# ENG 430: Document Design & Visual Rhetoric

Fall 2026 | Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30–1:45pm

## SYLLABUS BREAKDOWN


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## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION


- Dr. Allison Hitt—call me Dr. Allison!
- Associate Professor of English
- ahhitt@bsu.edu
- Check "Contacting Dr. Allison" on Canvas for office hours information


## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### from the BSU Course Catalog

Explores visual rhetoric, particularly focused on theories and best practices for the production of document designs. Familiarizes students with processes and techniques for producing and refining professional document designs.

### from Dr. Allison

We often talk in writing courses about composing the content for print and digital texts, but another important part of the composing process is **design.** Designing information involves considering the structure (organizing & chunking information) and the elements (color, typeface, images & captions) that help readers understand and make meaning with texts. Document design helps readers **use** the texts that we compose.

In ENG 430, we will discuss theories of accessible and usable document design and visual rhetoric, as well as analyze the visual choices of different professional texts. You will use professional design software to compose both physical and digital documents for different contexts and audiences in order to better understand the rhetorical, technical, and ethical dimensions of designing (as well as composing) texts.

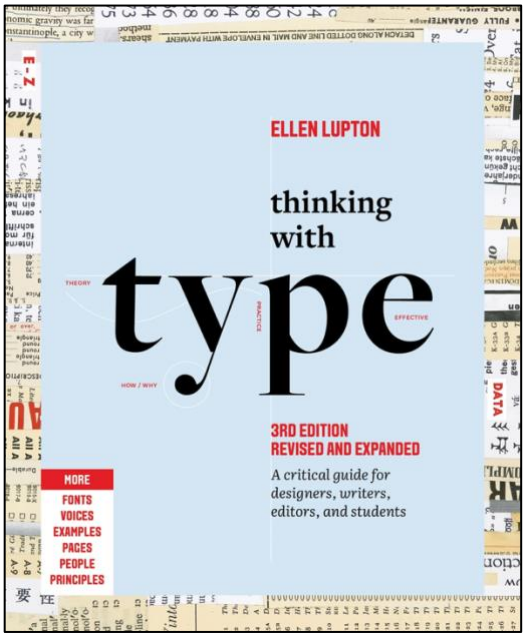
## LEARNING OUTCOMES

In ENG 430, you will learn to do the following:

- Evaluate and critique theories of document design and visual rhetoric
- Identify and employ strategies to read and analyze the images and visual documents you encounter in everyday life and in professional environments
- Practice the steps involved in the design of documents, including brainstorming, researching, sketching and prototyping, constructive critiquing, and revising
- Use design principles, color, typography, white space, and other visual design elements to clarify content and appeal to audiences
- Create documents using a range of design technology: Microsoft Word, Adobe software, and free design platforms
- Create documents that are accessible and usable to a wide range of audiences
- Reflect on the quality and rhetorical effectiveness of the documents you design

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. Lupton, Ellen. ***Thinking with Type: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Editors, and Students,*** 3rd ed. Princeton Architectural Press, 2024. 978-1797226828.
2. a subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud
3. Microsoft Word




As students, you have free access to both Creative Cloud and Microsoft Office. We will only use InDesign and Photoshop, but you must request access to the entire Creative Cloud suite before installing these two programs. You need to be able to access these programs on your personal computers in class.

I will make additional readings available through Canvas, which you will use regularly to submit work and access class materials. You need to be able to access readings for class discussions. If you prefer reading and taking notes on physical copies, you can print up to 600 pages a semester at no cost through PaperCut (formerly PrintSmart).

## ASSIGNMENTS

| Major Projects (550 pts) | | | | Process Work (300 pts) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Project 1 (75 pts) | Project 2 (75 pts) | Project 3 (150 pts) | Project 4 (250 pts) | Drafts & Feedback (100 pts) | Reading Responses (100 pts) | Homework & Exercises (100 pts) |

## Major Projects

*Project 1 Syllabus Redesign (75 points)*

The first project will introduce you to accessible page design using Microsoft Word. Informed by readings about visual rhetoric, design principles, and user design, you will redesign a course syllabus. Deliverables: syllabus (saved as both a .doc and PDF), 1-page reflection. **Due 9/22**

*Project 2 Event Flyer (75 points)*

The second project will introduce you to page design using Adobe InDesign. Informed by readings about color theory and page layout, you will design an event flyer. Deliverables: flyer, 1-page reflection. **Due 10/8**

*Project 3 Résumé (150 points)*

The third project will introduce you to tailoring the content and design of professional documents to specific situations, as well as the basics of typography. You will locate a job or internship posting and create two résumés for that position: one using Microsoft Word and one using InDesign. Deliverables: two résumés, 1-page reflection. **Due 11/3**

*Project 4 Zine (250 points)*

The final project will build on what you've learned about page design and introduce you to theories of document design as embodied, political, and social. You will create a multiple-page zine in two formats on a topic of your choice: a physical version (with paper, photocopied or collaged elements, and hand lettering) and a digital version using InDesign and Photoshop. We will host a zine fest during the final exam period for you to distribute your zines. Deliverables: physical zine (scanned), digital zine, 1-page reflection. **Due 12/8**

## Process Work

*Drafts & Peer Review (100 points)*

Designing, like writing, is a process. You will submit drafts of each major project to receive feedback from both me and your peers. If you follow the guidelines on Canvas and submit drafts (5 x 15 pts) and complete peer review (5 x 5 pts) on time, you will receive full credit for this work.

