



Syllabus: Rhetoric of Visuals and Infographics | Spring 2026

ENGL 2123-202 | TR 2-3:20 PM | BW 117

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Hillary Coenen | Phone: (940) 397-4058 | Email: hillary.coenen@msutexas.edu
Office: BW 203 | [Office hours](#) in person, by phone, or on Zoom at the following times:
Mon: Noon - 2 PM | Tues: 1-2 PM | Wed: Noon - 1 PM | Thurs: 1-2 PM | OR BY APPT

Course Description

A theoretical and practical inquiry into visual rhetoric and infographics, the visual display of information. Students learn how visuals are used to communicate and persuade; how culture influences the creation, delivery, and interpretation of visual messages; and how to apply this knowledge to the creation, arrangement, and delivery of visual information, data, and evidence.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

- **NDDB** - Williams, Robin. *The Non-Designer's Design Book*. Peachpit, 2015. [4th edition]
- **WSG** - Wong, Donna M. *The Wall Street Journal Guide to Information Graphics*. Norton, 2013

Important Dates

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- For long semester courses, last day to drop with a grade of "W": Wed. April 29, 2026, 2025, before 4:00 p.m. Withdrawals after this date will receive grades of "F." Note: You can receive an Instructor drop with a grade of "F" or "WF" prior to that date: See course policies for Late Assignments, Academic Dishonesty, and Revisions.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to

- Understand and apply the principles of visual rhetoric in their analysis of and justification for design decisions.
- Understand and address many of the ethical, legal, cultural, and economic issues that impact the creation, interpretation, and use of visual messages.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply skills needed to conduct research and/or engage in creative activities.
- Collaborate with peers to address real-world problems and respond to real world questions.
- Develop and apply design, teambuilding, and management skills to evaluating, researching, creating, and presenting visual information and arguments.
- Synthesize course readings, discussions, and assignments in a team project.

THECB Core Learning Objectives - Communication

This course fulfills a Communication Core requirement and will assess the following:

- *Critical Thinking Skills*, to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information. To assess the student's critical thinking skills, the Team Project Value Rubric will be applied to the Team Project presentation.
- *Communication Skills*, to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication. To assess the student's communication skills, the Team Project Value Rubric will be applied to the Team Project presentation.

- *Teamwork Skills*, to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal. To assess the student's teamwork skills, the Team Project Value Rubric will be applied to the Team Project presentation.
- *Personal Responsibility Skills*, to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making. To assess the student's personal responsibility skills, the Team Project Value Rubric will be applied to the Team Project presentation.

Grading System & Policies

Table 1: Points Allocated per Assignment

Individual Assignments	Points
Quizzes (4 x 2.5)	10
Critical analysis and redesign 1	5
Critical analysis and redesign 2	5
Infographics "dos and don'ts" (flyer & presentation)	10
MLA citations	5
Class demographics bar chart assignment	5
Research report w/graphic (related to team project)	20
Celebration of Scholarship reflection essay	5
	(65%)
Team (Collaborative) Assignments	
Team project proposal	5
Team project presentation	20
End of project closure report	5
Team member evaluation	5
	(35%)
Total Possible Points	100

Table 2: Total Points for Final Grade

Grade	Points
A	89.5-100
B	79.5-89.4
C	69.5-79.4
D	59.5-69.4
F	0-59.4

Collaborative Team Assignments

Collaborating with a team member on the team assignments is **a requirement** (i.e., you cannot complete these assignments on your own nor receive a grade for an assignment for which you did not contribute). Should your teammate not contribute or withdraw from the course, you will be re-assigned to a different team. (The final team assignments often are some of the highest grades received in the course.)

Acceptable Submission Format and Process

Formal assignments are to be typed and formatted with all sources documented according to MLA style guidelines. Formal papers will be uploaded to the D2L Assignment folder. By enrolling in this class, hillary.coenen@msutexas.edu

students expressly grant MSU a “limited right” in all intellectual property created for the purpose of this course. The “limited right” includes but is not limited to the right to reproduce the student’s work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and for educational purposes.

Note: You may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in another course, unless you obtain both instructors’ explicit written permission in advance.

