

COMMUNICATIONS DESIGN, MFA

Design plays a central and formative role in shaping communities, technology, and business. Never before have designers been expected to cultivate such a diverse set of skills and such broad knowledge. Our MFA program prepares individuals to pursue design with passion and cultural relevance. Our distinctive program emphasizes design as a means for communicating meaningful messages, organizing information, creating compelling user experiences, and affecting social change.

We believe that the most intriguing and successful designers are cultural innovators who use media to inform, persuade, and entertain. Our graduates develop voices as authors and entrepreneurs engaged in identifying and solving design problems within cross-disciplinary environments. We approach design as an agent of change—a strategy for transforming behaviors of individuals in desirable and sustainable ways.

The program provides a framework for both professional practice and academic careers, while emphasizing full-time studio practice in graphic design—communications, identities, objects, environments, and systems. Graduates enter the professional world with a confident design voice and an outstanding body of work, prepared to become innovative leaders in communications design areas—i.e., print and digital media, typography, identity systems and branding, design strategy, social media and interaction design, motion design, environmental design, data visualization, information design, and user experience design.

The MFA in Communications Design is a full-time program with classes offered during the day as well as some evenings for the convenience of students. A minimum of 60 credits, completed within two years of study, is required for the MFA in Communications Design degree. Students accepted typically hold undergraduate degrees in graphic design or related design fields, such as industrial and interior design, architecture, fine arts, and media arts. We also welcome applicants from non-design fields including communications and journalism, business, liberal arts, and the sciences. Up to 6 credits of qualifying courses may be required for applicants who do not meet all entrance standards but whose applications indicate a strong aptitude for graduate study. A portfolio review is required for admission.

The MFA in Communications Design program strives to prepare individuals to be confident and mature independent designers who will contribute to the expansion of the field; are skilled in the effective and appropriate use of technology; become leaders in the communications design profession; and are innovators in design pedagogy, research, and publication.

Course	Title	Credits
Semester 1		
DES-710A	Graduate Studio: Visual Language A	3
DES-720A	Graduate Studio: Technology A	3
DES-730A	Graduate Studio: Transformation Design A	3
DES-760A	Graduate Seminar A	3
HAD-641	Origins of Contemporary Communication Design	3
Credits		15
Semester 2		
DES-741	Cross-Disciplinary Studio	3

DES-751	Design Writing	3
DES-791	MFA Thesis Research	3
Elective Credits		6
Credits		15
Semester 3		
DES-710B	Graduate Studio: Visual Language B	3
DES-720B	Graduate Studio: Technology B	3
DES-730B	Graduate Studio: Transformation Design B	3
DES-760B	Graduate Seminar B	3
DES-794A	MFA Thesis I Resource A	1
DES-796	MFA Thesis I	3
Credits		16
Semester 4		
DES-795A	MFA Thesis II Resource A	1
DES-797	MFA Thesis Production & Exhibition	1
DES-799	MFA Thesis II	3
Elective Credits		9
Credits		14
Total Credits		60

Prerequisite Courses

(only if required upon acceptance)

Code	Title	Credits
DES-601	Design Process + Methodology	3
DES-602	Design Technology	3

- Apply socio-ecologically sustainable processes and research to design transformative strategies for communication and interactions between people and communities that promote a diverse, equitable and just society.
- Integrate situated knowledge and perspectives with histories, principles, and practices of communications design to support the creation of speculative artifacts, modes of representation, platforms and systems serving intersectional identities and abilities.
- Attain interdisciplinary knowledge that supports critical discourse and the development of a significant body of work characterized by experimentation, creativity, and resiliency and include non-dominant ways of knowing, thinking, and doing.
- Accomplish versatility and expert capabilities with communications tools and strategies across numerous technologies, demonstrated through critical responses that recognize design as collective action that address socio-economical and environmental issues.