

# GRAPHIC DESIGN, BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (B.F.A.)

The sophomore year in the graphic design program is focused on orientation to, and experimentation within, design practice. Students develop processes of making, meaning-building and critical engagement with ideas related to form, medium, materials and tools. This year provides a critical framework to develop a vocabulary allowing them to begin to discuss ideas around information hierarchies and meaning-making as well as legibility and translation.

The junior year is focused on experimentation with, and construction of, narrative structures, argument, advocacy and rhetoric (text, text and image, sequence). The underlying social, political and pluralistic demands of graphic design are emphasized. It situates the student and their work/practice within a context and community and introduces methods to facilitate collaboration with those directly and indirectly impacted by the end results of the design process

The senior year is focused on deepening, refining and situating individuated experiences; formulating and synthesizing learning by teaching others through participatory engagement; and building a situated design practice, while understanding that design is inseparable from the culture at large. The student experience in the program culminates in a capstone project that demonstrates their readiness and capacity to engage responsibly and creatively in the field, and is presented in a public exhibition.

## Admission

Students who have successfully completed the Art Foundation Program are eligible to apply for admission to the B.F.A. program in the Department of Graphic Design. All applicants must submit a portfolio of work. The department uses the portfolio evaluation criteria established in the School of the Arts for initial acceptance.

Students who wish to transfer into the Graphic Design Program must first apply to the Art Foundation Program for evaluation. A transfer student must demonstrate equivalent preparation at other institutions and submit a portfolio of work for review by Graphic Design faculty. Transfer students admitted into the Graphic Design Program must complete all major requirements determined to be missing from their academic design experience. Transfer students should expect to spend a minimum of five semesters in the Graphic Design Program in order to qualify for a B.F.A.

Due to the sequence of the required Graphic Design courses, students are admitted only for the fall semester.

## Standards of graphic design

Students must complete the required pre- and corequisites of the graphic design program in the order presented in the curriculum outline. This structure enables students to develop knowledge and skills based in graphic design that will prepare them for upper-level studio courses and successful entry into the graphic design profession.

Students are required to meet regularly with the department undergraduate adviser each semester on scheduled advising dates to make sure they are completing courses as required and are preparing for the portfolio reviews as needed.

Students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 to be accepted to the graphic design program. Once accepted, students must maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA in GDES courses to continue in the program.

A portfolio review of graphic design studio work takes place at the end of the sophomore year. The student's portfolio, GPA and individual course evaluations are reviewed to determine if the student may continue in the program. Additionally, the following courses must be completed at the end of the sophomore year to be eligible for continuation in the program:

Course	Title	Hours
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES elective (300-500 level)		

## Learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, students will know and know how to do the following:

- **Prioritize making as a primary mode of investigation and exchange:** Students will engage with labor as a physical and emotional activity that is fundamental to the design process. They will understand and practice design as a process that is not driven by assumptions, presumptions or preconceptions.
- **Understand that research is an essential component of the design process:** Students will employ research as a critical lens to understand context and to validate the relevance of design decisions and processes.
- **Develop capacity to design in collaboration with others:** Students will become equipped to participate in broad and diverse exchanges that expand the range and depth of design processes that are oriented to nonhierarchical learning and making.
- **Develop cultural literacy:** Students will be cognizant of forces that affect the formation and reinforcement of meaning and value. These forces define who we are and how the decisions we make can cultivate the dignity of individuals and communities.

## Special requirements

Once accepted, students must maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA in GDES courses to continue in the program. Student GDES course work GPA is monitored at the end of fall and spring semesters. A student with GDES course work GPA that falls below 2.5 by the end of any semester is placed on departmental probation for the next semester. Students placed on GDES GPA probation must bring their GDES course work GPA to a minimum of 2.5 by the end of the following semester. Students failing to bring their GDES course work GPA to a minimum of 2.5 by the end of that semester are no longer permitted to continue in the program.

