

VA 201 Visual Language I

Syllabus for Section A & Section B (Fall 2020)

Course structure: Synchronous (Please Note: Online classes will not be recorded)

Class meets fully online at the scheduled times through zoom meetings
(Please check your emails before class for the link to the zoom meeting)

Section A: Tuesdays 13:40-15:30 & Thursdays 9:40-11:30

Section B: Tuesdays 9:40-11:30 & Thursdays 12:40-14:30

Instructor: Meltem Işık

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 15:00-17:00 or by appointment

Email: misik@sabanciuniv.edu

When we talk about language, we really talk about a structure with -agreed upon- rules and codes. We use those codes and structure to convey and receive messages. All the students here at Sabancı University have learned to read, to write and to speak another language. Therefore, all of you know what it takes to learn to communicate in another language. You also know that people communicate at various levels of competency both in their native tongue and in a second language. Some of us are capable enough in English so that we can easily order a hamburger and coke in New York City. Others may have a level of competency that will enable them to read simple paperback novels or newspaper articles. Some can only read Lemanyak or Şamdan, but not manage to read Orhan Pamuk. Certainly, there may be the ones who have a particularly high-level capacity in a language that they have the ability and privilege not just to read but also to write novels, poetry and academic articles in that language. If we are attaching “visual” to the idea of language, it seems that we must be talking about an ability to read, decode, and communicate with nonverbal messages.

What is a nonverbal message? In reality, we deal with such messages more than one might imagine. We generally believe that a red cloth irritates the bull. By common agreement, we stop at red traffic lights and we go when it turns to green. We receive many and various silent messages about incomes, social status, class, taste and the like when we walk in Bebek and certainly a completely different set of nonverbal messages if we go walking in Sultanbeyli. Body language is supposedly an entire communication system, all silent. A smile means the same all over the world.

This course is mostly about basic reading in visual language, but it is not an art appreciation or an art analysis course. Just as in Beginning Spanish, English 101, Introduction to German and many other basic level language courses to be able to read in that particular language you will be asked also 'to write' very basic texts in this language. In this particular case, we will ask you to do very basic exercises in visual language. Since this course is part of a Visual Arts program you may be here thinking that you will create artworks, expressive masterpieces in a studio. If you were able to read Schiller and write like Gunther Grass in the Introduction to German Course without a doubt, there is a possibility to create a masterwork in this studio.

So, is this another boring introductory language course? Possible, if you think that language is boring. However, remember, language is also control. Language is power. Think of various uses of verbal language. How some people just use language to buy apples from the grocer? Think about how some other people can gather ten thousand people in a public square to listen to them. How they can use the same language to excite a huge crowd sometimes to topple governments, sometimes to lynch people. Think of the use of language in simpler human relations. How one can use the language to make another person so happy or so sad. (An “I love you” or an “I do not love you”) Think about poets, writers and actors that can make us laugh and cry at times using the same words that we use to buy apples.

Be it visual or verbal if you are competent and able in a communication process, if you know what to say, what words to use, how to pronounce the words, when to pause, when to scream, when to whisper you have a lot of power. You can convey ideas, feelings, emotions; you can activate or stop your listeners or viewers. You can make them be intrigued, disgusted or fall in love with you.

Both in verbal and visual language to have that sort of influence one must first learn the basic elements of a language (letters of that alphabet, words/vocabulary, rules of syntax/grammar). As you, all know we have to do a lot of memorizing, reading and writing exercises to master that part of a language only. Once we are able to read, write and speak in a language, to use that effectively we have to master the process of decision-making. This means we have to learn what words to use at a particular instance, when to pause when to scream, when to whisper. In visual language this process of decision-making is called designing.

- This course will start with some information and exercises about **seeing accurately and creating images**.
- It will move on to the **basic visual elements** and **their various characteristics**.
- We will look into how we see and perceive, discuss **basic principles of design**, focusing on the principles of gestalt, and **how visual perception informs design decisions**. (Such as closure/proximity/grouping/continuity.)
- Finally, we will get into **visual strategies**, through various basic design exercises to consciously **arrange various visual elements to achieve the particular effect we desire**.

