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## VISC 304

### Designing Understanding

Instructor: Jeremy Shellhorn  
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Email is answered daily.

Instructor: Alex Anderson  
Office Hours: by appointment  
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Email is answered daily.

Class #: 42186 & 44230

Spring 2024  
TuTh 12:30 - 03:05 PM  
CHALMERS 308 / 307

Credit Hours - 4

Prerequisite: VISC 202 and  
VISC 204 with semester grades of  
"C+" or higher or permission  
of instructor.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Exploration of the relationships among people, places, and the visual objects and information they use. Attention on the different roles of the designer as observer, empathizer, communicator and experience builder. Introduction to information design processes and procedures of understanding by ordering data into useful and persuasive information tools and experiences. Various methodologies will be explored for visualizing information for clarity, resonance, and editorial voice with special attention to the relationships among audience and context in the creation of meaning.

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## CALENDAR (please note, do not make travel plans when we have class)

Tuesday, Jan 16: First Day of Classes  
Monday, March 11: First Day of Spring Break  
Sunday, March 17: Last Day of Spring Break  
Friday, May 3: Stop Day  
Tuesday, May 7: Final Project Due

**Please Note:** You will have multiple opportunities to provide feedback on your experience in this course. Suggestions and constructive criticism are encouraged throughout the course and may be particularly valuable early in the semester. Each project deliverable includes a reflection statement to gather input on what is working well and what could be improved. You will also be asked to complete an end-of-semester, online Student Survey of Teaching, which could inform modifications to this course (and other courses that I teach) in the future.

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## PROFESSIONALISM AND PARTICIPATION

In order to maximize your learning and growth as a designer in this class, active engagement with the coursework is essential. Adopt a serious attitude and be willing to go beyond the assigned tasks. Challenge yourself and embrace the philosophy of learning through hands-on experience. Design is a competitive yet rewarding profession, and this course is designed with that mindset. Expectations include diligent effort every day, not just for grades, but for personal development and skill enhancement.

To truly benefit from this course, it is important to approach it with curiosity, self-initiative, and a dedicated investment of time. The work we will be doing can be time-consuming, slow, occasionally frustrating, and involve repetitive tasks. Embrace the opportunity to immerse yourself, actively participate, share ideas, and explore new possibilities. If this approach does not resonate with you, it may be worth discussing alternative course options with your advisor.

Effective verbal communication skills are paramount in conveying your ideas to clients and fellow design team members. During critiques, students are expected to come prepared to present their concepts, explain how their design form supports the underlying concept, and describe the process behind their ideas. Offering feedback to your peers is a privilege. Engaging in both giving and receiving feedback is beneficial. While you do not have to personally "like" someone else's work, it is crucial to provide insightful commentary in a respectful and constructive manner.

During class, lectures, and demonstrations, it is required that you be working on things related to this class (not other classes), that you turn your phone to silent mode and refrain from distractions such as texting, social media, checking email...

### **A lack of professionalism can effectively lower your grade by one full letter grade.**

- Attend class on time and stay throughout the whole class period
- Prepared for every class

- Participate in classroom discussions/crits
- Use class time to work on projects for this class
- Maintain a positive and open-minded attitude
- Demonstrate deliberate self-disciplined and timely work habits
- Progressively strive for and achieve the highest standards of quality

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## REQUIRED SOFTWARE

Please note: School of Architecture & Design degree programs receive a personal license to Adobe Creative Cloud at no cost. ArcD majors do not need to purchase or renew Adobe Creative Suite at the KU Bookstore.

Additional Requirements: Behance, Dropbox or Google Drive

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## SUPPLIES

Students will be expected to present their work in a professional manner. Quality tools and materials should be considered as an investment in one's future. Please don't purchase all at once in advance. If materials are needed in class we will do our best to let you know a class period in advance.

- notebook for class notes and assignments (bring to every class)
- box of binder clips (medium size)
- tracing paper (pad or roll min.12 inches wide)
- self-healing mat to cut on in class (not too big not too small)
- push pins (always bring to class)
- fine and thick nibbed markers for sketching
- transparent tape
- white paper tape or masking tape
- steel ruler with cork back (18 inches) AND a heavy ruler at least 24 inches
- x-acto knife with #11 blades

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## IMAGERY

To maintain integrity and respect copyright laws, it is crucial that you either create your own imagery or use images from the Public Domain whenever possible. If you are unable to create your own visuals, it is important to give proper attribution and credit when utilizing images from external sources. Remember to include attribution for any images sourced from the Internet. An image online does not grant you automatic permission to use it—it is not a matter of "finders keepers."

