

LETTERPRESS
PRINTING



SYLLABUS

SPRING 2012

INSTRUCTORS:
EARL KALLEMEYN
STEVE KENNEDY

Meetings:
PUCD 2013-A

2566 Class

Office Hours:
Mondays & Wednesdays • 10-4
by appointment

Phone:
917 478-8009
917 576-9452

e-mail
skennedy@nyc.rr.com

Letterpress Printing

“You can print! You can do real printing, even if now you can’t tighten a nut, can’t boil water, can’t tell type from tape, live in one room with three other people, and have to hoard your money. . . . It’s simple, it’s fun, it’s useful, and you’ll have something to show!”

—J. BEN LIEBERMAN

COURSE OBJECTIVE

To apply the language and practice of design & typography to letterpress printing.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course celebrates letterpress by using the computer to apply the fundamentals of typesetting and the essential principles of typography to the 500-year-old tradition of relief printing. Letterpress can add an exciting, tactile quality to your design. The *bit* that is characteristic of letterpress is the result of the type being impressed into the paper—this added dimension is pleasing to the eye and touch—making the craft of letterpress an effective design tool. Letterpress offers a tangible quality and nostalgic feel that can’t be achieved with any other technique.

APPROACH & GOALS

Students will compose type, make negatives and generate photopolymer plates; and investigate how the subtleties of paper, inking, impression and color affect their designs.

BACKGROUND

Throughout the Renaissance and well into the the 1950s, letterpress was the workhorse of the printing industry. Virtually all printed materials were produced on letterpress equipment. Today, many designers are returning to the craft of letterpress—printing from photopolymer plates—as a unique option to offset printing.

Additionally, the photopolymer process offers a way to apply current typesetting and imaging technologies to the creation of letterpress printing. The advent of photopolymer plates has not only extended the life of letterpress printing but it has elevated letterpress printing to a position it has never

enjoyed before. Photopolymer technology allows you to set type with design software on a computer, integrate images, line drawings, and halftones into your text, separate color on the computer and print sophisticated and technically complicated designs in multiple colors. All proofing and checking is done on the front-end (the desktop) using inexpensive laser-prints and finally, the space needed to store photopolymer plates is miniscule compared to that of lead type. Unlike type, photopolymer does not wear out, has no broken letters, there is never a wrong font, the surface is always perfectly type high, and complicated “make-ready” a thing of the past. Plates made from 2640 dpi negatives produce incredibly sharp, crisp impressions, superior to that of freshly cast foundry types. Photopolymer is the optimal printing method for the 21st century.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The students will demonstrate the principles, aesthetics, and techniques of professional typesetting, their ability to produce usable, original conceptual typographic design projects that communicate a specific design message.

Understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines: Design and printing takes place at the intersection of disciplines, so is by its nature inter-disciplinary. By using and combining printing technologies, and directly experiencing the way these influence the expression of ideas, you will learn to appreciate how printing can be a part of the creative process. For example, we will look at the question of how new printing technologies, such as 3-d printers, are affecting the way designers design, and how this is different for, for example, using letterpress printing.

RECOMMENDED READING

Printing Digital Type on the Hand-Operated Flatbed Cylinder Press by Gerald Lange (Third Edition). California: Bieler Press, 2005.

<http://www.fiveroses.org/bibliography.htm>

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Class participation (attendance, careful articulation of ideas, opinions, and criticism). Class assignments and presentation. Required reading. While this class only meets once a week, students should expect to spend a minimum of six hours per week on class work.

GRADING POLICIES

To achieve a satisfactory grade (C) you need to:

Attend all class sessions and be punctual, and participate in all class discussions, complete all assignments, as well as all parts of each assignment, with creativity, thoroughness, and thoughtfulness, present your work professionally, and meet assignment deadlines (late work will result in one grade lower than earned). Also, each of you is expected to treat your classmates with respect and be willing to learn from them, as well as being prepared to share your ideas.

Assignments: 90%

Active class participation: 10%

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend every class. If you are sick or have an extenuating personal emergency, please e-mail me. Students are permitted one unexcused absence. Students absent from class due to illness and seeking to make up assignments must provide physician's verified documentation.