

SYLLABUS

VCOM 2950: Visual Communication Applications

Spring 2025

Section 001: MW 12:40–2:05 pm Bragg 150

Section 002: TR 11:20 am–12:45 pm Bragg 150

Instructor

Philip Loubere, Professor

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Office: COE 345

Spring 2025 office hours: MW 10:30 am–12:30 pm, TR 1:00-2:00 pm

If you would like to meet with me, please ask me in class or email me at the above address to schedule an appointment. You're welcome to drop by but I might be in another meeting.

Course Description

Catalog description:

VCOM 2950 - Visual Communication Applications

Introduces industry-standard graphics applications used for print, web, and digital publication; discusses typography, design, and color theory; overview of publication procedures. Combined lecture/lab. 3.000 Credit hours

This is an introductory lab/lecture course in the Visual Communication concentration of the School of Journalism and Strategic Media. It is a pre-requisite to other Visual Communication upper division courses.

The course has two goals:

- To gain basic competency in the use of industry-standard digital graphics, photo editing and publication design software and
- To examine design principles that can improve the presentation of information in print and digital media.

Conceptual topics will include design principles, color theory, typography and publication technology. In assignments, emphasis will be placed on clear and user-friendly presentation of content, on good image editing skills, and on clear and accurate writing as well as creative and analytical thinking and problem solving. Some assignments will require basic math skills.

There will also be discussion of the history and current state of information design, and of how presentation affects clarity of communication and quality of content.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, you should be knowledgeable about:

- effective design principles for print and digital publications
- industry-standard practices for producing print and digital products
- history of print and digital technology

and you should have basic competency in industry-standard graphics applications, in particular Adobe InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop.

Class Structure

This class meets in a computer lab where each student will have access to a Macintosh desktop computer. You may also use your own laptop if you prefer, either Mac or Windows. See page 5 for software and hardware requirements.

Assignments and materials will be posted on our class D2L page and on a second site:

ploubere.com/vcom/2950

This site may be password protected and only accessible to students in this course. Your user name and password will be provided at the start of the semester.

This site contains instructional videos, and supplementary assignment and study materials.

The schedule for the semester is available on this site, subject to change as circumstances dictate:

Section 001 MW 12:40–2:05 pm: ploubere.com/vcom/2950/schedule2950-1.sp25.html

Section 002 TR 11:20 am–12:45 pm: ploubere.com/vcom/2950/schedule2950-2.sp25.html

Work Flow

• **Sessions:** Each class will start with a session in which topics and assignments will be explained, along with demonstrations of how to complete the assignments. These will usually take up about half an hour, leaving the rest of the scheduled time to complete assignments, either in class or on your own. Attendance is mandatory for the first part of the session but optional after that, so long as you keep up with the assignment schedule. See page 4 for the complete attendance policy.

• **Assignment instructions and due dates** will be posted on D2L, with a link to the class site where download materials and videos showing how to complete each assignment will be available. The D2L post will list both start and due dates for each assignment, along with the recommended amount of time needed to finish each assignment. There will generally be at least a week between the start and due dates.

• **Submissions:** Completed assignments will be submitted on the D2L site, where there will be a dropbox for each assignment. Most assignments will require multiple documents to be submitted. These should be assembled in a folder, which will need to be compressed into a single Zip file before submitting it.

Name your submissions with your last name first: *MyLastName.assignmentName.zip*

Coursework And Grading

- Each of the software applications will be taught through a series of exercises, followed by a project.
- Conceptual topics will be discussed in class and through videos and provided reading materials, and evaluated through four quizzes over the course of the semester.
- The midterm and final exams will each consist of two parts, a quiz on conceptual topics and a practical skills portion.

Successful completion of each assignment will earn up to a certain amount of points.

• 6 exercises, up to 50 points each:	300 points
• 3 projects, up to 100 points each:	300 points
• 4 quizzes, up to 25 points each:	100 points
	700
• Midterm exam:	100 points
• Final exam:	100 points
	200
• Attendance/Participation:	100

Maximum possible points: _____ **1,000**

Your final grade will be based on the total number of points you earned over the semester:

900-1,000: A	700-749: C+	500-549: D-
850-899: B+	650-699: C	Less than 500: F
800-849: B	600-649: D+	
750-799: B-	550-599: D	

Note: In the School of Journalism, the **minimum passing grade is a C**, or at least 650 points. Any grade below that will require that the course be repeated.

Grading Criteria

Points for assignments will be given based on how well the assignment's goals were met. These goals will be explained for each assignment, and will include specific requirements as well as on competency in use of the software, attention to design principles and to detail, organization of content, and visual appeal. Whenever writing is involved, grammar, spelling and clarity will also be evaluated.

To earn the maximum points, the work must be error-free and meet all of the assignment's specific goals.

Late work will not be accepted. Deadlines for exercises and projects must be met to earn points.