Revision

You may revise and resubmit any coursework within 2 weeks of receiving feedback and prior to finals week for additional feedback and a new assessment. Grade revisions are negotiated on a case-by-case basis, and all should be preceded by a revision plan with the help of the instructor.

Mid-Term Progress Report

At mid-term, I’ll share a progress report with advisors, support staff, and you. These do not appear on transcripts or affect GPAs. Students earning Cs or below should visit with me and TASP.

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments, defined as work not submitted to the designated site within 2 hours after the deadline, may still be accepted for credit if you consult with me within two business days of the deadline, at my discretion. If you anticipate you may have difficulty meeting a deadline, request an extension at least 24 hours in advance. If you have difficulty submitting or are unsure if your submission was successful, email me with your work attached and explain the issue.

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Plagiarism is the use of another’s thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument (including text written by a generation system or artificial intelligence tool) in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing on the Works Cited page)—whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. At the very least, plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment; at worst, the consequence will be an F in the course. Offenders will be reported to the Chair of the Department of English, Humanities, and Philosophy and the Dean of Students. Students have the right to appeal an alleged incident of Academic Dishonesty. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in [the Student Handbook](#), under Academic Dishonesty Procedure or through [the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

Academic Integrity Advice

This course aims to teach ethical research and writing practices, which require that writers clearly and consistently cite sources and take responsibility for their work. All work submitted for this course is subject to be scanned by plagiarism and AI checkers. If the text requires but does not include accurate and consistent attributions, you will not receive credit for the assignment, but you will have the opportunity to rewrite the assignment with guidance about proper attribution and citation (on the first occurrence). If this occurs twice in the course, you will receive a grade of “F” for the course. There are no exceptions to this rule.

To avoid penalties or accusations of academic dishonesty, I suggest the following:

- **Ask for help:** As the instructor of this course, I am responsible for teaching you about correct and ethical citation and attribution, and I’m available to assist you. Contact me several days before the assignment is due with a link to the source so that I have time to review the article and meet to discuss your concerns.
- **Don’t use AI:** Generally speaking, you are not allowed to use artificial intelligence (AI) engines, software, or artwork generating programs to produce content submitted for grading in this class

unless the assignment instructions specifically call for the use of AI. I will provide more information about specific assignments that incorporate AI when the time is appropriate in the course. You may not, however, construe this limited use as permission to use these technologies in any other facet of this course. Use of AI on tasks for which it is not permitted constitutes academic dishonesty.

- **Provide instructor access to all sources used in assignments:** All sources cited in an assignment must be available, accessible online for me, the instructor, to review as I grade your assignments. Save PDFs of your sources in a Google Folder, then share that Google Folder by pasting the URL into the comment box of your D2L submission. A link to an abstract or to an online database which has a paywall won't work: I need to be able to read the entire article, just as you did.
- **Accurately cite sources:** When using the ideas of other published and/or unpublished sources, students must use accepted documentation conventions (i.e., MLA or APA). All quoted content must be placed in "quotation marks," and for quoted, paraphrased, or summarized content, the correct source must be cited in the body and in a list of references.

GenAI Policy Details

If you choose to use a generative AI tool for this class, you are required to include a full transcript of your session(s) with each submission—every prompt you entered and every piece of AI output you received.

- If you turn in an essay that is just AI output pasted and submitted as yours, you will receive a 0.
- If your essay shows partial AI use (even a small amount), that is still prohibited. However, I recognize the temptations of new technology, so here is how consequences will work:
 - If your submission appears to be fully AI-generated, or if an originality checker indicates that your response is more than 20% AI-generated, I will investigate further. If your response and other evidence cannot demonstrate that the work you submitted is at least 70% original, you won't receive credit for the assignment.
 - If you submit work that contains some AI influence (more than 70% original) but you have been transparent and included the transcript, I will take that into account when deciding on consequences.

This policy is designed to create learning potential, a space for honoring you and your authentic creativity, critical thinking, and written expression. Note that there is no uniform policy on AI use at MSU. Make efforts to understand the policy for each course you take.