## Degree requirements for Bachelor of Fine Arts, Graphic Design (B.F.A.)

### General Education requirements

Course	Title	Hours
<b>University Core Education Curriculum</b>		
UNIV 111 Play course video for Focused Inquiry I	Focused Inquiry I	3
UNIV 112 Play course video for Focused Inquiry II	Focused Inquiry II	3
UNIV 200 Approved humanities/fine arts	Inquiry and the Craft of Argument	3
Approved natural/physical sciences		3-4
Approved quantitative literacy		3-4
Approved social/behavioral sciences		3-4
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>21-24</b>

Course	Title	Hours
<b>Additional General Education requirements</b>		
General Education electives (choose from AFAM, ANTH, BIOL, CHEM, ECON, ENGL, ENVS, FRSC, GSWS, HIST, HUMS, INSC, INTL, MASC, MATH, MGMT, PHIL, PHYS, POLI, PSYC, RELS, SCTS, SOCY, STAT, UNIV, WRLD, or ARBC 101, CHIN 101, FREN 101, GRMN 101, ITAL 101, LATN 101, PORT 101, RUSS 101 or SPAN 101).		9
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>9</b>

### Collateral requirements

Course	Title	Hours
<b>Art Foundation Program</b>		
ARTF 131	Drawing Studio	3
ARTF 132	Surface Research	3
ARTF 133	Space Research	3
ARTF 134	Time Studio	3
ARTF 139	Project	2
<b>Art history</b>		
ARTH 103 & ARTH 104	Survey of Art I and Survey of Art II	6
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>20</b>

### Major requirements

Course	Title	Hours
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 322	Core Studio IV	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	8
GDES 398	Dialogues	6
GDES 431	Critical Inquiry	4

GDES 440	Synthesis	6
GDES 480	Multi Studio II	2
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>52</b>

### GDES electives

Course	Title	Hours
Select eight GDES elective credits at the 300- to 500-level		8

### Open electives

Course	Title	Hours
Select 12 open elective credits		12

The minimum total of credit hours required for this degree is 122.

### Electives

Course	Title	Hours
GDES 301	Beginning Letterpress	3
GDES 302	Book Arts	3
GDES 308	Web Design	3
GDES 356	Studio Management	3
GDES 391	Lecture Topics in Design	1-3
GDES 392	Research/Individual Study	2-4
GDES 401	Advanced Letterpress	3
GDES 403	Design Activism	3
GDES 404	Typeface Design	3
GDES 408	Advanced Web Design	3
GDES 412	Typography III	3
GDES 413	Package Design	3
GDES 414	Exhibition and Environmental Graphic Design	3
GDES 417	Interdisciplinary Team Design	3
GDES 418	Design Center	3-9
GDES 445	Problem Seeking	3
GDES 481	Practicum	4
GDES 491	Studio Topics in Design	1-6
GDES 492	Design Internship	1-3

What follows is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements within a four-year course of study at VCU. Please contact your adviser before beginning course work toward a degree.

### Freshman year

Fall semester	Hours
ARTF 131 Drawing Studio	3
ARTF 132 Surface Research	3
ARTF 139 Project	1
ARTH 103 Survey of Art I	3
UNIV 111 Focused Inquiry I Play course video for Focused Inquiry I	3
Quantitative literacy course (University Core)	3
<b>Term Hours:</b>	<b>16</b>

### Spring semester

ARTF 133	Space Research	3
ARTF 134	Time Studio	3
ARTF 139	Project	1
ARTH 104	Survey of Art II	3
UNIV 112	Focused Inquiry II	3
Play course video for Focused Inquiry II		
Social/behavioral sciences course (University Core)		3
Term Hours:		16
<b>Sophomore year</b>		
<b>Fall semester</b>		
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
UNIV 200	Inquiry and the Craft of Argument	3
Term Hours:		15
<b>Spring semester</b>		
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
Natural/physical sciences course (University Core)		3
Open electives (300- to 500-level)		3
Term Hours:		15
<b>Junior year</b>		
<b>Fall semester</b>		
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES elective (300- to 500-level)		4
Humanities/fine arts course (University Core)		3
Term Hours:		15
<b>Spring semester</b>		
GDES 322	Core Studio IV	4
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
General Education elective		3
Open electives (300- to 500-level)		3
Term Hours:		15
<b>Senior year</b>		
<b>Fall semester</b>		
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES 431	Critical Inquiry	4
GDES Elective (300- to 500-level)		4
General Education electives		3
Open elective (300- to 500-level)		3
Term Hours:		15
<b>Spring semester</b>		
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES 440	Synthesis	6
GDES 480	Multi Studio II	2

