DES-791-07 MFA Thesis Research
Thursdays 6:00–8:50pm, Steuben Hall Room 410
jarrettfuller.com/thesis-research

Jarrett Fuller
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IBM Pavilion, Charles and Ray Eames
(1962)

*"We work because it's a chain
reaction — every subject leads to
the next."*
Charles Eames

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Bulletin Description

Students will explore various research methods with the goal of identifying a problem or issue that will become the basis of a thesis topic. Students will be expected to formulate a viable hypothesis, bibliography, and plan of action. How to best utilize public and private archives, collections and libraries, as well as online and database research, will be addressed.

Detailed Description

The MFA Thesis is not a single project, but rather a body of work consisting of multiple projects/visual explorations based on a single topic/subject area sharing a common methodology. The nature of the methodology the student intends to apply to the body of work should be identified during Thesis Research. While enrolled in the MFA program,students will be assigned projects and will undertake self-directed investigations. Regardless of origination, all of the student's projects should be linked by content and subject and consistently applied to the body of work being created.

Thesis Research is intended to assist the student in the formulation of a thesis topic. Lectures, weekly assignments and in-class exercises help students "problem seek" through writing, design research, and visual mapping. Thesis development is a constant process of convergence and divergence. A healthy dose of each is necessary for a unique viewpoint and a thoroughly considered body of work. The course will initially strive to maintain an openness and playfulness towards discovering a topic of interest. As the semester progresses, students will focus their research and begin to clarify their subject area, ultimately writing a viable hypothesis, bibliography and outline for both the written and visual components of the proposed Thesis.

Categories/types of research: Quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary, formative and summative will frame various research methodologies (historical, empirical, analytical, and exploratory) as the student identifies appropriate research strategies and tactics.

Faculty will discuss with the student their preferences, strengths and weaknesses; students will be expected to take a critical look at their entire body of work to develop a degree of self-awareness.

Course Goals

1. To identify a problem, issue or concern, as well as a coherent research strategy and tactics, that will become the basis for Thesis
2. To develop and write a clear and concise hypothesis statement, justification, and outline of the written and visual components of the proposed Thesis
3. To develop a bibliography
4. To establish delimitations of the proposed Thesis
5. To work collaboratively to help each other in the pursuit for a productive learning experience with positive outcomes
6. To clarify the nature of the methodology the student intends to apply to the body of work in Thesis
7. To thoroughly explore interests, a body of work, career goals and beliefs
8. To discover a topic that resonates and will hold interest for the year of Thesis ahead
9. To discover the creative potential of writing to help solve a design problem

Learning Objectives

1. Students will explore and utilize historical, empirical, analytical, and exploratory research methods
2. Students will write numerous iterations of an hypothesis statement and outline of the written and visual components of the proposed Thesis
3. Students will explain their rationale for why the study is important
4. Students will establish the limits and boundaries of the proposed Thesis
5. Students will engage in both collaborative and self-reflecting activities
6. Students will establish a plan of action and schedule for their Thesis semesters

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January 18
IN CLASS: Class intros, syllabus, grading, etc.
LECTURE: What is research? What is design research?
READ: *The Rise of Research in Graphic Design*, *Research and Destroy*, *Speculative Everything*
ASSIGNMENT: Bring in five items that caught your eye this week.

January 25
LECTURE: What makes a good thesis?
IN CLASS: Noticing responses
READ: *The Accidental Power of Design, Just Design, Unbuilding*
ASSIGNMENT: Collect examples of research through design

February 1
LECTURE: Design as inquiry
IN CLASS: Review research examples, thesis derive/formulating research questions
READ: *Research to Fuel Creative Process, Qualitative Questions, Quantitative Methods*
ASSIGNMENT: Thesis research questions

February 8
*Pin-up Design Research Examples
LECTURE: Research methodologies
IN CLASS: review research questions

February 15
LECTURE: What is a literature review?
IN CLASS: Library Presentation
ASSIGNMENT: Begin Literature Review

February 22
Literature Review Responses

March 1
Literature Review Responses

March 8
Literature Review Responses

March 15
Spring Break — No Class

March 22
Literature Review Due
Literature Review Responses
ASSIGNMENT: Begin pamphlet and presentation

March 29
Pamphlet and presentation design

April 5
Pamphlet and presentation design

April 12
Presentations Round 1

April 19
Presentations Round 2
Pamphlet and presentation files due

*April 20, 5:30pm: Submit pamphlet via email
(late submission will result in lower grade)

April 26
Candidacy Reviews — No Class

May 3-4
2nd Year Student Thesis Defenses
(mandatory attendance for 1st year students)

*Syllabus subject to change.
Please check *jarrettfuller.com/thesis-research* for the latest version.

