THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE DESIGNER: CONFLICT, WORKING THROUGH & RESOLUTION

Fall 2017

ARC 386M
Unique 01199

Instructor: Elizabeth Danze

Elizabeth’s Office: Goldsmith 4.136 and 2.308
Elizabeth’s UT Phone: 512.471.1922
Elizabeth’s Email: edanze@utexas.edu
Elizabeth’s Office Hours: by appointment

Instructor: Stephen Sonnenberg

Steve’s Office: 5.128 West Mall Building
Steve’s UT Phone (mobile): 512-762-4783
Steve’s Email: ssonnenberg@utexas.edu
Steve’s Office Hours: Mondays from 1:30-2:30pm, and by appointment

Course Description: Have you ever wondered what goes on in the mind of a designer? Or in the minds of different kinds of designers, including those who choreograph, create graphic novels, or design buildings? Or if there are differences in the way women and men think about designing, or think when they design? Or about the creative process of designing?

This seminar will examine the psychology of the designer, focusing on cognitive and affective processes defined and described by the discipline of psychoanalysis: her/his sources of psychological conflict, ways of working through those conflicts, ways of nurturing emerging processes of sublimation and conflict resolution resulting in creative expression, and finally self-actualization in the production of a dance, a graphic novel, or the design of a building, a built environment, a sustainable environment. Attention will be paid to the ways designs reflect an awareness of, and desire to create, a healthy and health producing environment.

The co-teachers of this seminar, an architect who is also a psychoanalytic scholar, and a physician practicing psychoanalysis who is also a medical humanities scholar, have worked and learned together for more than a decade, researching and building a bridge between architecture and design and psychoanalysis.

The seminar will begin with the study of three autobiographical graphic novels: Fun Home by Alison Bechdel, Marbles by Ellen Forney, and Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir by Roz Chast. These three works lend
themselves to an introductory exploration of the psychology of the designer, who employs introspection in the service of creating an autobiography in graphic form. Next, three choreographers will be studied, Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, and Judith Jameson. From there the seminar will examine the thinking and creative processes of several architects (the group from which those architects will be chosen include Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Philip Johnson, Louis Kahn, and Maya Lin), using films about them and their work, filmed interviews, readings about them, their own writings, and examination of their designs. In-class visits/interviews with designer-artist-architects will be included in the seminar experience. The final exercise will involve the creation of a design by seminar participants, who will be guided by the instructors in an introspective process bringing alive the psychology of the design experience for each student.

Participants are welcome from across the university, including but not limited to the disciplines of architecture, fine arts, liberal arts, the range of UT Austin psychology degree programs, and creative writing. Any interested participant will be considered for inclusion by the course instructors.

**Course Objective:** This course aims to introduce students to the psychology of the designer. Central to the course experience will be “getting inside the head” of the designer, focusing on the ways psychological conflict motivates the creative process, the ways that process is worked through to a resolution that takes the form of a creative idea, a design proposal, and a completed design. The instructors believe that study and exploration on the cusp of different disciplines often produces new insights, and therefore in the seminar we will consider the works of designers in three fields, the graphic novel and related visual arts, dance, and architecture. Taken as a whole, the course will convey the experience of a composite designer, who combines many of the possible ways a creative individual might see and understand herself or himself, as a designer. The final course exercise will be experiential, as each student will create a design, and examine her or his creative process introspectively. For the student in a design discipline at UT the seminar will be a platform for deciding whether to continue on that academic path, and help that student set her/his college, graduate and/or professional school, and career goals.

It will inform those not considering a career in a design field about the work of the designer, so they can be contributors to a society that critically shapes its future as it influences, and is influenced by, the work of designers.

Some required readings will be available online at Canvas, along with links to assigned videos not viewed in class.

**Core Objectives:** This course will include three core objectives: critical thinking skills, introspection, and communication skills. These objectives will be met through discussions in seminar meetings; analytical essays examining the design process; readings, films, and lectures that discuss the design process; and a final exercise in which participants will be asked to design a logo for a real project, in writing
describe their psychological experience of their own creative process, and in class discussion share that with other seminar participants. There will be no final examination.