Points earned will be posted on D2L. For some assignments and when appropriate, individual feedback from the instructor will be posted in the D2L dropbox for that assignment.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class. Attendance is defined as being not only present but being attentive and engaged in the class's activities and not doing homework, using a mobile device, listening to music or being otherwise distracted. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in being marked absent for that session.

Attendance and participation will determine **up to 100 points** of your final grade. If you:

missed no more than 3 classes:	100 points
missed 4 classes:	70 points
missed 5 classes:	35 points
missed 6+ classes:	0 points
missed 12+ classes:	grade of FA for non-attendance

Being late, leaving early or otherwise missing a portion of a class will be counted as **half an absence**.

This is not a remote or online class. Exams must be taken in person in our classroom.

Missing classes and deadlines and falling behind will severely impact your chances of doing well or even passing this course. It is your responsibility to be in class for lectures and discussions. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the missed material.

Mid-semester reporting is required of the instructor. Failure to attend class sessions or to complete assignments will result in a non-attendance report, which may impact scholarships and other benefits, as well as your standing in the University.

If you fail to earn a passing grade by the end of the semester, the instructor is required to list a last day of participation, which would be the last time an assignment was submitted or you actively participated in a class session. This may also impact your financial benefits and standing.

Learning Resources

Recommended Books

There is no required text. These are optional resources:

- [Adobe Classroom in a Book for Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign](#)

Tutoring

MTSU offers a free tutoring service for student success. It doesn't offer tutoring specific to this course or to other courses in the Journalism and Strategic Media department.

mtsu.edu/studentsuccess/tutoring.php

There will be a VCOM tutor available this semester who can help with Adobe applications such as InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. Information about this will be posted when it becomes available. If you need extra help do not hesitate to contact the instructor. Individual in-person or Zoom sessions can be scheduled as often as you need. phil.loubere@mtsu.edu

Technology Resources

As stated above, the class will take place in a computer lab in which each student will have access to a Macintosh desktop computer with the required software and Internet access.

To do coursework outside of the computer lab, you will need to have regular access to a desktop or laptop computer, either PC or Mac. Chromebooks won't work, they don't allow installation of the full-featured Adobe Suite.

To install and use the required software—the Adobe Suite—the device must have a recent or current operating system, Mac OS X v12 or later, or Microsoft Windows 10 version 1903 (64 bit only) or later. More information:

helpx.adobe.com/creative-cloud/help/creative-cloud-desktop-app-system-requirements.html

Free access to the Adobe Creative Cloud will be provided through the university. If you prefer you may also acquire your own license at the student rate from the Adobe site for education:

adobe.com/creativecloud/buy/students.html

You will also need regular access to the Internet through a high speed connection.

The department has a limited number of Mac laptops available for loan. Let the instructor know if you need one.

There are desktop computers in the library that have the required software. There will also be limited open lab hours in one of the Bragg labs. Hours and locations will be posted on D2L when determined.

Academic Information and Policies

Learning Areas

The MTSU School of Journalism is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). In order to meet the Council's standards, the School is required to include a range of topics in its comprehensive curricula. More information can be found here: acejmc.org

This course emphasizes the following student learning areas:

- Presenting images and information well
- Thinking creatively and analytically
- Evaluating content quality
- Computing basic math and statistics
- Processing information using technology

Classroom Conduct

The open discussion and free exchange of ideas is encouraged during class sessions. Everyone should feel free to ask any question or express any idea. However, there will be an expectation of civility and respect toward others. Statements whose purpose is to disparage, belittle, insult or threaten others may be considered disruptive to the session. Repeated incidents of this nature during a class session may result in the student being asked to leave, and if repeated in subsequent sessions, may result in the student being expelled from the class.

This class recognizes the unique ways that people from varying social intersections have contributed to media and entertainment. Disparaging statements about race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sex/gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or religion will not be tolerated. Please be mindful of difference in any interactions with others while participating in this course.

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is a hallmark of Middle Tennessee State University. We expect students to complete academic exercises, i.e., assignments turned in for credit that are original and appropriately credit all sources used.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

Plagiarism: The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper attribution. This includes self-plagiarism, which occurs when an author submits material or research from a previous academic exercise to satisfy the requirements of another exercise and uses it without proper citation of its reuse.

Fabrication: Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. This includes unapproved collaboration, which occurs when a student works

with others on an academic exercise without the express permission of the professor. It also includes purchasing assignments or paying another person to complete a course for you.

The use of Artificial Intelligence content generators is also considered cheating. There is no instructional value in having an application perform your creative tasks, and it would be dishonest to present such as your own work. Using any knowledge or content-generating resources without the explicit approval of your professor may be considered a violation of the Academic Integrity policy.

All cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Director of Academic Integrity and may result in failure on the test/assignment or for the course. When students participate in behavior that is considered to be academic misconduct, the value of their education and that of their classmates is reduced, and their academic careers are jeopardized.

If you have a question about an assignment, please ask for clarification.

