

Digital Tools for Designing: DSGN 1000

Fall 2026

Instructor: Robert Currie
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6:00 PM – 9:00 PM, Mondays, (plus Wed, April 8)
Room N320F
Jan 12 - April 13
In person
3 Credits

Class web site: <http://nscad.geneva9.com/>

Office Location/Hours: Slack or email

Course Description:

This foundation course focuses on developing an introductory understanding of the knowledge and skill a designer must have to effectively communicate with digital tools. The course focuses on demonstration, practice and application of digital software. For example, introduction to imaging basics and composite images are explored through Photoshop; vector drawing in Illustrator, page layout fundamentals through InDesign, and a 3D modelling program. Other core concepts of digital images are covered, such as colour, font, file formats (file size/dimension, DPI, image type files and when to use JPEG, PNG or GIF etc) and designing with code (using a language such as Processing). Skills acquired in this course are fundamental to further develop creative and professional practice.

Learning Outcomes*:

Upon successful completion of this course the student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. apply knowledge of the role of digital tools in designing/creative practice
2. understand digital capabilities that may be required in designing/creative practice
3. apply basic skill in core concepts related to digital skills for designing/creative practice

** Please note that each Learning Outcome must be successfully achieved before a final grade for the course is assigned.*

Student Workload:

Total student workload for a 3 credit course is estimated to be 9 hours/week, including scheduled class time.

Course Format:

This course will be conducted in person. This course serves as an introduction to Digital Tools for Designing. Students will be expected to attend weekly classes, participate in class exercises and discussions. All course projects need to be completed in full by the set due dates.

Evaluation Criteria:

Completion of all assignments is mandatory. Evaluation will be based on a number of assignments, quizzes, and a research/essay assignment. Participation in class will also account for a portion of the grade. The majority of assignments and projects will be completed outside of normal lab instruction hours. Dates and details will be provided in the course outline and as the course progresses. All work must be submitted entirely in English.

Grade Weights

Assignments:	65%	In-class practical quiz . . .	15%
Quizzes:	10%	Class participation:	10%

Course Attendance Policy:

Attendance and participation in class are mandatory and will be factors in your grade. Students who miss more than three online lectures without satisfactory communication and explanation may receive a grade of F, regardless of their performance on assignments, quizzes or evaluations. Unexcused absences will result in a lowered class grade.

There may be times when it is necessary to miss class for illness or emergencies, but in these situations you need to notify me as soon as practicable.

I will be as reasonable as possible when students are experiencing difficulty, but communication is vital - let me know as soon as possible if you need to miss class (preferably before class) and propose a plan for getting caught up on what you have missed. As a guideline, missing three or more classes without promptly communicated excuses may be grounds for a mark of F.

Note that foreseeable reasons, such as travel, work, commitments to other classes or factors other than illness or unforeseeable emergencies are **not** valid reasons for missing class. Travel and immigration arrangements, employment schedules and general time management are fully the responsibility of students.

Course Requirements, Resources, Materials:

Course requirements:

This class will require access to a computer running specific software, mainly the Adobe CC suite, and a reliable internet connection. You can use your own Mac or a Windows PC, but please note that for higher level classes (at the 2000 level and above) in design, a reasonably powerful Mac laptop is strongly encouraged. See the HSELS policy attached to this outline.

A licence for the Adobe CC suite is provided through NSCAD for the duration of the class. Details on how to do this will be sent as part of the class introduction process.

You can find the minimum requirements for Macs and PCs here: <https://helpx.adobe.com/ca/illustrator/system-requirements.html>

If you have a computer already and it meets the minimum requirements, you can use that existing computer for this class.

Your computer must be set to use the English language. Using software in another language is likely to cause difficulty, and instruction and demonstrations will be in English only.

NSCAD Attendance Policy:

To achieve this course's learning objectives, students are required to attend and participate in classes, according to your instructor's requirements. For studio and non-lecture courses: many of the topics and content delivered in this course will be taught through class demonstrations, discussions, and activities. As such, your attendance and participation are essential to your successful learning process. *However, students should NOT attend in person classes if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or if they are feeling unwell.*

Students should familiarise themselves with their course's attendance policies and pay special attention to their instructor's guidelines regarding attendance requirements. Your instructor will provide information on the attendance policy specific to this course. *In case of illness or COVID-related symptoms, please contact your instructor immediately by email to discuss options for completing your course work.*

Students will not be penalised for having to self-isolate during illness. In this event, course materials and assignments will be made available for completion in an alternative way to be communicated to you by your instructor.

