

Studio 1

Syllabus, Fall '18

Lectures: Mondays, Thursdays, 2:00-4:55pm, Sage 2211

Professor: Raquel Velho

Email: velhor@rpi.edu

Office: Sage 5114

Office Hours: Mondays, Thursdays 12-1pm

This is your *Studio 1* syllabus: it contains important information on the work we will be doing over the next semester. Have it with you at *all* sessions to add notes and comments.

Important notes

- This class is your **introduction** to the DIS program. It will cover **key concepts** that you will use throughout your degree. It is my **top priority** for your education. It should be yours, too.
- You will be expected to **accomplish work outside of class**. Pay close attention to homework assignments, including reading, sketching and group meetings!
- **Attendance is mandatory** – no incompletes will be given for this course. **Read over course policies below.**

Official description

The first design studio in the PDI series introduces DSIS majors to general design through a series of short projects. The projects stress creative thinking and invention, observation and perception, communication and visualization, sketching, photography, low-resolution prototypes and creative exploration of design and how it intersects with society. This is a communication-intensive course.

Student learning outcomes

Upon completion of Studio 1, students will be able to:

- Produce written essays that accurately summarize and dialogue with introductory concepts from the field of Science & Technology Studies, both from *Studio 1* and *Science, Technology, and Society* (STSx1110).
- Successfully name and use the steps of the design process to design artifacts and create low-resolution prototypes of these products. This includes the ability to sketch concept drawings for design pin-ups and the use of paper and cardboard for primary prototypes.
- Communicate effectively via written (reports), oral (presentations) and visual (posters) means the decisions and reasoning behind each step taken in the design process.
- Participate in collegial academic discussions and critique, having learned to provide feedback for their peers and to accept and use critique addressed to them about the work they produce during the semester (and beyond).

Your Studio 1 experience

Studio 1 is your introductory course for the Design, Innovation, and Society major. You will be developing *three* projects under the direction of your instructor on a variety of topics, with the intention being the engagement of diverse design skills and critical thinking. Our time in class will be divided into a variety of activities, including lectures, group discussions, tutorials, and open studio time.

The broad theme of Studio 1 is *Design and Representation*. You will be learning new ways of looking at the world and thinking about the objects/artifacts that we use in daily life, how we make them, how we represent them and, in some respects, how they represent us! You will quickly realize that the DIS major approaches design as a more-than-technical activity—we will be discussing design as a social enterprise that interacts with culture, economics, politics and psychology. We will explore the question of *who are designers, how do they/you make their decisions, and to what extent are they/you influenced by social institutions?* We will be pressing you in all your studio classes to question your assumptions, investigate why you prioritize certain things over others, and learn about others' perspectives.

Over the course of the semester you will...:

1. Learn basic design concepts, including the *design process*, what *prototypes are* (and why they're important), and choosing appropriate *fidelities* for different development stages.
2. Discuss and debate the place that design occupies in society, how it impacts our lives and how designers make (sometimes unconscious) decisions through the process of *making*.
3. Develop three different projects, dedicated to three different topics, materials and skills:
 - i. One project dedicated to developing your abilities in problem definition and sketching.
 - ii. One project dedicated to developing your abilities in refining the problem space through *other eyes* and creating low resolution paper prototypes.
 - iii. One project dedicated to tackling more robust prototyping abilities, focusing on design critique and questioning your design choices.
4. Critique your peers' projects, giving grounded and well-argued feedback on their sketches and prototypes, while learning to accept and use critique given to you as well.
5. Produce posters that succinctly and aesthetically summarize your design process and choices.
6. Write essays with well-founded arguments (and sources) about design and society, and reports about your design process.

Assignments and grade breakdown

This course will be graded using a weighted average. Each assignment within a project also has different weights. Assignments contribute to your final grade in the following manner:

	Assignments	%	Due
1	Sketchbook	10	Dec 6
2	Project 1	25	
	Problem definition notes (20%)		Sep 17
	Brainstorming mind-maps (25%)		Sep 24
	Essay 1 (25%)		Oct 1
	Pin-up & presentation (30%)		Oct 9
3	Project 2	25	
	Persona descriptions (20%)		Oct 18
	Essay 2 (25%)		Oct 25
	Pin-up & presentation (25%)		Nov 1
	Prototype & report (30%)		Nov 8
4	Project 3	30	
	Essay 3 (25%)		Nov 15
	Ideation & concept selection (20%)		Nov 26
	Pin-up & presentation (25%)		Dec 3
	Prototype, poster & report (30%)		Dec 10
4	Engagement	10	
	Class participation (50%)		
	Extracurriculars (50%)		

Grading Scale	
A 93-100	A- 90-92
B+ 87-89	B 83-86
B- 80-82	C+ 77-79
C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 60-66
F 59 and below	

(**A+** does not exist in the Rensselaer grading scale. However, should you excel in Studio 1 (i.e. ≥ 98), I will happily write a letter of commendation to be added to your transcript.)