Quizzes/exams: Taking a test/quiz online is just like taking a test/quiz in a classroom. Unless you have the approval of your professor:

- You may not use your textbooks
- You may not use class notes
- You may not use additional websites
- You may not ask anyone for help
- You may not use content-generating resources such as AI generators.

Reporting Last Day Of Attendance

At mid-semester, the MTSU Records Office will distribute a list of students enrolled in this class. The instructor will record on the list the last date of attendance for students who have ceased attending but not officially dropped or withdrawn from the class. The attendance record is to comply with federal financial aid regulations for students receiving aid.

Notice To Lottery Scholarship Recipients

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility.

If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you will not be able to regain eligibility at a later time.

For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form (<http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/forms/LOTFOD.pdf>) or contact your MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor (<http://www.mtsu.edu/one-stop/counselor.php>).

The MT One Stop is now open and located in Room 210 of the Student Services & Admissions Center (SSAC). If you have additional questions about financial aid, registration, tuition and billing and

transcripts, please contact your MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor or come by the MT One Stop.

Family Educational Rights And Privacy Act (FERPA)

In general, under FERPA I am not permitted to disclose your academic progress to anyone not allowed to receive such information. Thus I cannot discuss your academic progress, grades, etc., over the phone or via e-mail. All such discussions must be in person. At the end of the semester I cannot disclose your final grade over the phone or via e-mail. Nor can I “post” your grades on my door. You will receive your final grades via PIPELINEMT or WEBMT. Additionally, I cannot access your grades if you have a hold on your records.

Reasonable Accommodation For Students With Disabilities

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the Disability & Access Center (DAC) website www.mtsu.edu/dac and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or dacemail@mtsu.edu

Title IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against or been the victim of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking should contact a Title IX/Deputy Coordinator at 615-898-2185 or 615-898-2750 for assistance or review MTSU’s Title IX website for resources. www.mtsu.edu/titleix

MTSU faculty are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are legally obligated to share reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking with the University’s Title IX coordinator to help ensure student’s safety and welfare. Please refer to MTSU’s Title IX site for contact information and details. www.mtsu.edu/titleix

Outreach and Support Programs

The MTSU community is committed to the academic achievement of each student, and we know that struggling to address basic needs can affect a student’s ability to perform academically. If you are having trouble finding a safe and stable place to live or enough food to eat, please contact the MTSU Food Pantry at 615-898-2111 or mtonestop@mtsu.edu. You are also welcome to visit the MTSU Food Pantry at the MT One Stop, fill out our [Food Pantry Online Request](#), or speak with your instructor to get the assistance and resources you need.

From the Provost’s Office

[I am True Blue](#)

As a member of this diverse community, I am a valuable contributor to its progress and success. I am engaged in the life of this community. I am a recipient and a giver. I am a listener and a speaker. I am honest in word and deed. I am committed to reason, not violence. I am a learner now and forever. I am a BLUE RAIDER. True Blue!

Software Skills

Adobe InDesign

Exercises:

- Creating single- and facing-page documents, modifying page sizes, margins
- Placing text and photos
- Linking text blocks
- Resizing, cropping photos
- Text wrap
- Creating Master Page elements; applying them to pages
- Creating a print-ready publication package

Project:

- Informational or promotional document

Adobe Photoshop

Exercises:

- Cropping, rotating, color adjusting a photo
- Making and saving selections; modifying selected pixels
- Drawing paths
- Clone stamp tool
- Working with layers: changing blending modes
- Copying, pasting into selections
- Resizing, changing color mode, saving to appropriate file types for print and web use

Project:

- Commercial poster

Adobe Illustrator

Exercises:

- Placing a photo: linking vs embedding
- Color spaces for print and for web
- Creating shapes with the Pen tool
- Adding, modifying, deleting anchor points
- Modifying shapes: move, scale, rotate, skew
- Changing stroke and fill qualities: working with color
- Moving shapes in front of and in back of each other; creating layers
- Creating text blocks, applying text styles
- Changing shapes' blending modes

Projects:

- Designing a poster or a landscape

Conceptual Topics

■ Color theory

- Color wheel; primary and secondary colors
- CMYK vs RGB: Subtractive vs additive color models
- Color schemes: analogous vs complementary; split-complements
- Modifying hues: value, intensity

■ Typography

- Terminology: typefaces, fonts
- Serif vs sans serif; script and specialty typefaces
- Measuring units: Point size, em space, x height, leading, kerning, tracking
- Headline vs body font choices

■ Design principles

- Principles for choosing and organizing visual elements
- Gestalt principles, cognitive theory, economy

Technical Topics

■ Preparing documents for different media

- Print vs Web: CMYK vs RGB color spaces
- Vector vs bitmap documents
- Appropriate file types
- Appropriate sizes and resolutions for different media
- Line screen, half-toning for offset press reproduction
- Creating publication packages, PDFs