

## **VIS 215, Graphic Design**

Princeton University

185 Nassau Room 205

Mon 1:30 – 4:20 pm, 7:30 – 9:40 pm

David Reinfurt / reinfurt@princeton.edu

www.t-y-p-o-g-r-a-p-h-y.org

### **T-y-p-o-g-r-a-p-h-y**

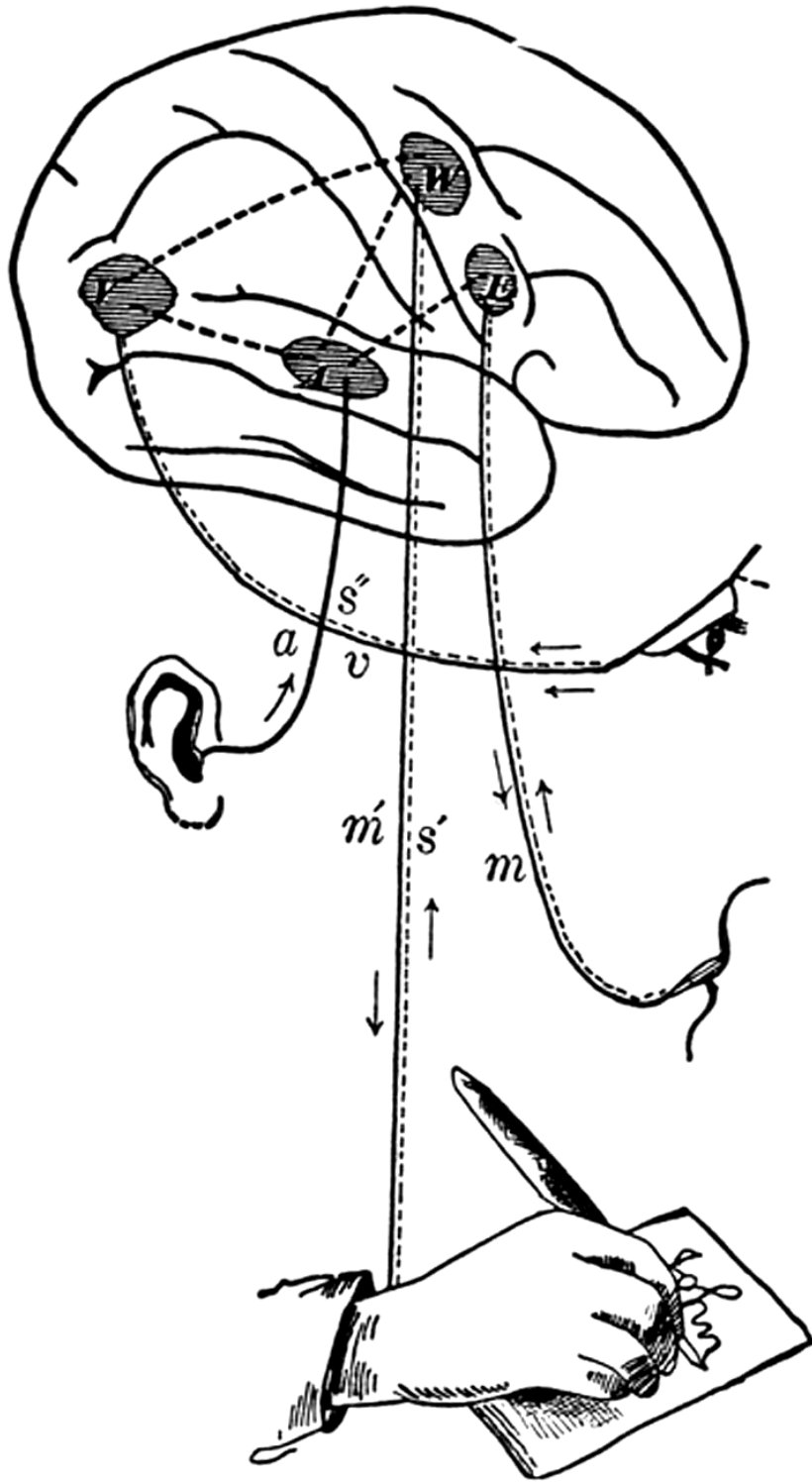
This class will be organized as either (take your pick) a practical seminar or, a theoretical workshop. It will not be a simple exercise in learning the tools of graphic design but neither will it be a grand tour through its history and theory. Instead the class will be run as half-workshop and half-seminar, usually at the same time.