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GRADING

Each instructor will assign the following percentages to each of these two categories when determining the final grade:

75%	Process + Realization
25%	Professionalism

Individual Course Grades

A	Excellent without exception
A–	Excellent

The student displays an exceptional perspective in critique participation, response to criticism, professional conduct, an advanced understanding of course material, and is able to achieve remarkable results above and beyond suggested project parameters. (Numerical Value: A = 4.0; A– = 3.7)

B+	Above average
B	Average
B–	Acceptable

The student displays a positive perspective in critique participation, response to criticism, professional conduct, a competent understanding of course material, and is able to achieve above average results while fulfilling suggested project parameters. (Numerical Value: B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B– = 2.7)

C+	Acceptable
C	Acceptable (C is the lowest passing grade for graduate students)

In some instances the student displays a positive perspective in critique participation, response to criticism, professional conduct, an understanding of course material, and applies it to assigned problems satisfactorily, meeting basic expectations but not pushing beyond suggested project parameters. (Numerical Value: C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0)

F	Failing (any grade of C- or below is a failing grade)

The student has failed to meet the minimum standards for the course. (Numerical Value: 0.0)

INC Incomplete

A grade of incomplete may be given if due to extraordinary non-academic reasons the student finds it impossible to complete all assignments. If a student wishes to propose an incomplete for a course, they must request such an accomodation in writing no later than the last scheduled meeting for the course. Failure to meet this deadline will result in a failing grade for the course. If granted (requests subject to apporval of both faculty of record for the course and department), all work must be completed within 8 weeks of the last class meeting or the INC will convert to a failing grade (F).

Overall Program Standing

All student's records are reviewed at the end of each semester to determine whether students who have failed to remain in good standing may continue in the program. To be in good standing, all graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0 (equivalent of a B). A graduate student whose GPA falls below a 3.0 at any time may be subject to dismissal. The specific conditions under which this policy will be invoked are as set forth by the dean of each school.

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GRADING GUIDELINES/EXPECTATIONS

Process and realization
- *Quality of Research:* Are the research methods used by the student effectively chosen and implemented to arrive at successful solutions, and do they cover all aspects of the problem, including historical background and functional concerns?
- *Concept and Conceptual Development:* Are concepts inventive and appropriate, show initiative on the part of the student, and do they satisfy the objectives of the stated problem? Is there a sufficient amount of conceptual work, such as sketches and drafts?
- *Attention to Detail:* Does the solution reflect an appropriate and effective choice of medium, use of tools, techniques and materials, and is it presented in a professional manner?
- *Syntactic Quality of Work:* Are all syntactic concerns — such as form, composition, and visual hierarchy — clearly and effectively articulated? Does the application of color support the message and satisfy aesthetic concerns? Is there an effective application of typography when appropriate? Does the student demonstrate the ability to represent shape and form in two, three, and four dimensions at an acceptable skill level?
- *Semantic Quality of Work:* Does the solution present an effective message — one that is appropriate for the intended audience?
- *Pragmatic Quality of Work:* Does the solution function appropriately, and as intended?
- *Motivation:* Does the student stay consistently motivated throughout the process?
- *Meeting the Objectives of the Assignment:* Does the student follow the project assignment in an appropriate manner, and does the solution meet the state objectives?
- *Participation in Critiques and Discussions:* Does the student actively participate in critiques and discussions on a regular basis?

Professionalism
- *Verbal Articulation:* Is the student able to critically address the work orally, and respond to ideas discussed in class?
- *Written Articulation:* When required, does the student document work clearly, concisely, and accurately? Is the student articulate and does the student use correct grammar in writing assignments?
- *Overall Attitude:* Does the student present a positive demeanor and outlook on his work, and towards the work of the other students and instructor? Was the student reluctant to do the expected work?
- *Collaboration:* When called upon to work collaboratively with peers, does the student demonstrate collegiality and professional behavior? Does the student contribute equally?
- *Class Attendance / Punctuality:* Did the student adhere to the stated attendance policy?
- *Deadlines / Class Preparation:* Were the intermediate and final deadlines met? Did the student arrive to class with work prepared as assigned, on time, and without excuse?

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DIVISIONAL, PROGRAM AND CLASS POLICIES

Academic Integrity Policy
At Pratt, students, faculty, and staff do creative and original work. This is one of our community values. For Pratt to be a space where everyone can freely create, our community must adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity.

Academic integrity at Pratt means using your own and original ideas in creating academic work. It also means that if you use the ideas or influence of others in your work, you must acknowledge them. At Pratt,

• We do our own work,
• We are creative, and
• We give credit where it is due.

Based on our value of academic integrity, Pratt has an Academic Integrity Standing Committee (AISC) that is charged with educating faculty, staff, and students about academic integrity practices. Whenever possible, we strive to resolve alleged infractions at the most local level possible, such as between student and professor, or within a department or school. When necessary, members of this committee will form an Academic Integrity Hearing Board. Such boards may hear cases regarding cheating, plagiarism, and other infractions described below; these infractions can be grounds for citation, sanction, or dismissal.

Academic Integrity Code
When students submit any work for academic credit, they make an implicit claim that the work is wholly their own, completed without the assistance of any unauthorized person. These works include, but are not limited to exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, projects, studio work, and other assignments and assessments. In addition, no student shall prevent another student from making their work. Students may study, collaborate and work together on assignments at the discretion of the instructor.