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## PLAGIARISM

It is mandatory that all work submitted for this class is original and created by you specifically for this semester and this class. Any instances where work is discovered to closely resemble material found online will be regarded as plagiarism. In such cases, appropriate sanctions will be implemented for all individuals involved in plagiarizing coursework. Plagiarism is a violation of the University Senate Rules and Regulations and will not be tolerated.

**Consequences may include** failing the project, disqualification from the Viscom Sophomore Review, course failure, departmental suspension, or expulsion from the university. Plagiarism is reported to the Department Chair, the Dean's office and to the University and is a form of academic misconduct.

**Important note about Artificial Intelligence:** If AI is used to help create text or images in this project (or any project in any of your classes), it is imperative to be transparent and honest about its involvement. AI can be embraced and explored as a tool used to enhance the creative process. Maintaining mastery over the AI and making necessary alterations to all final deliverables is crucial. Failure to inform us that you are using AI at any point in the project will be

considered plagiarism, and strict consequences will follow.

As we navigate this learning process, we must remember to exercise responsible AI usage and ensure that AI serves as a valuable assistant rather than a substitute for creativity and originality. Together, we can leverage AI to augment our process. Honesty and integrity could lead to a more insightful and ethical exploration of AI's potential in the creative domain.

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## GRADING POLICIES AND CRITERIA

This course is a mandatory requirement listed under the major studies section on your degree check sheet. And is part of the sophomore review. To progress to the next course in the sequence, it is necessary to achieve a grade of C (2.0) or higher. The final grade for each project will be determined by the collective assessment of several key components: Participation, Process, Exploration, Refinement, Final Product, and Craft.

A superior/excellent/exceeds expectations

B very good

C satisfactory / meets expectations

D unsatisfactory / did not meet expectations

F unacceptable

To achieve an "A" grade, it is crucial that your process, product, and participation surpass expectations. Merely completing the project requirements will not be sufficient to earn an "A." It is not merely a matter of fulfilling basic criteria.

Every one of you has the potential to earn an "A." Strive for excellence consistently. Meeting the minimum expectations by being prepared and fulfilling assigned tasks corresponds to a "satisfactory" effort, which equates to a "C" grade. Remember, a "B" grade reflects Very Good!

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## GRADING BREAKDOWN

**40% Process:** includes demonstrated process of idea development, research, type/image studies, concept development, quantity and quality of sketches. More than just one idea explored, prepared for class and critique participation. I will keep track of your process.

A process book will be handed in with each project. The process book contains ALL your sketches, refinements, notes... from the project. Directions will be given specifically for each project. It should be organized, neat and professional.

**50% Product:** comprehension of problem, originality of solution, appropriateness of solution, typography, visual invention, visual aesthetic, application/translation of concept, followed the assignment sheet or directives given in class.

**10% Craftsmanship:** presentation of final, neatness, precision, technical proficiency, appropriate materials. Poor craft can reduce a project grade by 1 full grade. You are learning to be professional and craft is a large part of being professional. (most of you will get an F in craft the first time around)

## LATE PROJECTS

All projects and assignments are due on the date given and due at the beginning of class. Late projects will be penalized by lowering the project grade by one full letter grade. After three days, late projects will no longer be accepted.

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## THE PURPOSE OF THE CRITIQUE

Critique is one of the most valuable parts of formal design education. It is also one of the most difficult aspects of the design school experience. It is a collaborative activity that takes quite a bit of time to learn – both in terms of how to give feedback, and how to accept feedback.

- How can you help your classmates be the best designer they can be?
- Please be collegial classmates and motivate each other to excellence every day.
- Critique is not a competition; it is an opportunity for everyone to learn and grow.
- Critique is a collaborative activity that requires time to learn how to give and accept feedback. Both givers and receivers of critique play a role in creating a positive and constructive environment.
- Pay attention to critiques of other students' work as there is much to learn beyond your own projects.
- Understand the goals of the critique, whether it is exploring concepts, refining details, or celebrating project completion.
- Critiques should be honest but not cruel or disrespectful.
- The purpose of critique is to improve the work.
- A critique should leave you empowered to improve your work.

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## EXPECTED WORKLOAD

As required by NASAD Accreditation. For Studio Courses 1 credit hour carries 3 hours of homework. For a 3-credit course that is a minimum of 9 hours of homework a week. For a 4-credit-hour course a minimum of 12 hours of homework a week.

If you have a job that requires you to work more than 20 hours a week you will find it difficult to succeed in your studios. Please let your instructors know if you are working full-time.