Graphic design has an equally split personality — it's both the technical execution of writing words (images, ideas) into the world by giving them form; and it is also a way of understanding the world through the forms of its writing. Designer and writer Paul Elliman describes the two-way street concisely: "Writing gives the impression of things. Conversely, things can give the impression of writing." I'd suggest that this reading-and-writing-at-the-same-time, or typography, is the root-level skill of graphic design. So in this introductory class, we will focus on typography by both reading about and making it.

The word "Typography" has split roots as well. Evolved from the Greek, "typos" means "figure" and "grapho" means "I write." This two-sided practice (reading-writing) I've just described is even written directly into the word "typography" itself. If there is one fundamental skill that every beginning graphic design student should master, it is this: to be able to set a text so that the form it is given works together with the substance of the text to produce a third meaning.

In this class you will be asked to complete a series of simple, mechanical exercises meant to foster a skill with and sensitivity to typography. *You will read a series of texts, usually on typography, and typeset much of what you read.* The semester will be divided in three parts, each one revolving around a particular typographic technology — first, you will be using the Typography Studio with hot metal type and letterpress printing; next, you will learn photo-typesetting using a standard xerox machine; finally, you will produce digital typography using contemporary computer typesetting software and laserprinting. These modes of production will be presented in chronological order, as a compressed one semester re-enactment of 500 years of typographic tradition. The idea is to learn something about typography (and therefore, graphic design) by practicing it, and along the way, to understand how typographic techniques have changed over time in order to develop a nuanced facility in using the current digital tools. Remember, these too will be replaced by something not-yet-known soon enough.

This is an art class, therefore the quality of your work depends at least as much on original and inventive formal thinking as it does on thoroughly satisfying the assignments. I will demand active participation in class discussions of both the texts that you read as well as critiques of other students' work. Over the semester, I expect you to develop a comfortable hand in typography as well as a vocabulary and critical faculty to speak about it.



Reading-and-writing-at-the-same-time diagrammed in *The Principles of Psychology*, William James (1890)

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### **Class Schedule**

February 5	Introduction Lecture — “T-y-p-o-g-r-a-p-h-y”  Letterpress
February 12	Assignment 1: Letterpress begins Class meets in Typography Studio, Room 123 Demonstration — Introduction to metal type, setting and printing Reading — “Story of Your Life,” Ted Chiang
February 19	Assignment 1: Letterpress continues Class meets in Typography Studio, Room 123 Continue setting type, proofing and corrections. Lecture — Beatrice Warde, the American Type Foundry
February 26	Assignment 1: Letterpress continues Class meets in Typography Studio, Room 123 Lock-up and printing.
March 5	Assignment 1: Letterpress ends Re-distribute type into cases. Exercise: A walk down Nassau Street  Photocopier
March 12	Assignment 2: Photocopier begins Phototypesetting in class and technical review Film — “Farewell, Etain Shrdlu”
March 19	Spring break
March 26	Assignment 2: Photocopier ends Project review / critique Lecture — “Bruno Munari, Original Xerographies”
April 2	No class  Computer
April 9	Assignment 3: Computer begins Introduction to typesetting software Exercise — Arrival . . . Lecture — “Muriel Cooper and the Visible Language Workshop”
April 16	Assignment 3: Computer continues Individual meetings, class review Lecture — “Mathematical Typography: Knuth, TeX & Metafont”
April 23	Assignment 3: Computer continues Walk — Around Old Ivy and Through Time Film — “Helvetica,” Gary Hustwit

April 30      Assignment 3: Computer continues  
Final review

May 7      Final portfolio due at 1:30 pm