

**EXPERIMENTAL TYPOGRAPHY** challenges typography's conventional role as a tool for communication, either by questioning its involvement in the communication process or by denying it a communicative function. Inasmuch as the term "typography" refers both to a practice and a resultant object, experimental typography seeks to alter the methods of typographic production as well as the product itself.

# Extype<sup>v2.0</sup>

## Introduction

Since Gutenberg's development of the printed word introduction of the printed word to the Western Hemisphere, type has occupied a unique place between mass media and high art. In its ubiquity, typography often escapes our attention. Nevertheless, it has captured the attention of designers and visual artists as much for its rich tradition and well-established place in society as its amazing flexibility.

## Course objectives

Through their own creative exploration, students will develop a basic knowledge and understanding of typographic practices and techniques including some traditional or historic practices as well as contemporary computer typesetting and typeface design.

Assignments are designed to encourage students to explore various facets of nontraditional typography. Instructor evaluation of assignments will focus on the students' development of skills necessary to produce a polished final product.

Through periodic readings and class discussions, students will also develop their knowledge of theory and criticism surrounding experimental typography and type art.

## Course structure and expectations

Classes will typically consist of a short presentation by the instructors followed by a short class discussion. The remaining time will be dedicated to in-class activities designed to explore specific techniques or workshop time for students to work on individual projects. On days when assignments are due, class members will present their pieces for instructor and classmate critique.

As per ExCo policy, students who miss more than 3 classes will not receive a passing grade.

Students must complete all projects (see next page) to receive a passing grade.

All students are asked to participate in the final show of student work (date, time, and location to be determined).

# Projects

Although some time will be given in class to work on projects and receive input from the instructors and classmates, students will also have to work outside of class. Projects will be critiqued in class, but will only be formally evaluated as complete or incomplete.

## 0: Student presentation

Prepare a 15–20-minute presentation on a topic of your choice that relates to the material being studied. Further information and possible topics are listed on page five.

## 1: Collage

As we have already done collaboratively in class, create an original typographic composition or composite text using only scissors, glue, a photocopier or scanner, and any found typed materials of your choice. Your piece may somehow interact with the content of your originating materials, but this is not required. Your piece may be any reasonable size in two or three dimensions.

## 2: Type reset

Choose a short poem or paragraph. Re-type the entire text in any way you want, but all of the words from the original must somehow be present in your version. Consider how the form of your piece interacts with the content. To begin to develop some proficiency in computer typesetting, you must use Adobe InDesign at some point in creating your piece. Your piece may be any reasonable size in two or three dimensions.

## 3: Type design

Sketch an original typeface and demonstrate how you might realize the final design, producing at least 10 finished glyphs. Consider how your typeface might be used and what effect it would produce. Your typeface does not have to contain recognizable alphabetic characters. Furthermore, your medium and method of production are entirely up to you.

## 4: Final project

Demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of typography by using a combination of techniques already explored during the course. This project may be an expansion or continuation of a previous project. Our final class will be devoted to critiquing projects in progress. Finished pieces (and any other work) will be presented at the end-of-semester show.

# Calendar: module 1

## Unit 1: Introduction to typography

*Class 1:* Experimental typography: looking at type in a new way. What do you find interesting about typography? How does type function in both aesthetically and communicatively? In-class activity: collaborative collage.

*Assignments:* Complete Project 1. Read Bringhurst chapter 1.

*Class 2:* History, terms, and basic techniques. Why is it (or is it not) important to study the history of typography? What techniques to contemporary typographers and artists use to further their aesthetic or communicative aims? Present finished first projects.

*Assignments:* Read Bringhurst chapter 7.

## Unit 2: Typesetting

*Class 3:* Introduction to computer typography using Adobe InDesign. Digital typeface technologies and terminology. In-class activity: practice using Adobe InDesign.

*Assignments:* Read Bringhurst chapter 6, “Designing Hate,” “The New Black Face,” and “The Global Curse of Comic Sans” by Jessica Helfand.

*Class 4:* How does one go about choosing a typeface for a given purpose? What do specific typographic choices tell a reader or viewer? Type for design versus type for art. In-class activity: more InDesign practice.

*Assignments:* Begin working on Project 2.

*Class 5:* Work on Project 2 in class. Instructor feedback on Project 2 progress.

*Assignments:* Complete Project 2.

*Class 6:* Present finished second projects. Film screening: *Helvetica*.

*Assignments:* Over break, read “So You Want to Create a Font” parts 1 and 2 and “Newzald: From Moleskine to Market” from [ilovetypography.com](http://ilovetypography.com). Also read “Experiments in Type Design” by Tobias Frere-Jones.

# Calendar: module 2

## Unit 3: The many faces of type design

*Class 7:* Introduction to type design. What factors do designers consider when creating a new typeface? What parameters might a type designer explore in creating a new typeface? In-class activity: hand lettering.

*Assignments:* Complete sketches for Project 3. Read “The Road to Clarity” by Joshua Yaffa.

*Class 8:* Type design and technological change. How has typography’s development been tied to technological change? What role do various technologies play in contemporary typography? How is this changing? Present sketches for Project 3. Instructor and classmate feedback. In-class activity: digital type design with InDesign and FontStruct.

*Assignments:* Complete Project 3.

*Class 9:* Present finished third projects. In-class activity: found object type.

*Assignments:* Consider what you might create for your final project, email your ideas to instructors.

## Unit 4: Beyond the page

*Class 10:* Type in three dimensions. Installation art, type in our daily environments. In-class activity: type intervention.

*Assignments:* Begin working on final project.

*Class 11:* Present and discuss in-progress final projects. Instructor feedback on project progress. Work on final project in class.

*Assignments:* Complete final project. Prepare a few pieces for display in final show. Invite friends to final show. Invite strangers to final show.

CLASS 12: Final show. May differ from ordinary class meeting time.

# Student presentations

Each student is required to prepare a 15–20-minute presentation on a topic of their choice that relates to the material being studied. We will choose topics during the first two weeks of class and assign dates so that presentation topics fit into class lesson plans.

## Possible topics

Ink. Paper. OCR and new technology. Braille. Machine-readable type and code. Photo type. ASCII art. Bad typography. Music typography and engraving. Non-western typography. Little-known characters. Web typography. Motion typography. Pictograms. Oberlin typographic trends. Concrete poetry. Calligraphy (western or not). The origins of our alphabet. Typewriters. Inside a font foundry (i.e. the business of typography). Dingbats. Signs and type. The future of type. Logotypes (trends?). Signpainting. Type and modernist design. Bookmaking. The science of typography. Times New Roman. Comic Sans. *Or a topic of your choice.*

## Resources

*Books:* When searching for books using OBIS or OhioLINK, many typography materials are often classified under “Printing” or “Design” and related subject headings.

*Websites:* [ilovetypography.com](http://ilovetypography.com), [typophile.com](http://typophile.com), [typotheque.com](http://typotheque.com), [typoneue.com](http://typoneue.com), [ministryoftype.co.uk](http://ministryoftype.co.uk), [typography.com](http://typography.com), [webtypography.com](http://webtypography.com)

*Multimedia:* YouTube and Flickr (photo sharing) have a remarkable array of type- and printing-related media. If you are particularly interested in your topic, you may want to try your hand and create your own examples. If you are looking for examples of historical typesetting, search the stacks at Mudd or check out Google book search for scans of old, dusty editions.

# **Bibliography**

**History**

**Type design**

**Digital type**