Course Policies & Practices

Class Communication - Email & GroupMe

Before asking questions via GroupMe or email, check D2L and our course syllabus and schedule. If the answers you seek are not provided, use GroupMe for questions and conversation about class activities, deadlines, and issues that pertain to others in the class. This will allow quicker responses and provide helpful reminders for others.

Email is the best way to contact me about your own attendance or performance. Allow 2 business days for email responses. All emails you send for academic purposes should be revised and edited, including a greeting, body paragraph(s), and closing, to meet professional expectations for emails. For all correspondence with your instructors, indicate your full name, course and section number.

Attendance Policy

Punctual, engaged attendance is crucial to your success in this class and in college. More than two weeks' worth of **unresolved** absences (TR: 4 classes) will be grounds for the instructor to drop you from the course. Any absences are likely to affect your performance in the course, and it's your

responsibility to be present and prepared for class to maximize your learning. If you must miss class for any reason, you may resolve absences by communicating with your instructor. If you must miss multiple sessions for any reason, alert the Dean of Students office with documentation so they can verify for instructors.

***Unresolved Absence:** Absences about which you did not communicate to the instructor prior to or within two days of its occurrence.

***Resolved Absence:** Absences about which you email your instructor prior to or within two business days. Emails must explain what actions you will take to stay on track in the course.

University Closure Practices

In the event of university closure for inclement weather conditions or emergency situations, students will be notified through official campus channels (MSU Alert, MSU Safety app, Postmaster emails, and website headers). When any schedule changes occur, I will provide schedule updates and assignment expectations using D2L News announcements, GroupMe, and university emails, and I will also update the Live Class Schedule to reflect changes. For this course, unless a change is posted to the course D2L News, assignments due to be uploaded or posted to D2L during the closure will remain due as scheduled. Students who are unable to complete assignments due during a closure (for example, due to a power outage) will not be penalized, but are expected to notify the professor of their situation.

Learning with Generosity

As a community, we have diverse bodies, experiences, and needs. Our differences are strengths and we should strive to learn from them. To learn in a safe environment, we must ardently reject language and behaviors that denigrate others based on identity. In this learning space, hate speech, harassment, discrimination, & violence are not tolerated. This course does encourage discussion of difficult topics. We work through discomfort and create a brave space for learning by showing respect for others and considering diverse perspectives. There is a lot we don't know about each other, and our word choice in discussing social & political issues matters! Ignorance is not an excuse for cruelty or dismissiveness, but we all make mistakes as we learn, so we should be willing to forgive & learn from these situations.

CARE for Class Community

Together, we'll decide what it means to show that we CARE about our own education and that of our classmates. CARE stands for Communicative, Accountable, Respectful, and Engaged.

Class members will describe specific behaviors and practices that correspond with those characteristics:

Principles	Students will...	Professor will...
<i>Communicative</i>		
<i>Accountable</i>		

Principles	Students will...	Professor will...
<i>Respectful</i>		
<i>Engaged</i>		

Campus Resources & Policies

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

TASP's Learning Center is located on the first floor of the Moffett Library, and tutors are available for one-on-one sessions Monday-Thursday from 11 AM-7 PM. You don't need an appointment to use these services. Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading. [See TASP's Webpage for more information.](#)

University Computer Labs

The University provides four open computer labs with Microsoft Office & internet access.

- Clark Student Center: 24 hours (Mon-Sun)
- Dillard 146: Mon-Thurs 6 AM – 7 PM
- Moffett Library: Mon-Thurs 8AM – 10PM; Fri. 8AM-5PM; Sat 10AM-6PM; Sun 2PM-10PM
- Legacy Hall: 24 hours (Mon-Sun)

Access to Microsoft 365

All students can download Microsoft Office 365 free of charge using their MSU Texas student email address. To acquire Office 365, [visit MSU's Student Resources.](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Explore resources on [Moffett Library's webpage](#) to learn how to best utilize the library.