*Visual Reading Responses (100 points)*

In place of traditional reading responses, you will compose visual responses throughout the semester that synthesize ideas from class readings. You can use a free program like Canva or gain experience with InDesign, but I ask that you start from scratch with whatever interface you select—*no templates*. Responses should be brief in terms of text (150–300 words) because I want you to prioritize design. Responses must fit on a single side of legal-sized (8.5x14") sheet of paper. Font sizes cannot be smaller than 10pt and the margins no smaller than 0.5". We will use visual reading responses to guide class discussions. **Deliverables: four responses**

*Homework and In-Class Design Exercises (100 points)*

To prepare you for major projects, I will ask you to engage in a range of low-stakes homework assignments and discussion board posts (worth 5 pts each). To develop your technical skills, you will complete in-class design exercises (10 pts) using a range of open-access and industry-standard design software. All process work is indicated in the course calendar below.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

All major projects will be accompanied by a detailed assignment sheet with guidelines and evaluation criteria on Canvas. All process work (drafts, peer feedback, homework, in-class exercises, and discussion boards) will be evaluated as complete/incomplete.

Your grade in this class will be calculated according to the grading scale below.

| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 93–100% | 90–92% | 87–89% | 83–86% | 80–82% | 77–79% | 73–76% | 70–72% | 67–69% | 63–66% | 60–62% | 59% & below |
| 791–850 | 765–790 | 740–764 | 706–739 | 680–705 | 655–679 | 621–654 | 595–620 | 570–594 | 536–569 | 510–535 | 509 & below |

## DR. ALLISON'S EXPECTATIONS & COURSE POLICIES

### Accessibility

I am committed to creating a classroom environment that is respectful of and inclusive to different learning and writing processes—whether that is in person or through Canvas. All the materials I share will be made accessible: videos will be captioned, audio will have transcripts, and images will be described. If we can work together to make the class more accessible, let me know.

When you share and compose media for this course, I ask that you be mindful of accessibility and include alt text, captions, and/or a transcript if appropriate.

### Attendance

Writing is a social process, and I invite you to take part in this process by regularly attending class and completing in-class work. We will spend class time discussing readings, working on major projects, and collaborating. Although you will not be penalized for missing a few classes, **anyone who misses three weeks of class (6 classes) without communicating with me cannot pass this course.** If you miss more than five weeks of class total, regardless of whether you let me know about those absences, you cannot pass this class.

You do not need to disclose personal information if you need to miss class. A short email prior to class (when possible) is totally sufficient, e.g., “Hello Dr. Allison, I’m unable to attend class this morning, but I will check the class notes and contact you if I have questions about the homework for next class. Thank you!”

## Email

I expect you to check your email regularly during the work week and respond to messages, just as you will expect me to do. **All emails regarding this class should include an informative subject line, address me by name, and be respectful and professional.** I prefer email to Canvas inbox messages, but I check both. If you have a complex question or need help beyond 1–2 simple email exchanges, please stop by office hours instead!

## Feedback

I will provide written feedback on all your major project submissions, drafts, and homework assignments. I try to return major projects within 1–2 weeks of submission. If you request an extension, you will receive feedback but not within the same timeframe because late work falls to the bottom of my grading pile.

You will also receive feedback from your peers throughout the semester. If you would like additional feedback throughout any of the projects, I encourage you to stop by my office hours or make an appointment at the Writing Center.

## Late Work

Assignments are due by the time specified on Canvas. However, there’s a good chance that at some point throughout the semester, you will need some extra help or time. **You can request a one-week extension by emailing me before the deadline.** You don’t need to disclose a reason—just send a polite email letting me know, e.g., “Hello Dr. Allison, I’m using an extension on the homework due tomorrow. Thank you!” If you need longer than a week to complete an assignment, please email me so we can work together to determine an appropriate deadline.

Extensions do not apply to peer feedback or Project 4.

## Plagiarism, AI, & Academic Integrity

You will be held to Ball State’s standards of academic integrity, which can be accessed in the Student Handbook under “Student Academic Ethics Policy.” You will be asked to document any sources you use for major projects.

The goal of this class is to finetune your critical thinking skills within the context of document design. There are situations where I believe generative AI (GenAI) tools can help you as writers and designers. However, GenAI is most useful when you already possess critical thinking and design skills and can assess for yourself the truth, effectiveness, and accessibility of AI-generated writing and design work.

If you use GenAI to write discussion board posts or peer feedback, extend the word count of a reflection, sketch major projects, or summarize readings, *you are no longer doing the work of this class.* Asking for help is always encouraged. However, I strongly discourage asking anyone, AI included, to do your work *for you*.

If you have questions about plagiarism, source citation, or AI use, please ask me.

### Privacy

Everyone deserves a safe space to learn, ask questions, and make mistakes. I ask that you respect each other's privacy by not sharing your peers' work outside of class, recording or taking photos of your peers with cell phones or AI glasses, or submitting your peers' work to AI tools. Feeding someone's work to an AI tool without their permission in order to summarize that work or generate feedback is disrespectful and a serious violation of privacy, and you will be given a zero on peer feedback if you do this.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### Disability Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

### Freedom of Expression

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State community, we treat each person with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the Freedom of Expression website, and the Beneficence Pledge.

### University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.