**Course Agenda:** Throughout the seminar we will try to “get inside the heads” of designers, using an established psychoanalytic model that suggests that creative efforts inevitably involve psychological conflict and resolution through a process called working through. Since this seminar is a kind of research laboratory, in which we will all learn together, we will constantly consider whether creative conflict really is, or is not, present, and when it is, what form it takes. Because the instructors believe that new discoveries occur when research is conducted on the cusp of more than one field, we will explore design in more than one form. We will begin by studying three autobiographical graphic novels, that lend themselves to observation of the thoughts and feeling of the authors/artists. Next, we will move on to the study of choreographers. This will broaden our inquiry, offering a different kind of design process for study, one that involves creating configurations using the human bodies of dancers. Finally, we will explore the designs of architects, and by this time we will be in a position to identify commonalities and differences in the design practices of the three groups of creative individuals we have studied. We will also bring in guests to the class, for Q&A, exploring their own design efforts. Finally, as a final exercise, each student will create a logo for a real project, and write an introspective essay that will focus on that student’s unique design experience. Those experiences will be shared in the seminar’s final meetings.

Throughout, we will emphasize introspection blended with careful, critical thinking about and among ourselves, through discussions, and sharing written essays.

**Grading Policy:**

- class attendance and participation in specific class exercises **(45% of grade)**.
- two four page essays analyzing aspects of the design process **(each 15% of grade, a total of 30%)**.
- designing a logo and a final four page introspective essay describing the design process **(25% of grade)**.

**University Policies:** Religious holy days: A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Students with Disabilities:** You will need to provide documentation to the Dean of Student’s Office so the most appropriate accommodations can be
determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities (SSB 4.104, 471-6259). Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Judicial Services web site at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/.

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students: All students should be familiar with the University’s official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student’s responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html.

University of Texas Core Values and Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. As a student of the University of Texas at Austin, you affirm you shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.

Course Schedule and Assignments:

Week 1 – Introduction, and Jumping Right In

Class #1 — Introduction by seminar participants, orientation by the instructors of the concepts of conflict, working through, and resolution. Discussion of the assignments. Viewing two videos and discussing them.
• **We will view together in class:** The Yale Open Lecture on Freud: oyc.yale.edu/psychology/psyc-110/lecture-3


**Week 2 – A Graphic Novel Describing A Person**

**Class #2** — We will discuss the novel and consider the way the graphics and the words complement each other, creating a powerful experience for the reader. We will gather our inferences about the conflict the author was working through in creating this book.

• **Read:** *Marbles* by Ellen Forney (Gotham Books: New York, 2012)

**Week 3 – A Graphic Novel Describing A Complex Family**

**Class #3** — We will discuss the novel, once again consider the way the graphics and the words complement each other, creating a powerful experience for the reader. We will gather our inferences about the conflict the author was working through in creating this book.

• **Read:** *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel (Mariner Books: New York, 2007)

**Week 4 – A Graphic Novel Describing A Family Undergoing A Generational Challenge**

**Class #4** — We will discuss the novel, once again consider the way the graphics and the words complement each other creating a powerful experience for the reader. We will gather our inferences about the conflict the author was working through in creating this book.

• **Read:** *Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* by Roz Chast (Bloomsbury USA: New York, 2014)

**FIRST FOUR PAGE ESSAY, TO BE POSTED TO CANVAS BY TUESDAY MORNING SO ALL PARTICIPANTS CAN READ ALL THE ESSAYS IN TIME FOR CLASS ON THURSDAY**

**THIS ESSAY SHOULD RESPOND TO THE QUESTION “HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE WAY THE THREE GRAPHIC NOVELISTS WE HAVE STUDIED ENGAGED PERSONAL INTRAPSYCHIC CONFLICT, WORKED IT THROUGH, AND CREATED A BOOK REFLECTING THAT CHALLENGE?”**
**Week 5 – First Reprise: A Discussion of Each Participant’s Essay**

**Class #5**— In this class we will discuss the first essays each of you wrote, and work together to identify common observations about the work of the three author/designers.

- **Read Before Class:** All Posted Essays

**Week 6 – Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Judith Jameson**

**Class #6** — In this class we will watch interview material with all three choreographers and excerpts from their work, and begin a discussion of their creative motivations and processes.

**Week 6 and 7 – Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Judith Jameson**

**TWYLA THARP**

http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tha0int-1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hgzw5spUxc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g19hNT61NAA

**MARK MORRIS**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cbHFgiOeTw&list=PL0055B980F65930B9&index=7

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmcSkAvw1TI

**JUDITH JAMESON**

http://www.makers.com/judith-jamison

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24SxAexpLc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCuZmDblC3I
Class #7 — For this class you are asked to survey the internet, find a video of a dance created by one of the three choreographers we are studying, come to class prepared to show the group the video by providing us a link on your flash drive, and tell us how you think the dance you found reflects the conflict solving creative process we are working together to define.

Week 8 – Second Reprise: Discussion of The Psychology of the Designer: Common Denominators Found In Graphic Novelists and Choreographers

Class #8 — A reflection on choreography with distinguished choreographer and dancer Holly Williams, Associate Dean of The College of Fine Arts, The University of Texas at Austin and a discussion summing up what we have learned so far in the seminar.