General Education elective	3
Open electives (300- to 500-level)	3
Term Hours:	15
Total Hours:	122

The minimum total of credit hours required for this degree is 122.

**GDES 202. Design Technology. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: successful completion of the Art Foundation Program. A design foundation workshop that emphasizes skills development and application of design technology: time and project management, visual thinking, image capturing and editing.

**GDES 205. Design Methods and Processes. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. An in-depth investigation of the theoretical aspects of the design process within the context of designing effective visual communications.

**GDES 211. Typography I. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: ARTF 131, ARTF 132, ARTF 133 and ARTF 134. An introduction to communication problem-solving through the visual medium of language. The fundamentals of typography and typographic design are explored in experimental and practical projects.

**GDES 212. Design Form and Communication. 3,6 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours or 4 lecture and 6 studio hours. 3 credits for Richmond; 6 credits for VCUQ. Prerequisites: ARTF 131, ARTF 132, ARTF 133 and ARTF 134. The relationship of form and communication in graphic design is explored through theoretical and applied projects. The impact of typography and imagery and their syntactic relations upon audience and content is stressed.

**GDES 213. Typography II. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 211. An intermediate exploration of typography as an expressive and functional communication vehicle. Emphasis is placed on defining effective design criteria to meet the reader's needs, the communicator's intent and the designer's formal sensibilities.

**GDES 214. Imaging I. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: ARTF 131, ARTF 132, ARTF 133 and ARTF 134. Enrollment requires successful completion of the Art Foundation Program. A studio course focusing on the use of digital imaging techniques for communication purposes. The processes and techniques for making and working with digital images are explored.

**GDES 216. Imaging II. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 214. A studio course focusing on the creation of visual images for communication purposes. The processes and media for making visual images and the limits of visual literacy are explored.

**GDES 220. Design Practices. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio is an introduction to research, analysis and the interpretation of content, emphasizing how hierarchical and syntactic structures participate in the making of meaning. Students are oriented as shapers and interpreters within culture.

**GDES 221. Core Studio I. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio is an introduction to the generation and control of form. This involves the exploration of methods, materials and language. Students are oriented to fundamental modes of design practices.

**GDES 222. Core Studio II. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio reinforces methods, materials and language used in generating and organizing form. Students examine the potential and implications of design processes and their outcomes.

**GDES 231. Theory Inquiry. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This inquiry course is an overview of theory and philosophy influencing graphic design as a situated practice. Students are exposed to design criticism and theoretical perspectives from a variety of disciplines.

**GDES 252. History of Visual Communication. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An investigation of contemporary visual communication concepts, media and images, and their role in contemporary society.

**GDES 253. Theory and Philosophy of Visual Communication. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An overview of theoretical and philosophical issues influencing the practice of visual communication design.

**GDES 301. Beginning Letterpress. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. An introductory/intermediate printmaking studio course designed for students interested in developing their visual vocabulary in letterpress and relief printing. Students will undertake critical analysis of the letterpress medium and utilize techniques to develop and produce finished editions of each assigned task.

**GDES 302. Book Arts. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. An introduction to the tools, materials and craft of contemporary bookmaking. Investigation of bookbinding, handcraft and related techniques.

**GDES 308. Web Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: permission of instructor. A course developing the design of websites. Emphasis is placed on the visual design, navigation, development, communication and authoring of websites.

**GDES 321. Core Studio III. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio examines systems and structures as frameworks for design methods, processes and outcomes. Students broaden their practice relative to scale, context, conditions and effect.