Research & Creative Opportunities

Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities (EURECA) is a program that provides opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in high-quality research and creative activities with faculty. EURECA provides incentives and funding through a system that supports faculty and students in a cooperative research process. For more information, contact the Office of Undergraduate Research, (940) 397-6274 or eureca@msutexas.edu. Information and resources are available on the [EURECA website.](#)

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: January 23, 2026

Deadline to file for graduation: February 16, 2026

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" April 29, 2026

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#).

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from MSU may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. For information about refunds, refer to [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Campus Carry

For information on the University's Campus Carry policies, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Student Emergency Support & Resources

Your well-being and success at MSU are of the utmost importance. The [Student Emergency Support & Resources page](#) features campus and community resources available for students experiencing emergency or extenuating circumstances. Contact student.affairs@msutexas.edu (940-397-7500) for more information.

Overview Schedule

***Note:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Unless otherwise stated, all assignments are due on D2L by 11:59 PM

Abbr.: Non-Designer Design Book (**NDDB**) & The Wall Journal Guide to Information Graphics (**WSG**)

Dates	Activities & Assignments
Week 1 T 1/20 R 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the course and to each other • NDDB introduction to principles of design • Discuss examples of flyers that would benefit from a redesign • Discuss Quizzes • Set up Google drive folder for class activities with a Google doc titled "PARC Principles - [your initials]".
Week 2 T 1/27 R 1/29	<p>Tuesday prior to class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch1 Introduction, Ch2 Proximity • In PARC Principles Google doc: Write your own definition of "proximity" as a design principle based on Williams's description. Use a quote or two and cite the page(s). Include your own summary, paraphrases, and/or examples. • Save photos of <u>two</u> (or more) informative flyers/posters you would like to redesign for the first redesign assignment in your Google folder. Flyers must be local, not national. <p>Thursday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz on Proximity • In your PARC Principles Google doc: What issues with Proximity do your saved flyers/posters have? • Discuss and Workshop Critical Redesign 1.
Week 3 T 2/3 R 2/5	<p>Tuesday prior to class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch 3 Alignment, and Ch 6 Review of Design Principles. • In "PARC Principles": Write your own definition of "alignment" as a design principle based on Williams's description. Cite a quote or two. Include your own summary, paraphrases, and/or examples. • In "PARC Principles": What issues with Alignment do your saved flyers/posters have? <p>Thursday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch 7 Design with Color, and Ch 8 Extra Tips & Tricks • Quiz on Alignment • Workshop Critical Analysis & Redesign 1

Dates	Activities & Assignments
Week 4 T 2/10 R 2/12	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch 4 Repetition, and Ch 6 Review of Design Principles • In “PARC Principles”: Write your definition of “repetition” as a design principle based on Williams’s description. Cite a quote or two. Include your own summary, paraphrases, and/or examples. • In “PARC Principles”: What issues with Repetition do your saved flyers/posters have? Thursday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch 9 Essentials of Typography, and Ch 10 Type (& Life) • Quiz on Alignment • Workshop Critical Analysis Redesign 1
Week 5 T 2/17 R 2/19	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch 5 Contrast, and Ch 6 Review of Design Principles • In “PARC Principles”: Write your definition of “contrast” as a design principle based on Williams’s description. Cite a quote or two. Include your own summary, paraphrases, and/or examples. • In “PARC Principles”: What issues with Contrast do your saved flyers/posters have? • Review Discussion Post instructions for Sunday’s post Thursday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read in NDDB - Ch 11 Categories, and Ch 12 Type Contrasts • Quiz on Contrast • Discuss conducting research, topics (list on board), and teams • Collect class data for later assignment Thursday: • Due Thurs. 2/19: Critical Analysis & Redesign 1 (original flyer plus your redesign and critique) • Due Sun. 2/22 to Discussion Board: Possible team research topics
Week 6 T 2/24 R 2/26	Tuesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: All “Possible team research topic” Discussion Board posts. • Form teams by topic areas • Discuss MLA/APA citation assignment • Discuss <i>Infographics Dos and Don’ts</i> presentation assignments • Sign up for <i>Infographic</i> presentations by next week. • Review Critical Redesign 2 Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group by teams and review Team Proposal instructions • Create Team Google project folders and Proposal documents • Sign up for <i>Infographic</i> presentations