Examples of infractions include but are not limited to:

1. Plagiarism, defined as using the exact language or a close paraphrase of someone else's ideas without citation.
2. Violations of fair use, including the unauthorized and uncited use of another's artworks, images, designs, etc.
3. The supplying or receiving of completed work including papers, projects, outlines, artworks, designs, prototypes, models, or research for submission by any person other than the author.
4. The unauthorized submission of the same or essentially the same piece of work for credit in two different classes.
5. The unauthorized supplying or receiving of information about the form or content of an examination.
6. The supplying or receiving of partial or complete answers, or suggestions for answers; or the supplying or receiving of assistance in interpretation of questions on any examination from any source not explicitly authorized. (This includes copying or reading of another student's work or consultation of notes or other sources during an examination.)

For academic support, students are encouraged to seek assistance from the Writing and Tutorial Center, Pratt Libraries, or consult with an academic advisor about other support resources. Refer to the Pratt website for information on Academic Integrity Code Adjudication Procedures (https://www.pratt.edu/the-institute/administration-resources/office-of-the-provost/policies-processes-and-forms/).

General Pratt Attendance Policy
Pratt Institute understands that students' engagement in their program of study is central to their success. While no attendance policy can assure that, regular class attendance is key to this engagement and signals the commitment Pratt students make to participate fully in their education.

Faculty are responsible for including a reasonable attendance policy on the syllabus for each course they teach, consistent with department-specific guidelines, if applicable, and with Institute policy regarding reasonable accommodation of students with documented disabilities. Students are responsible for knowing the attendance policy in each of their classes; for understanding whether a class absence has been excused or not; for obtaining material covered during an absence (note: instructors may request that a student obtain the material from peers); and for determining, in consultation with the instructor and ahead of time if possible, whether make-up work will be permitted.

Consistent attendance is essential for the completion of any course or program. Attending class does not earn students any specific portion of their grade, but is the pre-condition for passing the course, while missing class may seriously harm a student's grade. Grades may be lowered a letter grade for each unexcused absence, at the discretion of the instructor. Even as few as three unexcused absences in some courses (especially those that meet only once per week) may result in an automatic "F" for the course. (Note: Students shall not be penalized for class absences prior to adding a course at the beginning of a semester, though faculty may expect students to make up any missed assignments.)

Pratt Institute respects students' requirements to observe days of cultural significance, including religious holy days, and recognizes that some students might need to miss class to do so. In this, or other similar circumstance, students are responsible for consulting with faculty ahead of time about how and when they can make up work they will miss.

Faculty are encouraged to give consideration to students who have documentation from the Office of Health and Counseling. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities will continue to be provided, as appropriate.

Refer to the Pratt website for information on Attendance. (https://www.pratt.edu/the-institute/administration-resources/office-of-the-provost/policies-processes-and-forms/)

Students with Disabilities
The instructor will make every effort to accommodate students with both visible and invisible disabilities. While it is advisable that students with disabilities speak to the instructor at the start of the semester if they feel this condition might make it difficult to

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partake in aspects of the course, students should feel free to discuss issues pertaining to disabilities with the instructor at any time. Depending on the nature of the disability, and the extent to which it may require deviations from standard course policy, documentation of a specific condition may be required, in compliance with conditions established by the campus Learning Access Center, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must obtain clearance from the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. They should contact Elisabeth Sullivan, Director of the Learning Access Center, 718-636-3711.

Religious Policies
In line with Pratt's Attendance Policy, Pratt Institute respects students' requirements to observe days of cultural significance, including religious holy days, and recognizes that some students might need to miss class to do so. In this, or other similar circumstance, students are responsible for consulting with faculty ahead of time about how and when they can make up work they will miss.

Department-specific Attendance Policy
The continued registration of any student is contingent upon regular attendance, the quality of work produced and proper conduct exhibited. Irregular attendance, neglect of work, and failure to comply with Institute rules and official notices or conduct not consistent with general good order are regarded as sufficient reasons for dismissal.

If a student has any unexcused absences during the semester, upon the discretion of the instructor the student's final semester grade may be reduced by one letter grade. If a student has more than three unexcused absences during the semester, upon the discretion of the instructor the student may receive a failing grade (F) for the course. Similarly, repeated tardiness and/or early departure can be considered, cummulatively, as equivalent to absenteism; determining ratio for such calcualtion upon the discretion of the instructor (number of instances = unexcused absense).

Students are allowed excused absences in certain circumstances: illness or observance of religious holidays. In cases of illness, official documentation proving the illness must be provided to the instructor (no later than within a week's time after a missed class section); in cases of religious holidays, the student must notify the instructor in writing (at the beginning of the semester; no later than the first week of classes) when those days will occur.

Any combination of unexcused and excused absences totalling four course sessions will automatically determine failure for the course.

Participation in Graduate MFA Communications Design and MS Package Design Program Reviews (Mid-Term and End of Semester) are mandatory. Absence or limited engagement (late arrival, partial contribution, early exit, etc.) could see automatic letter grade reductions and/or potential course failures across any and/or all semester courses. Extraordinary exemptions are to be considered for documented emergencies only, in prior consultation with Faculty of Record, Program Coordinator(s) and Department.