

**Final Project: Professional Reflection**

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GRA 491: Graphic Design Portfolio

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## **GRA 491 Final Project: Professional Reflection**

This course has taught me a lot about myself; what I know for sure and what I need improvement on. This capstone was a conglomerate of all the knowledge and skills I have learned at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). I utilized every piece of knowledge and every skill I have learned in the 4 years I have been SNHU. My ability and knowledge of how to put a print-ready project together, to develop a website, to provide feedback to my peers and provoke discussion, and my ability to be able to write about my process and my work in a professional way, has been instilled in me with practice from each course I've taken. And this course allowed me to recall all of this knowledge and skills, and showed not only my professor, but me, that I have retained everything that I learned throughout the years, and that I will be able to carry all of these skills into my professional and future academic life. A lot of people may take the life and professional skills learned in college for granted; or they might not think of it as useful, but many of the skills learned, are what employers look for in an employee. There are 11 skills that employers look for—communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills, interpersonal skills, learning/adaptability skills, self-management skills, organizational skills, computer skills, problem-solving skills, open-mindedness, and strong work ethic (indeed, 2022). All of these skills I have learned at SNHU through the discussions, through being online and having to manage my time perfectly in order to finish everything on time; being that online is a fast-paced environment, and going into each course and having to be open-minded about what I was learning and the strategy being used to teach us each time. I am very grateful for these skills, and I am confident that I am prepared to succeed at any job I get/want.

Getting back to the actual capstone project, our objective for our capstone was to include a print-ready portfolio that included 10 projects or series of projects and our portfolio website.

Throughout this course we had milestones and through each milestone, we were able to receive feedback from our peers and professor. I did receive a lot of good feedback from everyone, and I incorporated most of the feedback to get to the final pieces I included in my print-ready portfolio, the portfolio itself, and my portfolio website. I'll start by going through the feedback I received for each of the 10 pieces and discuss why or why not I decided to incorporate it. For my first set of projects, the overall feedback I got was to display them as mockups, which I did. For the "How Bout' Them Apples" logo, one of my classmates suggested changing the color of the background to make it lighter because she felt like the chocolate on the strawberry and pretzel was hard to see against the also brown background. I considered her suggestion, but instead of going lighter, I just tried to make the browns more different so that the chocolate would stand out and be seen against the background. I did ask for feedback from my family, I made sure to ask my mom if she could see the chocolate against the background because her eyesight is not the best and she has trouble differentiating between colors sometimes. She said that she could see it fine, so I felt as though others would be able to as well, at least that's what I am hoping. For the Lil' Guppies pieces, the feedback I got was specifically on the business card. One of my classmates suggested putting colorful squares in the corners like my letterhead and envelope so that the text is readable. I was very receptive, as I felt this specific design was lacking and the text was hard to see. Therefore, I took her suggestion and made the changes and I think it made the design look way neater, more professional, more modern, and more readable. For the typography poster of actress Zendaya, one of my classmates suggested that I make one of the colors darker to create more contrast between the pinks so that you can see the shadow and highlight the effect better. Being that I am always open to feedback and seek it out, I received this feedback with open arms. Her pointing this out made me think and I agreed with her and I

made the darker pink a little darker. Her feedback also caused me to go in and move around some of the text to improve the proportions of her face, and now I think it looks more like her and you can see the differentiation of the pinks better. For the “Main Attraction” logo and business card, one of my peers suggested for me to make the graphics larger to make them more visible and to condense the lines of the address on the front of the business card. She specified that the address lines and the phone number were all evenly spaced, making it look like three separate entities instead of two, an address and a phone number. When she pointed it out I realized she was right, and I made the graphics larger and I condensed the lines of the address. Her feedback allowed me to look over the project with an open mind and fresh eyes, and I realized in addition to the graphics and the address, the font of the information needed to be changed to a sans serif font, so that it was more readable and that it wasn’t clashing with the font of the logo. And lastly, for the “Are The Planets Inhabited?” spreads, one of my peers suggested for me to add a drop shadow to the white text to give it the illusion that it’s floating in space. She also suggested that instead of separating the text into 4 chunks in boxes for the text to be readable, to change the background so that you can see the text better. She stated that one of the first pieces of feedback she received was to not put things in boxes unless you want them to be separated from each other; she was concerned that it would break up the story by putting the text in boxes, and make it look like four excerpts instead of one long article. I didn’t add a drop shadow to the white text, as I thought that would be too much, but I did add it to the title as I think it added another aspect that played on the space theme. For the text boxes and the background, I didn’t want to change the background and it didn’t look right to change the layout; I felt like as you were reading, you could tell that it was meant to be one article, so I thought it would be fine to leave it the way it was. As for my website, Professor LoCicero suggested that I

