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Professional Reflection paper

GRA 491

Professor Jamerson

I enjoyed the capstone class. It was a learning process that allowed me to develop my skills and compile a fluid, cohesive, personal brand, and professional portfolio. This was comprised of my website portfolio, print portfolio, and personal branding: resume, business card, letterhead, and envelope for my business Uniondale Belle Designs. Personal branding is how you are represented. Personal branding helps you build trust with your audience, grow your business, and expresses your experience and expertise. As a creator or freelancer personal branding is how you differentiate yourself from your competition. The process of the capstone class was time consuming but necessary to refine the projects for the portfolio. Milestones helped break the class down into more manageable sections and the discussions allowed classmates to review and give constructive criticism to improve the projects. In conjunction with the professor provided feedback from each assignment I was able to make improvements to each project. Building this comprehensive portfolio that covers digital and print needs helps someone like me who has never built a portfolio before. The class made each step easy to follow and the peer review allowed for feedback to be applied as needed. For me personally this clas was intimidating at first but as we completed each assignment, I became more confident in my abilities and learned to better represent my own work. As a graphic designer you should be able to professionally describe and analyze your work. This Capstone course helped me see the importance of manufacturing a portfolio you believe in and that represents you to the best of your abilities.

The capstone class gave me a chance to review projects and assignments from throughout my time in the Graphic Design and Media Arts program. This was an involved process of reviewing and choosing the projects I thought would best represent my design style in my first portfolio. This was a wonderful opportunity to look at all the class assignments as well as other ideas and projects I had done on the side during this time to find which projects best reflect my skills and techniques learned throughout the program. I chose a blend of school assignments, personal projects, and mock business assignments I have done to hone my skills. Using this class as a ruler to measure how my skills have improved and changed from the first courses I have taken, all the way through to the more challenging and detailed assignments in the higher-level classes I took towards the end of the program. It was a good chance to see the growth and development and assess what I have learned during my time in this program. At SNHU I have always felt supported and encouraged by my professors. Even if I was having difficulties with an assignment or technical issues the communication, I received from all my instructors has been phenomenal. The courses pushed me outside of my comfort zone and challenged me to find a way that my design style can be depicted even when following a style guide or creative design brief. The graphic design program has been an enjoyable experience for me, and I have learned so much about the fundamentals of design, how to better my own work and give constructive feedback to my peers with detailed explanations to hopefully help them improve their work as well. The capstone, while challenging, was a good measure for what I have accomplished throughout my time here at SNHU.

What feedback did you choose to incorporate into your print-ready portfolio and portfolio website? Hearing feedback from each of my classmates that communicated with me during the class discussions helped me to see ways to improve each project from another’s point of view having that new perspective helps point out details that I may not have seen. I am so glad to have this chance to help my classmates the way they helped me. Also, throughout this class we received feedback from the instructor. This was key to improving my ten portfolio projects as well as my personal branding. Often it was making changes such as adjusting layout or working on diversifying font types to create visual interest. The feedback was monumental in helping me build a better portfolio that felt finished and professional. This process of gradual feedback and improvements applied through a dialog created with my professor and classmates helps to produce more well-rounded final finished products that better fulfill the create brief and overall create happier more fulfilled customers. For me, formatting and making each project fit into a cohesive design for my website and print-ready portfolio was the most tedious part of this class. I found my website to be a challenge as I am not well versed in web design and the challenge for me was to make things appear as uniform and cohesively designed as possible. The final project I feel made vast improvements to all areas of my brand and portfolio.

Being able to collaborate is important to any graphic designer as you are often expected to work with others to create projects that are better overall from collaborative efforts. This class's collaborative nature came into play with the weekly discussion where we were able to post our projects and receive feedback from any number of our peers. This aspect of class is useful because you can improve your own work by hearing multiple different perspectives that may point out something that you did not see such as a typo or technical issue such as a broken link. Peer review may suggest improving the piece from an ethical or social standpoint. This is why collaboration works, visual art is subjective and can be seen and analyzed from many different perspectives. When you have strong personal branding and know what your design style is you are better able to being open to critique and collaboration with professionalism. The ability to work with others will only improve your designs.

Moving forward I plan to use the personal branding and design style I have developed to build my own brand focusing on the target audiences, project types and interests that will help to advance my brand and build my portfolio. I plan to launch my website as well as my linked social media sites to drive an online presence and begin taking on clients in a freelance capacity. The branding and portfolio I have developed through this program will help me to put a strong foot forward in the world of freelancing and build my experiences. Honing my style and skills as a freelancer I would then be able to apply for more jobs that require experience in graphic design. Moving forward, this is a field that I see being extremely competitive and being able to highlight your abilities and be confident in your work is key to being taken seriously as a graphic designer. I am changing fields from my previous job, but I see a need for graphic design and branding in my current field. All companies need the ability to market themselves effectively and I would like to blend my knowledge from both fields to help fill the needs I see there.

How will you maintain ethical principles and incorporate social responsibility in order to advance the graphic design industry and/or create artifacts (products or designs) that leave positive lasting effects on people and societies? Creating ethically and socially responsible designs is something every designer should be concerned with. Advancements in technology allow us to create in ways that were never before possible. It is our responsibility to educate ourselves on the socially correct and ethically responsible principles in all your work. As a creative your work is subject to many different perspectives and to intentionally create a morally questionable product or design is not only a threat to you as a designer, but you also risk your own standards and professional reputation. Graphic design must be in touch with our culture's social and ethical heartbeat. One poorly designed piece with no thought to cultural or ethical choices can put our clients in compromising positions and in turn that negatively reflects on the design itself. It is our responsibility as designers to create useful products that fulfill our clients needs as well asbeing pleasing to the eye. This can be accomplished by making designs more accessible. Accessibility can be gained through smart use of layout, using white space efficiently, guiding the eye through visual aids and subtle graphics. You can also make your designs more relatable. When you audience connects to your piece they are more likely to act or react depending on what the piece is asking of them. As a designer you have the power to choose projects that align with your morals. Remember as a designer you have the amplification power. Design is what gets things noticed. If you want the world to be a better place you can choose to support issues that you feel need amplifying. If you work on a project you are passionate about the design will be more powerful. Aligning your values with projects that you are passionate about is one way to amplify causes that will in turn have a positive effect on the world.

Professionally I want to create work that brings people together, that brings joy and whimsy into their lives. I think that is why I enjoy working with wedding and special occasion design. It is a happy moment in people’s lives that they want to memorialize. Weddings and other special events are often branded. They work within a color scheme and theme that they want to achieve and even though it is just a short period of time it is something people hold onto and become sentimental about. This is where I have found my most enjoyment so far in my design journey. I would like to continue to explore design opportunities in this area. Another area of design that I want to explore is that of branding for small businesses. Oftentimes I feel entrepreneurs are falling through the gaps in the marketing sector due to limited budgets and market outreach. I feel this is an area where I could help these individuals. Developing my own brand has shown me how important telling your own story is. This is a key part of any business and I feel as though I could fill a need in this sector. The capstone program taught me the strength of representation and being proud of the work you have created. I think that in the future I would like to work with others to give them the ability to be proud of their work as well.