Dates	Activities & Assignments
Week 7 T 3/3 R 3/5	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team workshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlining the team data visualization project. Team Google folder and document Team project proposal: In class, using doc. within the Google drive team folder, outline Team Project Proposal. Discuss finding data sources Due Tues. 3/4: MLA Citation assignment Thursday: No class Due Thurs. 3/5: Upload Critical Analysis and Redesign 2
Week X Mar. 9-14	Spring Break!
Week 8 T 3/17 R 3/19	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to class: Read <i>WSG - Infographic Dos & Don'ts</i>, Introduction and The Basics (1-29): Charting, Numbers, Data integrity, Data richness Discuss <i>WSG Infographics Dos & Don'ts</i> Presentation assignments Review Team Proposal instructions Thursday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upload Presentation Handout by 5 PM the day prior to your presentation. WSG Presentations (All students should read all chapters prior to class): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Charting Numbers (20-23) Data Integrity, Data Richness (26-29) Fonts: Legibility; Topography charts (30-33) Color charts (40-41), For color blind (44-45) Lines: Height & weight; Y-axis increments (50-53) Lines: Legends & labels; Clean lines clear signals (54-57) Due Thurs. 3/20: Team Proposal
Week 9 T 3/24	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share and discuss data for the class demographics assignment WSG Presentations (All students have read chapters prior to class) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lines: Left-right y-axis scales, Comp. scales (58-61) Horiz. bars: Ordering and grouping; Negative bars (70-73) Vert. bars: Form & shading; Zero baseline (62-65) Vert. bars: Mult. bars & leg.; Broken bars outlier (66-69) Pies: Slicing & dicing; Dressing up slices (74-77) Pies: Slicing a slice; Proportional pies (78-81)

Dates	Activities & Assignments
Week 9 R 3/26	Thursday: 13. Tables: Grid lines; #'s, aligning & ordering (82 -85) 14. Pictograms: Choice icons; Comp. quantities (86-89) 15. Do Math: Mean, med, mode: Avg, vs weight avg (94,98) 16. Percentages: Expressing %; Don't average % (107, 109) 17. Copy Style Charts: Words, Numerals (110-111) 18. T.S. Missing data (124-125); Coloring black ink (130-131) 19. Sched. Workplan (136), Com. Progress (138) • Discuss IRR assignment (Due Wed. 4/22) Due Sun. 3/29: Class demographics chart assignment
Week 10 T 3/31 (No Class!) R 4/2 (Spring Holiday!)	Tuesday: • IRR workshop No classes for MSU on Thur. or Fri. Spring Holiday
Week 11 T 4/7 R 4/9	Tuesday: • Discuss IRR assignment (Due Wed. 4/22) Thursday: • IRR workshop
Week 12 T 4/14 R 4/16	Tuesday • IRR workshop (due next Wed. April 22) • Discuss Team Project presentation Thursday: • Attend Celebration of Scholarship undergraduate research sessions (on Thurs. April 16). Due Sun 4/19: Celebration of Scholarship Reflection Essay
Week 13 T 4/21 R 4/23	Tuesday: • Questions on IRR • Team workshop: o Preparing Effective Oral and Poster Presentations o Using Google Slides Due Wed 4/22: Individual Research Report
Week 14 T 4/28 R 4/30	Wed. April 29, 4:00 pm – Last Day to “W” from long-semester courses; Drops after this date will receive grades of “F.” Tuesday & Thursday: • Team workshops: team project presentation • Discuss team closure report

Dates	Activities & Assignments
Week 15 T 5/5 R 5/7	Tuesday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to class on Tuesday, upload to D2L completed Team Project Presentation to D2L to show professor and get feedback during the class period. • Discuss Team Closure Report Thursday: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop: Team Closure Report Due Thurs. 5/7: Team Closure Report Due Fri. 5/8: Final team slide presentation
Finals <u>MSU Final</u> <u>Exam Schedule</u>	Final! Tuesday, May 12 from 5:45 to 7:45 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class team presentation of team project. (All team members must be present in person for their own presentation and for all other teams' presentations.) Due Tues. May 12: Teammate Evaluation (Survey).