add my logo to each page and that I add annotations to my pieces on my portfolio page. I incorporated both of his suggestions; I added my logo to the navbar so that it is always visible, and I added subpages for my portfolio pieces, because it is necessary for people to have context on the pieces so that they can understand your process. Especially when potential employers and/or clients are who will be exploring your website. And then for the print-ready portfolio, the only feedback that my professor gave me was that I didn't need to include a full case study, but only short context of what the project was and what it was for. With that information, I took away everything except for the overview, and I left a short description of the elements of design I employed. Feedback is a very important part of the design process. For graphic designers, web designers, and other creative workers, getting outstanding feedback is crucial since it offers them a different viewpoint, critique, or suggestions that will help us improve our subsequent design work. The best designers are those that consistently seek out detailed criticism; feedback is a vital tool and essential to successful design. Receiving high-caliber feedback from our clients and "like-minded professionals" gives our design project a fresh perspective, enables us to notice things that we might not otherwise see, boosts our drive, and advances "[our] personal development" (Pixel Surplus, 2021).

Graphic design is one of the vastest fields; for it is everywhere and influences every part of our lives. Whether it be a website, a marketing initiative, or a product, they have an impact on actual people and can have a cascading effect (Sownie, n.d.). Because of this, we as graphic designers, have a social responsibility to uphold ethical principles in all of our work. Ethical design is when you design exceptional goods in accordance with your values, ethics, and business practices (Sownie, n.d.). Furthermore, "ethical design is all about defining & designing the "goodness" factor within a product design that aims to benefit the individual user, their

ecosystem, & the society as a whole” (Ethical Designs, n.d.). I am hyper-aware of the psychology that goes into graphic design. I know individually everyone perceives things differently. Culturally and even regionally perceptions can vary, especially when it comes to graphics design (Marzouk, 2016). In one culture the color red could symbolize sacredness and in another culture, it could represent danger and negativity; or one symbol could be offensive in some parts of the world and not in another (Marzouk, 2016). So, it is important to know these things as a graphic designer. With that being said, I try to be very cautious of what I create and what message and underlying messages could be being communicated; so I try to stay away from using too many symbols or imagery that could be misconstrued (AALofts Design, 2021). I also make sure to analyze all of my work and get other people (in case I miss something myself) to analyze/look over my work to make sure there are no hidden images or no underlying messages that could possibly be interpreted wrong, and take away from my original intent (Bump, 2020). So, I will make sure to keep with this same mindset and create projects that are ethical and promote social goodness.

Now that my journey at SNHU is coming to an end, it is time for me to fully dive into my career as a graphic designer. My goal has always been to be a freelance designer and one day have my own design studio, where I create more than just promotional pieces and projects for other companies. I would like to create designs for my own streetwear brand and create and sell my own prints etc. With all the skills I have acquired—learning the design process/developing a creative brief, how to conduct graphic design research, brainstorming techniques (Superside, 2022), understanding style guides and learning how to use them to create pieces that accurately represent the company or business, knowing the audience I’m creating for, knowing how to make revisions, and having a full understanding of how to use Adobe software to create

professional designs for both print and digital media—I know that I am ready and will be able to make all of my career goals come true. My overall capstone experience was eye-opening and knowledgeable. I learned a lot through the whole experience, not just the skills I listed above, but also how to work under pressure and to complete tasks quickly without compromising the quality of the project(s). This capstone was a lot of hard work and put a lot of my knowledge to the test, but I enjoyed every minute of it, and I will be able to take what I learned through this experience with me throughout my professional, personal, and academic life.

## References

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