**GDES 322. Core Studio IV. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio expands critical discourse to investigate design's impact through distribution and engagement. Students consider how their personal voice and point of view function in a larger context.

**GDES 330. The Business of Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course introduces basic global economics and general design business concepts such as the free enterprise system, legal forms of business and financial considerations. It also surveys business and management practices such as planning, decision-making, communication, global ethics, marketing, human resources, finance and entrepreneurial skills needed to open a design business. Crosslisted as: IDES 330/FASH 330.

**GDES 331. Precedents Inquiry. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This inquiry course is a pluralistic survey of precedents and historical examples of design with an emphasis on multiple perspectives and power structures. Students will encounter design histories through a source-based approach.

**GDES 343. Systems in Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 205, GDES 213 and GDES 216. The study of systematic and methodological approaches to communication design through the solving of complex problems in visual communication. Emphasis is placed on objective process and research in approaches to various professional situations.

**GDES 345. Print I. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 205, GDES 213 and GDES 216. An introduction to the design process and applied realizations of print-based materials and outcomes. Addresses the form and communication of the printed page from the tradition of print to the organizational principles outside that tradition. Objectives accomplished through lectures, demonstrations and problem-solving.

**GDES 346. Visual Narrative I. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 205, GDES 213 and GDES 216. Studio course that introduces the conceptual and technical issues involved in the design and production of sequential documents and time-based compositions. Addresses the possibilities and limitations of the integration of word, image, video and sound as they relate to problem-solving in visual communication.

**GDES 347. Interaction I. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 205, GDES 213 and GDES 216. An introduction to the conceptual and technical issues involved in the design and production of interactive documents and environments. Addresses the possibilities and limitations of computer-generated images, sound and digital video as they relate to problem-solving in visual communication.

**GDES 356. Studio Management. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A study of business and management factors that relate to creative design. Topics include marketing, structure and organization; financial factors; ethical and legal aspects; and management of design, illustration and photography studios.

**GDES 365. Print II. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 345. An advanced studio course devoted to the study of systematic and methodological approaches to the design process and applied realization of print-based materials and outcomes. Emphasizes rigorous objective and experimental research methods in approaches to various professional situations. Objectives accomplished through lectures, demonstrations and team-based approaches to problem-solving.

**GDES 367. Interaction II. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 347. A studio course devoted to the design and production of advanced projects in interaction design and experience design with focus on research, problem definition and team-based approaches to problem-solving.

**GDES 370. Design History: 20th and 21st Centuries. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: ARTF 105-106. Study of the major theories and styles on communication arts, fashion and interior environments of the 20th and 21st centuries. Contemporary analysis of cultural conditions and the manner in which designers respond to those conditions. Crosslisted as: FASH 370/IDES 370.

**GDES 380. Multi Studio I. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. May be repeated for a maximum total of 8 credits. This studio emphasizes critical engagement, research and speculation. Students engage in collaboration, peer learning and interdependent discovery.

**GDES 391. Lecture Topics in Design. 1-3 Hours.**

Semester course; variable hours. 1-3 credits per semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 credits. Topical lectures in design issues and visual communications.

**GDES 392. Research/Individual Study. 2-4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1-2 lecture and 3-6 studio hours. 2-4 credits. May be repeated for a total of 6 credits. Enrollment requires permission of instructor, approval of faculty adviser and chair. The structuring, research, execution and presentation of an independent project in visual communications under the direction of a faculty adviser. The student will be encouraged to become a self-generating problem seeker and solver with the ability to carry out self-stated goals.

**GDES 398. Dialogues. 1 Hour.**

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. May be repeated for a maximum total of 6 credits. This course engages students in peer-to-peer reflection, dialogue and debate in order to further develop an understanding of the diversity and scope of design practices. Graded as pass/fail.

**GDES 401. Advanced Letterpress. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 301. An advanced print studio course designed for students interested in exploring their visual vocabulary in digital and letterpress relief printing. Students will undertake critical analysis of the combined media of digital and letterpress and utilize techniques inherent within each technology to develop and produce finished editions.