COURSE STRUCTURE

- The course meets online through zoom, twice a week for two hours each session.
- There will be no exams but plenty of homework assignments / projects.
- Projects will be announced, and the project briefs will be available on SuCourse+.
- You will be given specific formats (paper sizes) for every home project. Presenting your work in these formats are crucial and critical!
- **All homework/projects are to be submitted online. You should photograph, name and uploaded your projects on SuCourse+ before the class begins.**
- All homework/project files you submit online should be named in the following format: **your name-last name-project number**
- You will always have the opportunity to redo your projects, after the online critique sessions, and submit it before the next class. When you redo the homework/projects in order to improve your results, this is called “sharpening” a design. In such cases do not forget to add a capital “S” (meaning sharpened) next to the number of the project: **your name-last name-project number S**

MATERIALS

Materials and equipment that you should have are:

- A digital camera of one sort or another. A cellular phone camera is acceptable for the purposes of this class.
- A4 paper (regular white, plenty of it)
- Canson or Schöller white drawing paper. Start with at least two sheets 100 x 70 cm format. We'll hardly ever ask you to use that format, but it is cheaper to buy the large sheets and cut them to the required formats)
- Black paper (Fon kağıdı): At least 3 sheets
- Pencils: H4, H2, HB, B2, and B4
- Pencil sharpener
- Eraser(s): A white clean rubber and the blue malleable eraser
- Scissors
- Utility knives and spare blades (one large, one small)
- Steel ruler
- One sheet of thick grey cardboard (mukavva), or cutting mat (this one is critical to use to cut your paper into format, you do not want to cut your tabletop)
- Blue Tack / Patafix
- Glue (Peligom or Uhu both liquid and stick)
- Black markers (One 0.5, one medium tip and one large tip)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- **Your grade predominantly will be based on the sum of these homework/projects that you submit.**
- There will be lectures especially in the first half of the semester, and some classwork/projects but the main part of every course session will consist of critiques. That means visual reading, discussions and verbal evaluation of your homework/projects.
- **Another major portion of your grade will be based on your participation and articulation. That means we expect you to be active and articulate participants in these critiques using your own words as well as the concepts and terminology of the lectures.** In a sense while you are expected to transform verbal homework/projects assignments into visual messages, you should also be prepared to "translate" visual language into verbal language in the critique sessions.
- Attendance will be taken regularly, but please note that it is not sufficient just to attend the zoom meetings. **In order to earn 25% of your grade, participation in the class critiques and timely presentation of the projects are critical.**
- **Regardless of your project grades, if you miss more than 25% of the classes (that is more than 7 classes), you will fail this class, and your grade will be NA.**

GRADES

Projects:	50%
Participation:	25%
<u>Final Project:</u>	<u>25%</u>
Total:	100%

A weekly schedule consisting of a draft plan for this semester is below.*

Have a good semester!

FALL 2020

	Tuesday		Thursday
Week 1 6-8 Oct	Visual language as communication		Seeing accurately: Knowing vs. Seeing–Drawing Stravinsky
Week 2 13-15 Oct	Left brain vs. right brain Blind contour drawing: Perception of the edges	13–14 October Add-drop period!	Accurate drawing Line quality and character Using a view-finder: Seeing negative spaces
Week 3 20-22 Oct	Perspective drawing: Sighting angles and proportions–Drawing with Durer Device		Perspective drawing: Sighting angles and proportions–Drawing with Durer Device
Week 4 27-29 Oct	Styles of representation Basic pattern areas		No class
Week 5 3-5 Nov	Design as decision 1+1=3		Grid: Module and pattern
Week 6 10-12 Nov	Visual elements and their various qualities Visual Balance: Figure and field		Visual Balance: Poster
Week 7 17-19 Nov	Gestalt Grouping/Repelling	16 Nov–4 Dec Withdrawal period!	Emphasis
Week 8 24-26 Nov	Comforting/Disturbing designs		Line drawing/ Silhouette
Week 9 1-3 Dec	Light and shadow drawing		High contrast drawing
Week 10 8-10 Dec	Visual Strategies: Boldness & Subtlety		Visual Strategies: Spontaneity & Predictability
Week 11 15-17 Dec	Visual Strategies: Activeness, transparency		Visual Strategies: Exaggeration & Understatement
Week 12 22-24 Dec	Final Project		Final Project Critique
Week 13 29-31 Dec	Final Project Critique		Final Project Critique
Week 14 5-7 Jan	Final Project Critique	Last week of classes	Final Project Critique
Final Exams 12-15 Jan	Final Project Critique	9 – 21 Jan Final exams	Final Project Submission
Final Exams 19-21 Jan			
	27 January 2021 Grades submission		

*Course content, requirements and policies are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.