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## IMAGERY

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Flickr Commons: <https://www.flickr.com/commons>

Bio Diversity Library: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/biodivlibrary/sets/>

Public Domain Review: <https://publicdomainreview.org/collections>

Library of Congress: on flickr

The New York Public Library: [nypl.org/research/collections](http://nypl.org/research/collections)

The British Library: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/albums>

National Archives: [flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/albums)

UpSplash: <https://unsplash.com/images/stock/public-domain>

Pixels: <https://www.pexels.com/public-domain-images/>

### Archives:

Letterform Archive <http://oa.letterformarchive.org>

The Peoples Archive <https://becoming.peoplesgdarchive.org>

TM RSI SGM <http://www.tm-research-archive.ch/>

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## ATTENDANCE

Students are required to attend class. Please be in class on time and remain for the entire period. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Three late marks will equal one

absence. A total of 3 absences will be allowed for any reason, including excused absences. On your 4th absence, your grade will drop by one full letter grade, or you may be asked to withdraw from the course.

In the event of any absence, students are still responsible for obtaining all information and materials from the class period and completing all assignments on time. It is your sole responsibility to find out about any new work assigned during your absence.

If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or any contagious cold, it is imperative that you refrain from attending any KU classroom or entering any KU space. In such cases, you have the option to participate in class remotely. However, if you have symptoms, suspect exposure, or have been identified through contact tracing by healthcare professionals, it is crucial to follow the isolation guidelines provided by the CDC or KU policy.

If you miss a class for any reason, you must obtain the information and materials you may have missed. It is not the instructor's duty to provide you with the missed content.

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### **MEDICALLY-RELATED ABSENCES**

Because of the fast-paced, project-based nature of studio curricula, absences as the result of a medical condition will count in the same way as non-medical absences. Excessive absence for any reason, as outlined in this policy, is irreparably detrimental to a student's ability to succeed in our studio curriculum.

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### **RELIGIOUS OBSERVATIONS**

Students who plan to observe religious holidays should inform instructors of the day(s) they intend to be absent due to religious observance. You should inform the instructor before the absence. Doing so allows enough time for you and your professor to prepare accordingly and/or have a discussion to "reach a mutually acceptable solution." <https://diversity.ku.edu/religious-observances>

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### **STUDENT ACCESS CENTER**

The Student Access Center (SAC) coordinates academic accommodations and services for all eligible KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodation and have not contacted SAC, please do so as soon as possible. They are located at 22 Strong Hall and can be reached at 785-864-4064 (V/TTY). Information about their services can be found at [access.ku.edu](http://access.ku.edu). Please contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

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### **NAME AND PRONOUNS**

Everyone has the right to be referred to with their preferred name and pronouns. An opportunity to share names and pronouns will be provided on the first day of class. If there are any changes during the semester, feel free to inform me. The instructor and students in this course are expected to respect each other's identities, names, and pronouns. If someone makes a mistake or misgenders another student, a brief apology and self-correction are appreciated. In case you feel that your identities are not being respected, including by the instructor, please let me know about the issue. If you prefer not to share with me directly, you can consider reaching out to other resources like the Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity or the Office of Civil Rights [civilrights@ku.edu](mailto:civilrights@ku.edu) and Title IX.

Students who are in the process of updating their name at KU can refer to the Center for Sexuality & Gender Diversity's "Name & Gender Marker Changes at KU" guide at [sgd.ku.edu/name](http://sgd.ku.edu/name).

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### **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

The University of Kansas supports an inclusive learning environment in which diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, and appreciated. We believe that all students benefit from training and experiences that will help them to learn, lead, and serve in an increasingly diverse society. All members of our campus community must accept the responsibility to demonstrate civility and respect for the dignity of others. Expressions or actions that disparage a person's or group's race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity/expression, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, or disability are contrary to the mission of the University. We expect that KU students, faculty, and staff will promote an atmosphere of respect for all members of our KU community. This is an inclusive classroom. At KU, administrators, faculty, and staff are committed to the creation and maintenance of "inclusive learning" spaces. These are classrooms, labs, and other places of learning where you will be treated with respect and dignity and where all individuals are provided with an equitable opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed.

It is likely you may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in the classroom. Courteous behavior and responses are expected at all times. When you disagree with someone, be sure that you make a distinction between criticizing an idea and criticizing the person. Expressions or actions that disparage a person's or race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity/expression, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or marital, parental, or veteran status are contrary to the mission of this course and will not be tolerated.

