

VIS 160A Frequently Asked Questions – for Amy Alexander’s sections (Information for other instructors’ sections may vary):

Hello! As you may have heard, VIS 160A involves a project proposal and a portfolio review at the beginning of the quarter. In order for the class to “hit the ground running,” students should be prepared with a project idea and supporting portfolio materials before the course begins. We will spend the first and second classes discussing your projects and portfolios. While everyone will have the same requirements for the week 2 presentation, some students will need to bring additional portfolio materials week 1.

- **If you have completed all prereqs and have already been cleared by Advising to register for the course (i.e., you are on the class list or waitlist):**

- Please come to the first class prepared to discuss your idea for your senior project.
- You do not need to bring a portfolio to the first class. (But keep your portfolio projects handy; you will present some of them as part of your Week 2 assignment.)

- **If you are missing any prereqs, are hoping to “crash” the course, or otherwise haven’t yet been cleared by Advising to register for the course:**

You will be considered for admission to the class **if** space is available, and **if** your portfolio indicates you are exceptionally well prepared to compensate for your missing prerequisite.

- Please come to the first class prepared to discuss your idea for your senior project.
- **Also please bring along a full portfolio of your work to the first class**, emphasizing your most advanced work and work that shows your preparation for your proposed senior project. For example: if you are proposing an electronics project, I’ll want to see your best and most advanced electronics work. Please also indicate in your portfolio which projects if any were group projects and what your role in them was. For example: “Crazy Game – VIS 145B group project. I was one of a team of three students who collaboratively developed the concept, and I was responsible for programming the network portion of the Max/MSP application.”
- If I approve your portfolio, you still have to be cleared through Advising. Normally, all of this happens first week, so by the second week’s class you’ll be notified as to whether you can register for the course.
- We will review portfolios at the first class, but if the group is large, I may need to review portfolios outside of class time. So please bring materials you can leave with me if necessary, i.e., not your only copy of your work.

Some often-asked questions about the project proposal:

Q1) What are the parameters of the project proposal? What do you mean by a “major independent project?”

A) VIS 160 is a two-quarter (twenty week) A/B sequence – you will design and develop the same project during both the A and B quarters. The project will be your own idea, but it has to be a digital art project. We’ll talk more about that at the first class, but in general we mean you have to have a completed project, which you’ll be prepared to publicly exhibit in some way, by the end of the second quarter. These can take many forms (electronics installation; digital/live performance; artistically interesting net-based software project; artistically interesting phone app; a video with a conceptually important digital component, etc.) In all cases, think about how you can critically engage the subject matter you’re dealing with in your project.

Some examples of things that have been proposed that did **not** qualify as an appropriate project proposal: learning a software package (that’s not a project); creating a website for a company or other organization (it’s a project, but most of these are not what we think of as art projects. Also, you cannot work on a commercial project here); making a pamphlet in Photoshop (use of digital media needs to be a strong aesthetic and conceptual component of the project, not incidental); video game lacking an artistic concept (of course you can make a game, but it should function as art, too. Be especially careful not to let your game idea turn into a “tech demo.” Think about how you can critically engage your topic.) There are of course grey areas, so if you’re not sure, please email me about the project you have in mind and I’ll try to give you some feedback.

The first-week proposal itself can be brief – I recommend writing a couple of paragraphs beforehand. Be prepared to talk about it in class. You’ll submit a more substantial proposal Week 2.

Q2) Is the project proposal I present first week cast in stone? What if my project idea changes somewhat after first week, or what if you don’t approve it? I’ve got a few ideas; can I bring more than one?

A) I understand you may not be 100% sure of your project before we even start the quarter. While you should in general propose a project you plan to stick to, the proposal is just intended to give us a starting point to work from, and to allow the other students and me to get to know what your interests are as an artist.

And yes, if you’re thinking about more than one idea, feel free to propose more than one -- we’ll give you feedback in class.

More questions? – please email me. Amy Alexander – ajalexander@ucsd.edu

(Please put VIS 160A in the subject so I don’t miss your mail.)

Looking forward to seeing your work and hearing your proposal!

-Amy Alexander