

Art 281, CS 273

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#### ABSTRACT

This course is a study of the literate image: the visual and conceptual workings of written communication, from early writing to computer typography.

The course consists of class lectures and short exercises (see below), readings (textbook: *Writing Systems*, Geoffrey Sampson, Stanford U. Press, in paperback), and an independent study/project. Exercises may use any appropriate media: pencils, pens, cameras, computers, etc. Time permitting, there may also be films (see below).

There will be a mid-term examination based on the lectures and readings.

In lieu of a final examination, each student will present an individual project on a subject of the student's choosing, to be presented during the final week(s) of class.

#### SUMMARY OF TOPICS (subject to occasional change)

##### Week Topics

- 1: Introduction: "The Forest of Symbols".  
Exercise: Alphabetic Landscape.
- 2: Dawn of Writing.  
Exercises: Colors of speech.
- 3: Science of Signs (Semiotics & Semiology).  
Exercises: Icons of daily life.
- 4: Evolution of the Alphabet.  
Exercises: Variety of personal literacy.
- 5: Writing as Recording.  
Exercises: Graphic diary: "A day in the life of . . ."
- 6: Typography: Renaissance faces with 20th-century expressions.  
Mid-term exam
- 7: The Marking of Meaning.  
Exercises: Contrast and Harmony.
- 8: The Structure of the Page.  
Exercises: Geometry of the page.
- 9: Avant-garde Typography.  
Exercises: Concrete Poetry.
- 10: Presentations of projects.