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### **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

The members of the School of Architecture and Design's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee are here to provide an equitable community for all. This sense of community is achieved by knowing that we are here to support all the members of our school. If you need someone other than your immediate network of professors and peers to talk to, please reach out to us. We will be available for anyone who needs support or advice, or would like to know about university resources, professional paths, or challenges and strengths of our programs, we are here and willing to meet. Please reach out to Prof. Kapila D. Silva, Associate Dean for DEIB ([kapilads@ku.edu](mailto:kapilads@ku.edu))

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### **NONDISCRIMINATION, EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**

As a premier learning and research institution, the University of Kansas must continuously address issues of diversity and multiculturalism. Every member of the university community is expected to engage in action that leads toward the development of a more democratic and inclusive community. Proactive efforts towards increasing diversity and the elimination of discrimination are necessary in our university. The University of Kansas prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, age, ancestry, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, gender identity, gender expression, and genetic information in the university's programs and activities. Retaliation is prohibited. Contact the Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX, [civilrights@ku.edu](mailto:civilrights@ku.edu), Room 1082, Dole Human Development Center.

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### **ArcD STUDENT HUB**

Weekly announcements, advising info, policies and resources, job postings, internships, scholarship opportunities, upcoming electives, and study abroad trips, student organizations information and events! [www.arc.d.ku.edu/current-students](http://www.arc.d.ku.edu/current-students)

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### **CONNECT WITH YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISORS**

Real-time conversations with an academic advisor are the fastest path to assistance and support. The ARC/D advisors offer two kinds of real-time availability: 1. Virtual Drop-In Hours - Any undergraduate student is welcome at virtual drop-in hours and 2. Scheduled In-Person Appointments. Check out the website for more information or to set up an appointment. [www.arc.d.ku.edu](http://www.arc.d.ku.edu)

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## STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The student conduct process exists to protect the rights of the community. The rights and privileges of the individual are components of a community. These rights are protected with vigilance equal to the enforcement of rules and procedures. When a student is unable to conform to their behavior to community expectations and values, the student should no longer share in the privilege of participating in this community. <http://studentconduct.ku.edu/>

RESPECT: You are expected to show positive regard for each other.

COMMUNITY: You are expected to build and enhance a community of your peers.

INTEGRITY: You are expected to exemplify honesty, honor, and respect for the truth in all your dealings.

RESPONSIBILITY: In relation to student rights, you are given and accept a high level of responsibility to self, to others and the community.

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## ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this class. Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations, reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; plagiarizing of another's work; or otherwise acting dishonestly.

Disruptive Behavior: The scope and content of the material included in this course are defined by the instructor in consultation with the responsible academic unit. While the orderly exchange of ideas, including questions and discussions prompted by lectures, discussion sessions and laboratories, is viewed as a normal part of the educational environment, the instructor has the right to limit the scope and duration of these interactions. Students who engage in disruptive behavior, including persistent refusal to observe boundaries defined by the instructor regarding inappropriate talking, discussions, and questions in the classroom or laboratory may be subject to discipline for non-academic misconduct for disruption of teaching or academic misconduct. <https://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect7>

All academic misconduct is reported to the Department Chair, the Dean's office and to the University. Consequences may include course failure, departmental suspension, or expulsion from the university.

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## RESOURCES

### ArcD STUDENT HUB

This new site is a great resource for all KU Architecture & Design students. Visit it to see weekly announcements, advising info, policies and resources, job postings, internships, scholarship opportunities, upcoming electives, and study abroad trips, student organizations information and events! The site will be updated weekly during the academic year.

[www.arcd.ku.edu/current-students](http://www.arcd.ku.edu/current-students)

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[www.arcd.ku.edu/advising](http://www.arcd.ku.edu/advising)

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The Student Access Center (SAC) coordinates academic accommodations and services for all eligible KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodation and have not contacted SAC, please do so as soon as possible. They are located at 22 Strong Hall and can be reached at 785-864-4064 (V/TTY). Please contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

<https://access.ku.edu/>

### **THE KU WRITING CENTER**

Writers need feedback, sounding boards, and other people to coach them while they compose. That is where the KU Writing Center comes in. It is a place for productive talk about writing, with trained peer consultants to help you brainstorm, draft, and revise your projects.

<https://writing.ku.edu/>

### **UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTERS**

University Academic Support Centers provides a variety of academic support programs designed to support learning for all KU students.

<https://academicsupport.ku.edu/>

### **ACADEMIC LEARNING CENTER**

Academic Learning Center offers many services and programs to assist students in their academic success and to enhance their collegiate experience at KU.

<https://learning.ku.edu/>

### **COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

CAPS Personal Counseling Services can help students with issues related to adjusting to college and other psychological, interpersonal, and family problems. Individual sessions, group sessions and psychiatric services are available.

<https://caps.ku.edu/>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

[Academic Misconduct](#)

[Change of Grade](#)

[Commercial Note-Taking](#)

[Commitment to Integrity and Ethical Conduct](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion](#)

[KBOR Statement on Free Expression](#)

[Mandatory Reporting](#)

[Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action](#)

[Racial and Ethnic Harassment Policy](#)

[Sexual Harassment](#)

[Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

[Weapons, Including Firearms](#)



