

Course Syllabus

How do we tell, and how do we read, stories?

The answer to those questions elucidate essential aspects of narrative, the way parts can stand for wholes, the distinction between mood and plot, the difference between things that happen in sequence and things that happen simultaneously, and the way details reveal truths. We will investigate those issues through careful reading and watching, but most importantly, by making.

We come to this material from two distinct points of view: Michael is a designer and Whitney a documentary filmmaker. Graphic Narratives is closely linked to our own work dealing with the relationship between form and meaning. We have both been engaged in the way that ideas are broadcast through things like films, books, magazines, posters, diagrams, collages, videos, websites, and so on.

Michael has been exploring the way the graphic and the architectural inform one another. In addition he is engaged with the question of how architecture reveals itself both as a process and as a spatial experience. Whitney's work explores the relationship between representation and truth, and how process drives form and meaning.

So in this class we aim to look at multiple aspects of narrative: how we tell the story of an architectural project, and how thinking about narrative informs the design process.

The class is a hybrid of a workshop and a seminar. In the first half of the semester there is a very straightforward visual project every week that will be critiqued and discussed in class. These short assignments are designed to investigate a single facet of making narratives.

At the same time, there are weekly readings and viewings that support the work in class. Each student will be responsible to make a presentation on several of the additional materials throughout the semester.

In the second half of the semester we will concentrate on a multi-week project that uses your own work, or your own interests, as a subject. You will develop a short film or AV presentation that both describes your process and reveals your project using the techniques developed in together in class.

Our intention is that Graphic Narratives is an extremely practical class – the tools you acquire should be immediately applicable to problems of presentation and documentation of your work. Simultaneously, we hope that through practicality we can investigate the structure of narrative itself in precise and profound ways that will influence the way you think about making design. – Whitney Dow, Michael Rock