NSCAD University Occupational Health and Safety Policy:

At NSCAD safety is a priority. All students are required to obtain and maintain up-to-date safety (WHMIS) certification. An on-line Brightspace certification process is available to all NSCAD students.

Please note that your NSCAD ID card needs an up-to-date Health and Safety (WHMIS) sticker to access shops and studios, and for Security to permit you access to the university campus sites after hours. WHMIS training is provided online through students' Brightspace account.

Grading System:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent	Grade Point Score	Descriptive Term
A+	95 and above	4.3	Excellent
A	90-94	4.0	Excellent
A-	85-89	3.7	Very Good
B+	80-84	3.3	Very Good
B	73-79	3.0	Good
B-	67-72	2.7	Good
C+	63-66	2.3	Satisfactory
C	59-62	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	55-58	1.7	Satisfactory
D	50-54	1.0	Marginal
F(Fail)	49 and below		

Academic Integrity:

A climate and culture of academic integrity is an expectation of everyone. Students at NSCAD are required to comply with standard academic practices in acknowledging sources in all work presented for academic credit.

New Academic Integrity Policy

Please be sure to read NSCAD's NEW Academic and Integrity Policy: <https://navigator.nscad.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/3.5-Academic-Integrity-Policy-Final.pdf>

Note on use of machine learning/artificial intelligence tools

Machine learning and artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, dall-e, midjourney, and many others) are evolving rapidly. These tools generate text, images or other media by recombining elements of existing works.

The NSCAD Academic Integrity policy is clear. Use of such tools without fully crediting the source is a violation of NSCAD's plagiarism policy. Punishments range up to a mark of zero for the assignment, failing the course or expulsion from NSCAD. Material created, in whole or in part, by tools like ChatGPT or other similar AI/Large Language Models (or any other software to generate text, images or other media) cannot, ever, be considered your own work.

Each assignment will have clear rules for the use of media and citations. Ask if you have any questions, and keep in mind the basic rule: all work you submit must be your own, unless the assignment includes clear written instructions stating otherwise.

Writing Center:

The NSCAD Writing Centre in D230 offers professional tutoring for any kind of written assignment, at any level of study, at any stage of the work. Specialised workshops will also be offered during the term. Please see the Writing Centre web page for more information and booking online at <https://nscad.ca/student-experience/academic-resources/writing-centre/>.

Accessibility Policy:

Accommodations can be arranged for disability-related needs by contacting accessibility@nscad.ca. Students are encouraged to connect with the Accessibility Office as early in the term as possible. Students can connect with the Accessibility Office at any point in the semester or time as a NSCAD student to access or learn more about the available supports. Visit: <https://nscad.ca/student-experience/academic-resources/accessibility/> for more information and to find the Accessibility Policy which includes a protocol that clearly outlines everyone's roles and responsibilities in the accommodation process.

Spiritual/ Religious Observance:

Requests for accommodations for spiritual or religious observances must be presented in writing to the instructor within the first two weeks of class.

Schedule

January 6Winter semester classes begin
January 20.....Last day to add/drop a course without financial/academic impact.
January 21.....Courses dropped recorded on transcript as 'W'
February 16.....University closed - Heritage Day
February 16 - February 20No classes - Winter Break
February 24.....Faculty mid-semester warning deadline
March 10.....Last day to drop course with a 'W'
April 3University closed - Good Friday
April 6University closed - Easter Monday
April 7Friday classes held (this date is a Tuesday)
April 8Monday classes held (this date is a Wednesday)
April 9 - April 16Assessment Period (flex/study/exams/critiques)
April 24.....End of Winter 2026 Term

Probable date of quizzes:

Feb 09Written quiz, 5%
March 23.....Written quiz, 5%
April 13.....Practical quiz 15%

Assignments and tasks will be due weekly.