Thesis A & B
Spring 2011
Instructor: Nancy Hechinger
Tuesdays 3:30-6:00

Overview

You've been prepped—fired up and ready to go! I know you've done some deep conceptual digging, experimenting, floating. All good stuff and a lot of fun. Now it's time to have even more fun–making your idea as real as possible, bringing it to conclusion. The focus then for your semester with me will be writing and presentation. In life and for thesis while it's super-marvelous to have a great idea, even a great product/prototype, if you can't communicate it orally and in writing 91/2 times out of 10 you won't get anywhere with it. 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration.

Also, I believe that writing is thinking, writing is design, and writing forces you to visualize your idea into reality. And it's cheaper than going into production before you know what exactly what you're doing.

As I said at the Thesis Overview meeting, no one expects you to write *Anna Karenina, Leaves of Grass, Lives of a Cell* or *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* I do expect you to write clearly. And I hope you will learn to write in a voice that is comfortable for you. If it feels like a costume/ someone else's voice it will never be as compelling.

Same is true for presentations. You will present often enough that you will totally rock on thesis week. Guarantee.

Class time and class assignments focus on writing and presentation. Most of you will also be making something, but each person's project is different and requires a different schedule. You will be responsible for setting your own project schedule (we'll go over that in class), and updating the class on your progress.

You've got 2 weeks between each class so each assignment encompasses a lot.

Thesis class (yours over 2 semesters) has four stages: conceptual, design, production and presentation. These are the basic stages (though they may come with different names) of every project you will do for the rest of your life. Fourteen weeks is still a very fast timeline for producing even a protoptype of a project, but it is a good amount of time for you to get into the rhythm of a more or less realistic production schedule and to develop a consciousness of how you think, work, and adhere to timelines.

The course is a process class
The class and I will help you shape your projects and suggest the final form the projects will take; and work with you to reign in overly ambitious ideas in order to make them "do-able" within the timeframe of the class. Input from classmates, as well as guest critics, help you further refine the thesis.It is structured as a series of student presentation and class feedback sessions in which various aspects of individual thesis projects will be discussed: background and contextual research, the design treatment, the implementation process and production schedule, user testing and revision, and the overall resources needed to accomplish the working project prototype, as well as the written thesis, and the final thesis presentation. When others are presenting you are expected to be very present. Your feedback is crucial. And, often it is the case that you learn more from the critical feedback of others'work than your own…it's easier to hear when you've no cause to be defensive.

Feedback sessions will be primarily internal sessions (i.e. the class only) with a mid-term review by external guest critics. To take advantage of the 2 sections, there will be 2 classes (one for each section) before the mid-term where you will present to the other class.

You will complete a fully articulated, working thesis project prototype and related thesis paper, as well as a final presentation for review in class with a guest critic. **Early prototyping—staying on schedule**

Begin *right now!* whatever kind of research and prototyping you need to do. You will develop our own production schedule that will have weekly milestones. You should be prepared in every class to give an update on your work. It is especially important to bring up problems, so that the class can help you either help you solve them or at least help you adjust your idea and/or schedule.

Predetermined milestones can be found at http://itp.nyu.edu/help/Shows/ThesisGuidelines

Thesis Components
Your thesis project has three parts: the paper, the prototype and the presentation. Some students want to do a thesis that is primarily research—then a fleshed-out academic paper is the equivalent of the prototype.

The thesis paper part of the thesis project is only 2500-3500 words— short enough that you could submit it to a conference, or send it to someone for review, as the basis for a business plan, or grant. You may want to use the format for SigChi for your thesis paper. It's almost a standard for conference submissions. *http://sigchi.org/chipubform/*

Document Your Progress
I suggest that you to keep a journal of your work. It's a good habit to start now, when you probably have a good memory. Keep all your drawings, notes, research, questions, brainstorms, failures, insights in one place and date the entries. If you ever have a truly original idea that makes it to market…that entry is considered proof when you had the idea. An engineering notebook is set up to note time and date. For you, it will have the advantage of a) not losing any ideas b)not losing any paper c) and writing your whole "methodology" section of the Thesis as you go. You can start by getting a binder (yes, a good ole binder.) Then when you do your assignments, or have ideas, do research, get information, you put them in the right place in your binder. You may keep an online file/wiki/blog if you want, but you will have to hand in hard copy, so always keep a hard copy …and I like to read hard copy so that I can edit your drafts.

Thesis Presentation
 You get 20 minutes exactly in the spotlight. Fifteen minutes is a good length for your presentation so that you can get some feedback from the faculty and others.