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – First Week of the Study of Architects

Class #9 —

- **Read Excerpt**: *Boundaries*, a visual and verbal sketchbook by Maya Lin (2000) posted on Canvas
- **Read**: *Space and Psyche*, “Modeling Erik Erikson’s Diagram of Psychosocial Development” by Elizabeth Danze posted on Canvas
- **Watch Selected Part in Class**: Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision, 1994
- **And Optional for Viewing Out of Class**: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lu3yVLoDc3A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lu3yVLoDc3A)

Week 10 – Second Week of the Study of Architects

Class #10—

- **Read**: *Light is the Theme: Louis I. Kahn and the Kimball Art Museum* by Louis Kahn and Neil Johnson (1975) posted on Canvas
- **Read (Optional)**: *Space and Psyche*, “Architectural and Emotional Space” by
SECOND FOUR PAGE ESSAY, TO BE POSTED TO CANVAS BY TUESDAY MORNING SO ALL PARTICIPANTS CAN READ ALL THE ESSAYS IN TIME FOR CLASS ON THURSDAY

THIS ESSAY SHOULD RESPOND TO THE QUESTION “HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE WAY THE GRAPHIC NOVELISTS, CHOREOGRAPHERS, AND ARCHITECTS WE HAVE STUDIED ENGAGED PERSONAL INTRAPSYCHIC CONFLICT, WORKED IT THROUGH, AND CREATED A BOOK, DANCE, BUILDING, OR OUTDOOR SPACE, REFLECTING THAT CHALLENGE?”

Week 11 – Second Reprise: A Discussion of Each Participant’s Essay

Class #11— In this class we will discuss the second essays each of you wrote, and work together to identify common observations about the work of the creative designers we have studied.

- **Read Before Class**: All Posted Essays

Week 12 – Third Week of the Study of Architects

Class #12—

- **Read**: *Space and Psyche*, “In Praise of Vagueness” by Juhani Pallasmaa posted on Canvas
- **Read Excerpt (Optional)**: *The Life and Work of Frank Gehry* by Paul Goldberger (2015) posted on Canvas
- **Read (Optional)**: *Space and Psyche*, “A Violent Atomization, Attachment versus Autonomy in the Philip Johnson Glass House” by Adele Tutter posted on Canvas
- **And Optional for Viewing Out Of Class**: [http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=438944405&m=439085914](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=438944405&m=439085914)
- **Watch Selected Part in Class**: The Sketches of Frank Gehry (2006)

Week 13 – An Interview With Herman Dyal About How He Creates a Logo
Class #13 — In this class we will begin discussing The Veterans Community Park and Pavilion Project, and with our guest discuss how he might create a logo for the project. We will also discuss with him how he has created logos in the past, and other design projects he might choose to share with us, including design of the book *Space & Psyche*.

- **Read**: Sonnenberg, PTSD, VCPP Resource Book posted on Canvas
- **Read**: The Veterans Park and Pavilion Project Very Brief Summary posted on Canvas
- **Read**: Veterans Park and Pavilion Presentation Summary posted on Canvas
- **Read**: Sonnenberg Introduction to VCPP Resource Book posted on Canvas
- **Read**: Palaima & Sonnenberg Our Wounds, Our Duty posted on Canvas

Week 14 – Further Discussion of Veterans Community Park and Pavilion Project, and Development of Each Student’s Logo

Class #14 — In this class each student will discuss her/his ideas about the Veterans Community Park and Pavilion Project and the logo each is designing. We will encourage the use of introspection as each participant thinks about her/his design process.

- **Read**: Palaima, Resource Book, Public Knowledge of War posted on Canvas
- **Read**: Leche, Teaching Writing to Soldiers and Veterans, Resource Book posted on Canvas
- **Read**: Woodruff, Performing Memory, Resource Book posted on Canvas
- **Read and Study**: Theater of Dionysus posted on Canvas

THIRD FOUR PAGE ESSAY, TO BE POSTED TO CANVAS BY TUESDAY MORNING SO ALL PARTICIPANTS CAN READ ALL THE ESSAYS IN TIME FOR CLASS ON THURSDAY

THIS ESSAY SHOULD RESPOND TO THE QUESTION “HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE WAY YOU HAVE ENGAGED YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTRAPSYCHIC CONFLICT, WORKED IT THROUGH, AND CREATED A LOGO REFLECTING THAT CHALLENGE?” BE SELF-REFLECTIVE.

Week 15 – Student Presentations of Logos and Discussion of Their Essays and Their Designs
Class #15 — A reprise of our work together through a group discussion of each student’s logo design and self-reflective final essay.