

8-2 Final Project: Capstone Paper

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GRA-491 Graphic Design Portfolio

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The first question asked for this reflection is “what was my capstone experience like?”. In truth it was grindingly hard for me. This has been true for most of my time at college. My reasons for this will be made clearer as you read more. The reality is that however hard this was I never gave up and am graduating with honors.

I want to touch on the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) before getting into the rest of this paper as it has changed so many things while I went to school. It was at times hard to focus on the classwork for me while the design world was shifting in such monumental ways. I cannot imagine how hard it is for the professionals working in the industry for years. At first Programs like DALL-E were very rudimentary. They created images that had strange perspectives and extra elements that a human designer would not miss. With the newest versions that is getting to be less of a problem. To quote Tom’s Guide “great art is timeless — and, until now, a uniquely human pursuit. These days, though, the best AI image generators are busy blurring the lines between human and machine creativity.” (Sansom, 2023). So my capstone experience was hard mentally on a personal level and a professional one.

The professors feedback about simplification of my websites layout really hit home. He also made many suggestions about how to improve it. He suggested the use of smaller images that allowed the viewer to take them in and pick their favorites. Of course these will all be linked so if they want to see a bigger image they just need to click on it. I implemented all of these that were possible. We were told to use the base website from a previous class, GRA-410. This website had lots of problems and redoing it from scratch would have been better. My portfolio website shows this especially. That said, the new layout is much improved, as are the designs. Some of the works like my new Amethyst Bay magazine advertisement and the newer TOWN restaurant tri-fold are designs that I like a lot. The website building program I am using suffered

a meltdown this week that took me a few days to fix. After grading I will start a new website using what was learned in this class. Here is the URL for this class's website <https://redwoodwinddesign.com/>. My embedded print-ready portfolio is clean and simple. I feel it shows where I am as a designer at this moment very effectively. It uses a lot of negative space and a recurring light blue circle for the background. The circle moves around to help keep the viewer engaged in the different pages. There is a lot of room for growth with this design and any feedback will be incorporated into future iterations of the work. Explaining my work is still a weak area for me. I get very nervous trying to explain things. Though there are occasionally people that can read over my work now is not one of those times. In all work others see things we miss. I have been drawing most of my life and have almost always had others around who helped me with what I created. More often than not these designs ended up being my favorites. Others help me with things like "Scale and visual hierarchy are some of those creative fundamentals that can really make or break your designs, so it's important to have a good hold on them to maintain a successful composition." (Canva, 2023). Sometimes I lose the thread of a design and having a person there to look it over with me is so wonderful.

I think the best feedback as far as something to be applied to my future academic and/or professional life came in the module eight announcements. As I have never worked in a professional setting my nervousness to be entering this part of the workforce has been at times overwhelming. This was written by Professor Will Temple in class GRA-491 Module Eight Overview (2023),

"One of the problems with school is that it circumscribes your actions and thoughts to be in reactive mode. You're taking classes, getting bombarded with rubrics that change every week for every class and are constantly responding to professor's feedback (or not!

Hmmm.). It's an I say "jump!" and you say "how high?" system of actions and reactions. Often, you never really have enough time to sit down and ask yourself, "wait, why I am I doing all this again?" Being able to ask why questions is among the many things that separate a professional from everyone else. As you finish school, it's time to put the reactive hat on the shelf and begin to initiate actions. To stand in a crowd of lemmings and say, "hey wait, why are we all walking toward that cliff again?" It's about acting in response to a clear need to change, to do better and to grow. This is, rather than be in rubric-response mode, waiting for others to dictate your actions, you initiate actions, you set the terms by which others react to you. This is both a responsibility your education equips you to assume and a creative agency it bestows upon you carry out."

This class is about preparing us to move into the workforce. This block quote, which I almost never use in a paper, helped me feel better. It loosened some of the mental ropes that were binding me. My interest in being a graphic designer started because of my love of creating. I lost that to an extent during the grind of school. So how will I apply my learning? As a template that is not too rigid. All of the tools I have learned are important. In the end it is time for me to use them to find my place in this ever-changing landscape of design. Even the most basic elements and principles of design we learned in class like the "New and improved Elements and Principles of Design icons" (Butler, 2012) are critical to effective layouts. As mentioned throughout this paper the future of my learning will likely be directed towards working with AI.

My professional goals are in flux right now. Originally I was looking into taking more school to become a Multi-media designer "Multimedia designers create complex animated images and videos using art and computerized animation programs." (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). Now for the interim I am just seeking any job that will give me experience to start. My

main goal is to be employed at a job I like while making enough money to live reasonably. To do this I will develop myself into whatever the market sees as a part of the design field that will continue being done by humans. I have been looking at the graphic design field and it seems to be undergoing a shift to technical specialties and less of the old traditional skills. Machine learning is getting to the point that a lot of our basic skills can be done faster and cheaper by AI (Mok & Zinkula, 2023).

While the market for graphic designers seems to be difficult to break into right now, I have proven that my ability to learn quickly and effectively is higher than normal. Everyone who knows me and knows the fact that I never used computers till starting college is amazed at my progress. The ability to find and utilize resources like [W3Schools Online Web Tutorials](#), Adobe tutorials, and YouTube show my ability to learn from my own research. My next step will be to use this ability to learn the new skills that are in demand at the moment. A lot of companies seem to want video editing and animation skills on top of the basic graphic design program skills. Some of the programs that seem to be in demand are After Effects, Premiere Pro, and Aero. These were not programs we learned in school. I will take some time to learn these and get certificates in them. There is also a market for people to take advantage of these AI's. The article, *7 Ways Generative AI Will Change the Job Market*, by Ayush Jalan (2023) goes over some emerging jobs using AI. One of these where a person with a graphic design/art degree would have a real advantage is as a "AI Prompt Engineer" (Jalan, 2023). This part of my education has passed and the design world has changed extensively. My hopes on starting at college were to just jump right into a traditional graphic design job upon graduation. Now my eyes are set on a different future that is changing so fast it is hard to keep up. Right now I am exploring

continuing education in some of the skills listed by Gili Malinsky (2023) like script and automation.

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