This course explores the unique opportunities and qualities available to technology-based design when it is placed in the hands and ears of pedestrians, drivers, aviators, tourists, and other mobile agents.

From *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy’s* proposition of a handheld, crowd-sourced encyclopedia/travel guide, to Paul Virilio’s early observation that the Walkman granted pedestrians the syncretic construction of their own outdoor realities “in kit form,” to the 100 billion iPhone applications that have now been downloaded... from “glass cockpit” avionics and in-car information systems to handheld museum guides... graphic designers can now radically shift the interface between people and the environments they explore, and designers commonly do use technology to augment real-world environments in complex ways.

But how should we? When can these new technologies improve or heighten our relationships with our environments, and when do they simply monetize the contexts around us or isolate us from one another? With reference to avant gardes that have contributed to and predicted today’s state of the art, this class asks students to consider their own applications for iPhone, Android, and other mobile devices.

The class is primarily intended for second-year graduate graphic design students but other students may be admitted. Students need not own a smartphone. No prior experience developing for mobile platforms is expected.

The class is focused on studio critiques of design work, and will include discussions of required readings on many weeks.
I was a real amateur at it but I learned what his feeling for chess was.... He said it wasn't a war game, it's an aesthetic game, and you feel the shape of the board as it begins to shift its pattern and you make it become beautiful, even if you lose.

–The gallerist Julien Levy remembering being taught to play chess by Marcel Duchamp

This is an A train running local, local, local, local, local, local, local, local, local to Lefferts Boulevard.

– Conductor unknown

I was wondering about a radio [broadcaster] in the Netherlands ... he was stu-stu-stu-stuttering. And I was thinking, how is it possible that someone who can do everything, he can be a postman, he can be a scientific thinker, he can be an architect, but not someone who’s working with language... But when he was speaking it was so intense and so believable...

– Karel Martens

His smartphone held photographs, his only connection to the life he once lived.


We begin with the phone in your pocket. Each of us has our own way of speaking, our own way of writing, our own tics and habits. Invent a simple app for the smartphone (one or two screens) whose user interface meets your needs and your needs only. In its language, its ergonomics, its mentality, its worldview, its efficiencies, its poetics, it is as customized as possible to you. Without guidance, it might not be usable or even comprehensible by anyone else.

Your app may have a simple purpose or it may just be a toy or a nervous quirk. If you’re comfortable with programming, implement it in HTML and JavaScript. Otherwise, implement a mockup as static screens or a movie which are sized correctly to fit the phone and can be demonstrated on the phone. In either case, Keep It Simple!

Finally, produce a document explaining your interaction language to others. This document could serve as a guideline for others who want to make apps for you.

Beginning writers are told to “show the readers everything, tell them nothing,” a quote often attributed to Hemingway. How incisive, surprising, and valuable is what you’ve shown us about yourself through your language of interaction? Consider this criteria as you invent your project. Although the app you are designing is a personal one, as a design project your audience is broad – for now, at least as broad as your classmates. Engage us and let us see something new.
Part 2. Mobility.

Amar Kanwar, *A Season Outside*

This is an open-ended project and laboratory to directly explore the idea of mobility with reference to the mass movement of people across borders globally. Develop one or more designs for mobile software that are informed by your research on global migration. You may focus your research on the movement of people in the Middle East and Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, or generally. You may focus on issues in the very recent news (such as the current series in the *Times* on movement from the Middle East and South-Central Asia, across the Aegean Sea and through the Balkans to Europe), on historical movements (such as the Great Migration in America), or both.

It may be important to employ metaphor as a design strategy. Speculative proposals to assist migrants through software may be problematic, given that your design lacks user testing, and your implementation lacks the network effects enjoyed by major apps already in use by many migrants. Speculative proposals for direct advocacy can be similarly problematic. How can your work as a designer be profound on its own terms, while still being informed and inspired by today’s world and its history?