I will invite outside-of-ITP reviewers to the final class. Here's the thing. Usually the last two classes are reserved for outside reviewers so you can each do you 20 minute presentation and get at least 10 minutes of comments. No way to do that in one class. Because of your shortened time, I am going to schedule an extra class for the final review. I have asked Gordie to reserve a time for us on the Friday following the last class…so half will present one day, half the next.

Be A Good Colleague

This is a class, not an individual advisory. The reason is *not* just that it would take up too much time of one poor professor. The reason is that all ideas have to be tested by outsiders. Your colleagues will provide invaluable feedback about how well you communicate your ideas. As a colleague, I expect you to be rigorous, honest, and constructive with your classmates. You will tell

each other when you don't get what they are doing; what you like; what similar projects you know of. The beauty of the ITP program is that you all come from so many different fields and cultures —share them.

In one way you should want to be greedy and only care about your own work. But there is very little that you can do in the interactive (or any other work) world without collaborating with others. Even if it is an art work, you have to work with gallery owners, grant makers, etc. You have got to get your idea across.

I care a lot about how generous you are with your help and criticisms with each other. It counts for a third of your grade.

Be A Good Student
- Come to class on time. If you are going to be late, text me at 917-684-0969. Persistent and/or unexcused absences figure into your grade.
- Three unexcused absences or lateness are cause for failure. (Oversleeping, for example, is not an excuse.) You should notify me at least a few hours before class at nancy.hechinger@nyu.edu
- Hand in work on time
- Laptops closed, ears wide open.
- It's OK to eat, and to bring food to share.

Syllabus

The course syllabus below is a general idea of the flow, but it may change a bit depending on the needs and wants of the class.

Note: Whenever you make a presentation in class, I expect you to have practiced it. And timed it. You will be timed and cut off at the buzzer. Every class presentation is a chance to get better at making presentations.

| Week 1
A: 1/26/11
B: 2/2/11

Intro/Overview
First Presentation
How to Make a Schedule
Research Requirements | Class:
1. Hand in Essay (hard copy)
2. Presentations and Feedback
5 min. presentation/5 min. crit
Practice it before class!
Include:
--the idea,
--why you're doing it
--what you're going to do/make/show at the end
--what you need to know/find out/solve. | Assignment:
1. Schedule individual meeting with Nancy (office hours wiki)
2. Create a detailed project plan/schedule
3. Conduct Research
4. Write 1–2 page Research Paper
5. Prepare short (3–5 min) presentation on research findings and what you still need to find out (if applicable) |

Week 2 A: 2/9/11 B: 2/16/11 Group work on schedule	Class: 1. Groups work: schedule 2. Research Presentations and Swap Meet 3. Hand-in Paper (bring 3 hard copies to class, 1 for me, 2 for peer reviewers)	Assignment: 1. Write your dream review (3 copies) 2. Write a user scenario for your project (if applicable, if not—I'll give you another assignment (3 copies) 3. Prepare 7 minute presentation of your thesis (prep for mid-term review)
Week 3 **2/23/11 & 3/2/11** **NOTE: Joint Class—** **Presentations and** **Feedback**	Class: 1. Hand in papers, to me and to peer reviewers. 2. Presentations and Feedback	Assignment: 1. Write/rewrite elevator statement and one pager 2. Revise/prepare 7 min. presentation for mid-term review.
Week 4 A:3/9 B: TBD before Spring Vacation	Class 1. Mid-Term Presentations	Assignment: 1. Review Production Schedule/Revise 2. Quick Write up of Mid-term Comments, your response and adjustments. 3. First Draft Thesis Paper
Week 5 A: 3/23/11 B: 3/30/11 Home Stretch! Thesis Paper Review Thesis Book Last review before final paper.	Class 1. Group Work on draft and schedule 2. Discuss Thesis Book 3. Update & Demos 4. Individual Meeting with NH in class	Assignment: 1.Prepare your spread for Thesis Book 2. Write your official submission for Thesis Show and Thesis Book: Title, description, & URL 3. Revise Thesis Paper
Week 6 A: 4/6/11 B: 4/13/11	Class 1. Presentation Run Through	Assignment: 1. Finish up! 2. Practice. 3. Practice 4. Practice
Week 7 A: 4/20/11 & 4/21/11 B: 4/27/11 & 4/28/11 Last class	Class Final Presentations with Guest Critics Hand in hard copy Thesis Paper	Assignment: 1. Practice. 2. Practice. 3. Practice 4. Practice
Thesis Week Presentation Time TBD	You are prepared. You will be wonderful. I will be proud.	Assignment: 1. Enjoy 2. Relax 3. Celebrate!