



DS 300 PRINCIPLES OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING: THEORY AND PRACTICE

IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to the design elements and principles important for commercial display and the development of creative visual merchandising (VM), focusing on the history and evolution of visual merchandising, contemporary trends, and best practices in the field, and its relationship to the contemporary retail industry. We will explore the context that gave birth to visual merchandising as a marketing discipline that influences consumer behaviors, situating it in relation to the evolution of the retail industry worldwide.

During the course, field studies will allow students to encounter some of the most interesting examples of Milanese retail in terms of visual merchandising and to understand and learn how the Italian companies operate in the field.

This course will expose students to both the basic principles and best practices and trends of visual merchandising for both windows and in-store displays. It will also give students the tools and skills necessary to analyze and evaluate retail types and visual promotion strategies.

To complete the course, each student will be asked to apply the elements and principles learned in class by developing their own VM project, following the project from concept to production of a mock up.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures, discussions, creative sessions, case studies, course-related trips, student presentations (PDF and speech).

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course Participation - 10%
- Periodic Assignments - 10%
- Midterm Exam - 20%
- Final Exam (*Presentation to the class of the project*) - 25%
- Visual Merchandising Project and Pdf presentation - 35%

Course Participation

An important part of the learning will be done in class through lectures, discussions and presentation of different case studies. Students are expected to take an active part in these discussions by contributing their own experiences as well as concepts learned from the assigned readings, desk and field research, homework, and lecture materials. Students must come to every class having completed assigned readings and viewings. They will be asked to discuss and comment on these homework assignments.

Periodic Assignments

Throughout the semester, students will be asked to submit 7 periodic short assignments that require them to apply theoretical principles learned in class or to perform preparatory work for their VM project. These assignments are intended to help students develop the skills necessary to create their own window display proposals at the end of the semester. As developmental assignments enable the instructor to evaluate progress and skill building, they will be graded on a check, check plus, check minus basis.

Process book

During the full semester each student will be asked to keep track of their experience using a (digital) Process Book/Learning Journal. The process book is documentation that outlines the process of a project, since inspiration comes from every experience and is very important for the process of creation to keep track on that, mainly is a personal tracker for inspiration and growing you will put into use for creating your final project.



The process book check will be part of the assignments during the dedicated dates by the end of the semester, the evaluation will happen during a chat at the desk teacher in couple of times just to see how is going your evolution in terms of observatory of the creativity that surrounds you.

Workshop

During the workshop part (week 10, 11,12) student are asked to come in class and spend at least 45 minutes there working on their project. Presence is also required because most of the time arise doubt by classmates that the professor can clarify to the whole class. Beside this, is important to take with you your computer or material you might need to proceed with the project and, also, professor is available for suggestion, clarifications and guidance about individual projects.

Midterm Exam

The exam is an in-class test based on course readings and lectures held during the course.

The students will be required to analyze windows display according to the topics studied in class.

Final Exam - VM Project and Presentation

The exam is a proposal of a window display for a chosen brand. The exam is composed of a pdf presentation that will be presented by the students to the whole class and professor, on the day of the final exam, therefore presence is required.

Each student will be asked to apply the elements and principles learned in class by developing their own VM project based on an assigned brand and case study. While students will have some class time devoted to guided work that enables them to workshop ideas and consult the instructor, the project will require preparation time outside of class.

For the project, students will develop a **window display proposal** for an assigned brand by following the VM phases studied during class:

- Students will first receive a brief describing the context
- They will then analyze the brand and its heritage in order to develop a strategy for addressing their target and effectively communicating a message aligned with the brand.
- Finally, they will proceed through the design process, with the assistance of the instructor, to create a real proposal for a window display.
- The project will be no-budget limited as the task is to convey the brand DNA and identity using VM and window displays.

On the final exam, students will submit their proposals in the form of PDF slides (as required) and also **present their projects** to the class, explaining the evolution of their projects and evaluating their final results.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Know and describe the role of visual merchandising in today's retail industry
- Read and analyze windows and recognize display schemes
- Employ the basic principles of VM for different types of windows and stores
- Plan and develop a final proposal for a window display
- Apply their creative and technical knowledge and skills to the VM process

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to be responsible for their own class attendance and to give academic responsibilities priority over other activities. Regular class attendance is mandatory. For physical and mental health reasons, IES Abroad Milano allows a maximum of THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course, TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course, and ONE (1) absence in each Seminar course. Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in Seminar courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

Please Note that during the semester lectures and assignments could have a slightly different order and sequence compare to the syllabus, and this will also depends on the knowledge and progression of the class. Anyway, the full program will be accomplished before the final exams.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Readings & Assignments
Part 1 - Theory: Overview of Retail and “What is Visual Merchandising (VM)?”		
<i>Session 1</i>	Course Introduction Framing the main contents of the course and exploring students’ expectations and career goals	
<i>Session 2</i>	Introduction to VM “VM is a marketing tool”	Reading: Ch.2 of <i>Why We Buy</i>, “Walk like an Egyptian: the mechanics of shopping”. pp.42-89.
<i>Session 3</i>	Historical Background Introducing the historical context and evolution of VM	Assignments: Watch <i>Scatter My Ashes at Bergdorf's</i> (documentary, 94 min.)
<i>Session 4</i>	Historical Background <i>Secret of Selfridges</i> (documentary, 54 min.)	Assignments: Submit a brief essay about lecture and documentaries about the impact of politics, evolution, technology and everyday life has (and have) on the retail industry. Due before next class. (GRADE)
<i>Session 5</i>	Trends in VM Overview of the latest trends in VM	Reading: Ch. 1 of <i>How to Shop</i> “Shopping in the 21st Century”. pp. 13-25.
<i>Session 6</i>	Retail Safari Lecture-related trip Visit via Montnapoleone to discover what trends they are applying <i>The visit of this street (the most important luxury fashion brands street and district) will be useful to see and actively analyze on field some of the most important trends that retailers are applying to their windows and displays in order to attract more customers.</i>	Assignments: After visiting the sites and submitting the trend analysis “Mood Board” assignment https://www.trendsonyourhands.com/index and http://thebwd.com/ (Students will be required to identify window display trends and produce mood board(s) highlighting the window display best practices they find most compelling). (GRADE)

