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- Theme: Criticism
- Required books: Elements of style, Strunk & White
Dictionary
- Projects: Research and analysis (history, theory, criticism)
Written critiques of architecture, painting, film, and
design examples
Develop a model of criticism
Develop a bibliography
Thesis development
Course documentation and discussion questions (see below)
- Each week: You will keep a notebook or diary in which the following
will be documented: discussions, questions, notes from
reading, observations, etc. These notebooks must be
organized as I will be reading them.
- You will submit 3 3"X5" file cards - every wednesday - each
with a question or topic for discussion in that day's
seminar. Be ready to explain your reasons for selecting
your topics/questions.
- Midterm evaluation: You will turn in your notebooks so that I may review
your working procedures.
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Premise: "Theory as well as history and criticism constitute the
essential trinity that distinguishes a profession from a
craft or trade."

Massimo Vignelli

"The main function of criticism is not that of providing
flattering or denigrating reviews but that of providing
creative interpretations of the work, period or theory
being analysed.

With criticism, designers will be offered the possibility
of multi-layered reading of the work of other designers, or
the opportunity of focusing on the meaning of particular
expressive movements. Criticism will prevent, to a great
extent, the superficial spreading of fads, or in any case
will provide ground for their evaluation in the proper
context. Graphic design will not be a profession until we
have criticism."

M.V. in the introduction to
Graphis Annual 1983/84

Educated designers should know why they do what they do.
They should be able to express reasoned opinions about
matters of design. Theoretical knowledge and intellectual

work are at the basis of every activity. In order to achieve a better understanding and be able to critique the design activity, we will look at other fields in which criticism is an established aspect.

If possible, guest speakers will be invited to talk about criticism in their specific fields: literature, film, etc. They will provide background information and illustrate existing models.

Interested students who possess a strong knowledge of a particular field are invited to make similar presentations.

Goals:

Develop a method of criticism
 Analysis of problem-solving methods
 Identify the constraints involved in design
 Relate criticism in design to that in other areas
 Analysis of value
 Develop vocabulary, bibliography, and writing skills
 Discuss ethics
 Go beyond the "visual" in design

Calendar, by the week:

1	} Museum project	The structure of the class and the schedule of assignments and deadlines will be flexible, as to adapt to the needs of the work in progress.
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6	} Midterm evaluation	Specific deadlines will be announced in advance, with sufficient time to allow for preparation.
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11	} Model of criticism and group presentations	
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16	} Finals	

Assignments:

1) Research and analysis project

Each student will critique a painting from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The critique will include:

Description of painting
 Historical background of painting and painter
 Appropriate vocabulary
 Critical criteria adopted
 Critical opinion

4-week project:

- 1 First analysis
- 2 Vocabulary & first draft
- 3 Draft read by instructor
- 4 Final piece due

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2) Written review of three books and presentation to class.

This will form a general bibliography for the course.

3) Model of criticism

These projects will be done by small teams (3 or 4 people)
Model will include four main topics related to criticism
and will be in outline form.

4) Written critique of selected examples of design

5) Final paper; critique on the course

Suggested readings will be assigned as the course progresses.

Further project descriptions and presentation requirements
will also be introduced at various times during the course.