Your engagement grade

The “engagement” grade is straightforward to fulfill. You are expected to:

1. Participate in class: you are expected to contribute to class discussions, design critiques, presentation Q&A's. Contributions are to be *respectful* of your peers, never deliberately combative, but demonstrating a spirit of collegiality and curiosity.
2. Engage with on- *and* off-campus events relating to STS, DIS, and design and social issues more broadly. You are to attend **at least two** events. I will be checking in with you on events that you have gone to. Some possibilities: volunteering in recruitment events for the program, sitting in on one of the STS colloquia, attending events at the Tech Valley Center of Gravity in Downtown Troy. I will signal to some interesting events throughout the term. You are expected to submit **a brief 300 word summary** of the event, including your impressions of it and how it contributed to your views on DIS/STS/design for these events.

Late penalties

Because of the fast pace of classes and the iterative nature of assignments, late penalties are particularly harsh: assignment deadlines are *hard deadlines*. I will remind you of the dates above but highly recommend you add them to your agendas from the first week of class.

- Up to 24h late: lose 15% of assignment grade.
- Up to 48h late: lose 30% of assignment grade.
- Later than 48h: *no credit given*.

Written work is expected to be typed and either printed and handed in *on the day it is due* or emailed to me. If emailed, they are due by 11.59pm of the due date. *Tardiness begins to be counted from midnight*.

Prototypes are expected to be handed in *by the end of studio time* on the due date.

Presentations will be given *in class* on the dates above. As with other class absences (see course policies below), the only excusable absences are illness, family emergencies, and scheduled Rensselaer athletic events. If you miss the presentation date, you will be expected to present either the week before or after. If you do not present, no credit will be given.

Supplies and Expected Costs

All texts for the course will be provided at no cost. Instead, you are expected to purchase materials for sketching, drafting, and prototyping. At a minimum, you will be spending money on the following:

- A dedicated sketchbook and preferred drawing and sketching tools (I recommend that you also use it for notes from class so it's all concentrated in a single space for quick reference)—this sketchbook *will be handed in*. See separate assignment description.
- Sketch paper for pin-ups;
- Materials for prototypes;
- Printing costs for posters.

Course Policies

Attendance

Show up to class, I will be taking attendance every week! Excellence in submitted work will not make up for delinquency in attendance. More than two unexcused absences will result in a *lowering of your final course grade* by a full letter for each class missed beyond two. *Four unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.*

Excusable absences include illness, disability-related absences, family emergencies, and scheduled Rensselaer athletic events, but you must be *communicative* about these (you have my email and office phone number above)! If you were supposed to turn something in during a class you had an excused absence to, it must be turned in within 48 hours of the class that you missed.

Tardiness

You are expected to arrive promptly in class: I will take attendance at the beginning of class time. If you arrive late, *do not interrupt* conversations/discussions/lecture. Wait until studio time to come inform me that you have arrived so I can mark you as present.

Submitting assignments

See assignment breakdown and late penalties for general hand-in policies. If you have any questions, *email me well in advance.*

Academic integrity

Student-teacher relationships should be built on trust. Students should be able to trust that teachers have made responsible decisions about the structure and content of the courses they teach, and teachers must trust that the assignments students turn in are their own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational enterprise and contradict the very reason for your being at Rensselaer. The *Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities* defines various forms of academic dishonesty and procedures for responding to them. The policies laid out in the Handbook are intended to maintain a community of trust and will be strictly enforced. Please review these policies.

For this course, the following penalties will apply:

- Significant acts of plagiarism (e.g., text copied verbatim from an unidentified source): Failure of the course and a written judgment in the student's official record.
- Minor acts of plagiarism (e.g., referencing the findings of others without appropriate citations): Failure of the assignment, plus reduction of final course grade by one letter grade.
- Other acts of academic dishonesty: Penalties range from a warning to reduction of final grade by one letter grade to failure of the course, depending on the severity of the violation as determined by the instructor.

The Rensselaer Handbook provides specific procedures by which a student may appeal a grade. You should speak to the professor before initiating an appeal. If this does not lead to satisfactory resolution, you have the option of appealing your grade by writing to the head of the STS Department no later than 10 days after your grade has been posted.