**GDES 403. Design Activism. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. An overview of the ethical issues faced by practitioners in the field of design and proactive roles available outside of the traditional client/designer relationship. The course presents critiques of the various roles that designers play in the areas of marketing, advertising, product development, and as entrepreneurs and content generators. The course includes a component in which problem identification, team work and real-world engagement are required.

**GDES 404. Typeface Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Glyph construction is explored through historical and methodological analysis as well as the creation of typographic systems. Formal mechanics of typefaces are emphasized in discussion of their function as vehicles for communication. Both the functional and expressive nature of typefaces are examined through hands-on exercises.

**GDES 408. Advanced Web Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 308. Investigation into the design and development of dynamic websites. Introduces database integration, webhost management and advanced coding techniques. Emphasis is placed on the semantic design and development of content-rich websites and blogs.

**GDES 412. Typography III. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 212. Advanced problems in typographic design with emphasis on the development of a personal creative approach to form and communication.

**GDES 413. Package Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 213 and 367. Theoretical and studio investigation of three-dimensional structural principals as they relate to the area of packaging, exhibition and environmental design.

**GDES 414. Exhibition and Environmental Graphic Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 213 and 366. Study of the presentation of information in large-scale, three-dimensional formats. Exploration of exhibition and environmental design, including developing imagery and typography, understanding the use of "wayfinding" (identification, interpretation and orientation) and human factors, communicating of programmed content.

**GDES 417. Interdisciplinary Team Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 213 and 366. Advanced projects in visual communication in which student design teams solve complex problems requiring collaboration.

**GDES 418. Design Center. 3-9 Hours.**

Semester course; 2-6 lecture and 3-9 studio hours. 3-9 credits. May be repeated for a total of 12 credits. Enrollment requires portfolio review by faculty. A professional studio to give students practicum experience working with faculty on self-initiated and client-initiated, real-world design projects.

**GDES 431. Critical Inquiry. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture and 2 studio hours. 4 credits. This inquiry course is focused on research, critical analysis and discussion. Students assess and reflect on their emerging practice and its relation to the field.

**GDES 440. Synthesis. 6 Hours.**

Semester course; 12 studio hours. 6 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 431. This studio provides students the opportunity to synthesize knowledge, skill and experiences accumulated over their progression through the program. Students are required to define and execute a capstone project that demonstrates their readiness and capacity to engage responsibly and creatively in the field. The class culminates in a public exhibition.

**GDES 445. Problem Seeking. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A seminar exploring the nature, scope and implications of defining design objectives in terms of limitations, requirements and potentials of a product's implementation, performance and life cycle.

**GDES 470. Senior Seminar. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An examination of selected theoretical, historical, aesthetic and social areas of concern to the graphic designer. Scholarly research, critical analysis and discussion are expected.

**GDES 472. Senior Studio. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 studio hours. 3 credits. A capstone course oriented toward the creation of a professional portfolio, self-promotional materials and business system. The course culminates in the annual Senior Show.

**GDES 480. Multi Studio II. 2 Hours.**

Semester course; 4 studio hours. 2 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 380. Utilizing principles and skills gained in the prerequisite course, students facilitate discourse, framing and articulation of creative partnerships.

**GDES 481. Practicum. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 4 field experience hours. 4 credits. This course engages students in practical experiences related to the contemporary and future practice of design and research through hands-on learning under the supervision of qualified practitioners. Students must be actively engaged in work for a minimum of 120 hours.

**GDES 491. Studio Topics in Design. 1-6 Hours.**

Semester course; 2-12 studio hours. 1-6 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 credits. Studio focusing on evolving and emergent topics that affect contemporary design practice.

**GDES 492. Design Internship. 1-3 Hours.**

Semester course; 1-3 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 3 credits. Prerequisites: senior standing, 3.0 GPA or permission of the chair. Supervised pragmatic work experiences. Training is provided under the direction and supervision of qualified professional practitioners.