Session 7	Window Display VM Basic: Type of window	Reading: - Ch. 5 of Visual Merchandising “Getting to know your windows”, pp. 44-49 Assignment: - Watch the video Lesson #1: The 3 Types of Shop Window (tutorial, 4 min) Watch the video before class to have an overview on the different types of window display. Be ready to discuss in class.
Session 8	Window and In-store VM - Basics: - type of store - Space management - Display methods - Ambiance	Reading: - Ch. 6 of <u>Visual Merchandising</u>, pp. 110-151. Assignments: - Watch the videos <u>Lesson #2 : Space Management in Shop Window</u> (tutorial, 7 min.) <u>Lesson #3: Rhythm & Balance in Shop Window</u> (tutorial, 7 min.) Short quiz about the theoretical elements we learn in class (GRADE)
Session 9	Visual Identity How to create a visual identity	Assignments: - Watch the video <u>3 things to learn from Dolce&Gabbana windows</u> (tutorial, 4 min.) Submit mood board (Students will be required to identify brand identity through window display and produce mood board(s) about a chosen brand) (GRADE)
Session 10	Retail Safari Lecture-related tripi: Visiting Gae Aulenti Area. <i>The visit of this area (one of the most recent and modern shopping area in the city) will be useful to see and actively analyze on field some how different brands use VM and trends into their windows and displays in order to attract more customers.</i>	Reading: Ch. 3 of <u>How to Shop</u> “Shopping Tribes” pp. 26-49.

Session 11	Midterm Exam	
Session 12	Design Experience 1 Design Retail Experience	Reading: Ch. 3 of <u>Why We Buy</u> "Men are from Home Depot, women are from Bloomingdale's: the demographic of shopping," pp.102-151.
Session 13	Design Experience 2 Customized retail experience	Reading: Ch. 6 of <u>How to Shop</u> . "Have you been served?" pp.147- 167.
Session 14	Window Design How to design and present a window display (possibly online)	Assignment: Watch <u>The Magic Windows</u> (documentary, 50 min.)
Session 15	Brand Heritage Brand Heritage and VM best practices	Assignment: <i>Submit your process book's task assigned : create a journal entry about a special location/art/exhibition you visited and explain which part and why inspired or surprised you the most.</i> (GRADE)
Session 16	Retail Safari Lecture-related trip: The Retail Safari will be organized to show to the students what they have just learnt in the class in terms of Retail Experience. The idea is to visit either a concept store or a mannequin showroom (based on availability)	Reading: <i>Windows: The Art of Retail Display</i>, p. 1-52. Assignment: Submit proposal for project theme
Session 17	Behind the Scenes - Let's begin! Workshop: Guided group work on project	Assignment: Submit research on the heritage and practices of your assigned brand

Session 18	Concept Generation Workshop: Guided group work on project	Assignment: Submit Inspiration assignment (<i>students must visit an art exhibition of choice to find inspiration from a totally different field and environment) and create a journal entry for the outtake of the experience</i> (GRADE)
Session 19	Project: Define the Concept Workshop: Guided group work on project	Assignment: Work on VM project
Session 20	Project: Develop the Concept I Workshop: Guided group work on project	Assignment: Submit research summary about best practice in visual merchandising you want to include in your project. (GRADE)
Session 21	Project: Develop the Concept II Workshop: Guided group work on project	Assignment: Work on VM project
Session 22	Project: Developing Presentation Workshop: Guided group work on project	Assignment: Work on VM project

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Retail Safari - Via Monte Napoleone Area – Milano (Via Monte Napoleone is the main street were to observe luxury brands and window display best practices and trends)
- Retail Safari – Gae Aulenti Area- Milano (Gae Aulenti is a new shopping area with alternative fashion brands, useful to observe to understand the different use of VM)
- Retail Safari - Concept Store or Mannequins/display Showroom/production - Milano (*ideally visit will be at Nonostante Marras Boutique where students will observe different retail and customer experience in alternative we could visit a mannequins/display showroom*)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Underhill, Paco. Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping. Random House, 2007.
- Morgan, Tony. Visual Merchandising- Windows and In-store displays for retail. Laurence King, 2011.
- Portas, Mary. How to Shop With Mary, Queen of Shops. BBC Books, 2007.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Yarrow, Kit, Paco Underhill and Jossey-Bass. Decoding the New Consumer Mind: How and Why We Shop and Buy. 2014.
- Lindstrom, Martin. Buyology: How Everything We Believe About Why We Buy is Wrong. Random House Business, 2009.
- Portas, Mary, Thames and Hydsen. Windows: The Art of Retail Display. 1999.