on the use of typography in online news media and interfaces). This is an idea that I would like to explore in essay form first, and then expand through further collaboration with professors in Political Science or Linguistics. It would be great to do a empirical work on this.

3. Fire Gauge (UX/UI/IA and Strategy/Branding work): My work includes extensive design work to build a suite of apps for desktop, kiosks, and mobile devices. Fire Gauge empowers improvement-driven leadership through fire department-tailored services and tools. Currently, only being used by San Ramone and Alameda County Fire Departments, in California (Oakland, San Jose, and the east Bay). I have high hopes, but also fears about this project. It could become big, or could have its legs cut out from under itself by competition.

4. Unity and Division: This collaborative project with Eric Gillett, Linda Reynolds, and Brent Barson will be a good design piece, and could do well in competitions (I hope). It is a more traditional graphic design project, however, and is not immediately related to my subfield of user experience design.

5. Proof (Design and art direction for Department of Design Magazine)

6. Untitled Speculative UX project: I would like to create a unique app or digital interface that explores some form of theoretical exploration of the limits and boundaries of UX design. I don't know what form this would take, but I think it would be useful.

7. Divided Speech: Typographic project in collaboration with University of Utah professor, Henry Becker. Creating a series of prints mashing together speech from Donald Trump (or prominent Republicans) against his opposition.

8. New books: In addition to these projects that have been started in some form or another, I have two other book projects that I would like to begin, but that I doubt I would completely finish before CFS:

a. *American Gothics* (similar to my Futura book, but on the cultural reach of Morris Fuller Benton's Franklin, News, and Alternate Gothics)

b. *Children of the Bauhaus* (on the student work created by Art Schools in Germany 1920–35). I found an incredible archive of student work sent to Berlin as part of national competitions, but later captured by the US Army and sent to the Library of Congress. All of it is hand-drawn with paint or ink.

Besides these larger projects, I imagine that I will continue to create smaller posters, web pieces, and other design projects.

### **III. Personal Goals and University Aims**

In this regard, I believe that my goals support the mission of this university and in particular the aims of a Brigham Young University education. I seek to bring honor to this school in order to create opportunities for our students now here, and those who will come in the future. I came to BYU not just because it is a good job. There are other universities. I want to be an example of discipleship and scholarship, and train students to follow my own example.

### **IV. Resources**

In this regard, I feel well supported by the College and the Department. I have been outfitted with up-to-date computer equipment, travel money, and sufficient funds to purchase books, typefaces, and other needful materials. I do anticipate that my project measuring the empirical trustworthiness of typography might require eye-tracking or face-reading equipment that is available on campus, but not owned by our department. Finding collaborators would help obviate the need for capital expenses. I plan to seek additional grants from the school and the wider academic community. For my work to truly hit a national audience, I need to make connections with the taste-makers, and design writers in New York and San Francisco.

### **V. Accomplishments to Date**

The publication of my book by Princeton Architectural Press is a significant accomplishment that I hope to build upon with smart projects, and artful collaborations. I am encouraged by successes by several of my students, as well as emails thanking

me for my classes and mentorship. I hope to capture the interest in my work that will come with the publicity for the book. I feel posed for good things to come, but am also aware of the work ahead of me.

#### **VI. Ongoing Assessment**

As mentioned above, I intend to make notes after each class and lecture to better capture immediate feedback. I plan on reviewing those notes at the end of each semester while making an assessment of my classes. I will, of course, pay close attention to my teaching evaluations. I would like to write one article per trimester (Winter, Fall, Spring/Summer), with the aim of publishing at least one a year. I would like to balance submissions to high tier academic journals with online journals and periodicals (such as *Design Observer* or *FastCompany*) Additionally, I would like to submit work to each of the major competitions in my field each year (*Communication Arts* Typography and Design Annuals, *Graphis* Design Annual, *Print* Typography and Regional Design Annuals, *Type Directors Club* Annual, the AIGA 50 Books Competition). Additionally, I will submit to other competitions such as the regional AIGA SLC 100 Show.