DS300 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 visit the Italian companies operating in the field.

This course will expose students to both the basic principles and best practices of visual merchandising for both windows and in-store displays. It will also give student 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 his/her 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

ADDITIONAL COST: 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 - 25%
- Visual Merchandising Project and 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 enabling the instructor to evaluate progress and skill building, they will be graded on a check, check plus, check minus basis.

Midterm Exam
The exam is an in-class written essay based on course readings and lectures held during the course.

Final Exam
The exam is composed of essay questions that require students to apply course readings and lecture material toward the brand studied in their VM project.

VM Project and Presentation
Each student will be asked to apply the elements and principles learned in class by developing his/her own VM project based on an assigned brand and case study. While students will have some class time devoted to guided group 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 and budget of the project.
- 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.

On the last day of class, students will submit their proposals and also **present their projects** to the class, explaining the evolution of their projects and evaluating their final results. In addition, they will hand-in an **analysis of 1,500 – 2,000 words** that explains how they completed all the phases of the design process, from research to final outcome. The paper should give an account of the thought processes that motivated their choices throughout the project and situate their project in relation to the principles learnt in class.

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

- Describe the role of visual merchandising in today's retail industry
- Read 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:
IES Abroad Milan Attendance Policy: Regular class attendance is mandatory. IES Abroad Milano allows a maximum of **THREE (3)** excused absences per course before the final course grade is penalized . This margin is specifically intended to cover any absences arising from unavoidable and unexpected events or emergencies related to health, family, and religion. Each absence beyond the three excused ones will automatically result in a penalty of 2 points off (2/100) the final grade. **SEVEN (7)** absences per course will result in a failing grade (the three excused absences included).
Please note that **this rule does not apply to exams: failure to attend your midterm and/or final exam will automatically result in an F grade on that exam**. Absence on the date of other scheduled tests, presentations or quizzes does not entitle a student to recover/reschedule such tests. If using absences for travel, students must be aware that they may find themselves in a situation in which they have no excusable absences left in case of illness.

CONTENT:

WEEK			TOPIC	TYPE	CONTENT	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
Part 1 - Theory: Overview of Retail and "What is Visual Merchandising (VM)?"						
		1	Course Introduction	Lecture	Framing the main contents of the course and exploring students' expectations and career goals	
		2	Introduction to VM	Lecture	"VM is a marketing tool"	**Assignments:** Watch *Scatter My Ashes at Bergdorf's* (documentary, 94 min.)
		3	Historical Background	Lecture	Introducing the historical context and evolution of VM	**Assignments:** Watch *Secret of Selfridges* (documentary, 54 min.)
		4	Trends in VM	Lecture	Overview of the latest trends in VM	**Assignments:** Read chapter 3 of *Why We Buy* "Men are from Home Depot, women are from Bloomingdale's: the demographic of shopping," pp. 102-151

		5	Analyze trends	Course-related trip	Visit via Montenapoleone to discover what trends they are applying *The visit of this street (the most important luxury fashion brands street) 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.*	**Assignments:** Visit the sites and submit 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 moodboard(s) highlighting the window display best practices they find most compelling). Read chapter 3 of *How to shop* "Shopping Tribes" pp 26-49
		6	Window Display VM	Lecture	Basic: Type of window	**Assignments:** Read chapter 5 of *Visual Merchandising* "Getting to know your windows" pp. 44-49 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 type of window display. Be ready to discuss in class.

		7	Window & In store VM	Lecture	Basics: Type of store Space management Display methods Ambience	**Assignments:** Read <u>chapter 6</u> of *Visual Merchandising* pp. 110-151 Watch the videos *Lesson #2 : Space Management in Shop Window* (tutorial, 7 min.) *Lesson #3: Rhythm & Balance in Shop Window* (tutorial, 7 min.) Be ready to discuss space management in depth in class.
		8	Visual Identity	Lecture	How to create a visual identity	**Assignments:** Watch the video *3 things to learn from Dolce&Gabbana windows* (tutorial, 4 min.) Be ready to discuss best practices in visual identity expression in class. Submit Case Study desk analysis (students will perform analysis of local store(s) selected by instructor)
		9	Design Experience 1	Guest Lecture	Design Retail Experience	**Assignments:** Read <u>chapter 2</u> of *Why We Buy,* *Walk like an Egyptian: the mechanics of shopping* pp. 42-89
		10	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 Design and Customized Retail Experience.*	**Assignments:** Read <u>chapter 1</u> *How to shop* "Shopping in the 21st Century" pp. 13-25

Part 2 - Practice: from brief to proposal					
		13	Midterm Exam	Exam	
		11	Design Experience 2	Guest Lecture	Customized retail experience	**Assignments:** Read underline chapter 6 of *How to shop* "Have you been served?" pp. 147- 167
		12	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 Design and Customized Retail Experience.*	**Assignments:** Post to Moodle discussion forum on trends in Customizing Retail Experience.
		14	Behind the scenes	Course-related trip	New Crazy Colors *The visit to the window display factory is important to understand the "behind the scenes" of a window display in order to acknowledge the students about the whole process required to build a window display.*	**Assignments:** Watch *The Magic Windows* (documentary, 50 min.)
		15	Window Design	Lecture	How to design and present a window display	**Assignments:** Submit proposal for project theme and budget Read *Windows: The Art of Retail Display* pp. 1-52
		16	Brand Heritage	Lecture	Brand Heritage and VM best practices	**Assignments:** Submit research on the heritage and practices of your assigned brand

		17	Concept Generation	Workshop	Guided group work on project	**Assignments:** Submit Inspiration assignment (Students must visit an art exhibition of choice to find inspiration from a totally different field and environment)
		18	Project | Define the Concept	Workshop	Guided group work on project	**Assignments:** No reading. Work on VM project.
		19	Project | Develop the concept	Workshop	Guided group work on project	**Assignments:** Submit research summary on non-competitor (from another field) and transferable best practices
		20	Project | Develop the concept	Workshop	Guided group work on project	**Assignments:** No reading. Work on VM project
		21	Project | Developing presentation	Workshop	Guided group work on project	**Assignments:** No reading. Work on VM project
		22	**PRESENT PROJECTS**	Presentations		
		FINAL EXAM - DATE TBD				

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:
- Via Montenapoleone – Milano

Via Monte Napoleone is the main street were to observe luxury brands and window display best practices

- Retail Safari – Milano
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Retail Safari is a guided visit to some shops that will be relevant for their customer and store experience

- New Crazy Colors– Monza

New Crazy Colors is a factory that produce props for windows and displays, they also have a museum of the best windows realized in the past. This visit is relevant to observe the behind the scenes of the creation of a window display

REQUIRED READINGS:

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

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

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