

# Minor in Design Studies

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**Interdisciplinary Minor** | 18 credits

**Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences**

**Boston College**

# Why Design Studies?

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In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to **think critically, creatively solve complex problems, and collaborate effectively** is an invaluable asset. At Boston College, design is not just a set of creative tools, but a transformative educational approach that fosters these essential skills while nurturing personal growth. At the heart of BC Design Studies is design thinking, a powerful, human-centered approach to innovation and problem-solving.



## In your minor, you'll build



**Human-centered problem-solving methodologies**



**Design-driven concepts from ideation to prototype**



**Ethical and systems frameworks to address implementation**



**Storytelling strategies for conveying complex ideas with purpose**

# Design Studies Minor

## Overview

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**The 18-credit interdisciplinary Minor in Design Studies** provides undergraduate students with a structured exploration of human-centered design principles and practices. Through a blend of required core courses and approved electives from across the university, students learn to identify unmet needs, frame complex problems, and research diverse contexts. The curriculum empowers students to ideate creatively, prototype solutions, test iteratively, and communicate their impact effectively.

By emphasizing collaboration, ethical considerations, and systems thinking, the program bridges Boston College's liberal arts tradition with hands-on, project-based learning. Our goal is to develop reflective practitioners capable of applying design methodologies to drive innovation and create positive social impact across diverse fields.

**To learn more, contact the Director:**

Carissa Henriques, Associate Professor of the Practice and Director of Design Studies,  
henrica@bc.edu.

## ELIGIBILITY + APPLICATION ↗

**Prerequisites:** Prior to applying, students must have completed or be currently enrolled in one of the Foundation-level courses.

**Advanced Coursework:** Registration for Advanced-level courses requires permission and is available only after completing 9 credits in the minor (including the Intermediate-level course option).

**To be eligible to apply for entry to the Design Studies Minor, students must:**

- Be a Freshman or Sophomore in good academic standing\*
- Have completed or be enrolled in at least one of the Foundational design courses in the list
- Complete the online application

*\*Students may declare in their junior year if they have already taken (or are enrolled in) 9 credits of eligible design studies coursework.*

**Students may apply** to the minor using the online application. Applications are due by April 20.

## APPLY NOW



**URL**

<https://forms.gle/ykQ8PyCBefuLNi948>

# Design Studies Minor **18 credits\***

\*15 credits must be unique to the minor and not counted for other major/minor requirements.

## Course Checklist

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**To be eligible for the minor, students must have completed one Foundation course [or] be currently enrolled in a Foundation course, as well as be in good academic standing.**

**PICK ONE COURSE  
3 CREDITS REQUIRED**



### FOUNDATION

Foundation level courses offer an introduction into design thinking and human-centered design concepts, design-driven problem-solving processes, and opportunities for prototyping.

- UNAS 1025 / ARTS 1125 Innovation Through Design Thinking, 3 cr.
- ENGR 1026 Innovation through Engineering Design, 3 cr.
- ENGR 1801 Making the Modern World: Design, Ethics, and Engineering, 3 cr.

**PICK ONE COURSE\*  
3 CREDITS REQUIRED**



### INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate level courses expand and deepen student thinking, problem solving methods, and prototyping skills, balancing research and hands-on making.

- ENGR 1101 Introduction to Human Centered Engineering, 3 cr.
- UNAS 2175 / BZAN2175 Physical Computing - Interactive Art, Robotics, and Tech for Good, 3 cr.
- UNAS 2205 Information and Communication Design, 3 cr.
- UNAS / ARTS 2300 Interaction Design, 3 cr.
- UNAS 2301 Design Research Methods and Implementation, 3 cr.

\*Students may take more than one course in this category, utilizing additional courses as electives.

**PICK ONE COURSE\*  
3 CREDITS REQUIRED**



### ADVANCED

Advanced level courses are project-based, functionally serving as a capstone for the minor. When possible, the Advanced-level course should be taken last in the course sequence, and they are registered by instructor permission.

**Your Advanced level course may only be taken once 9 credits of the minor are completed (1 Foundation, 1 Intermediate and 1 elective)**

- UNAS 4301 Applied Design for the Common Good, 3 cr. *(available Spring 2027)*
- UNAS 3309 Advanced Visual Storytelling and Information Design, 3 cr. *(available Spring 2027)*
- UNAS 4302 Design Thinking and Implementation Science Project, 3 cr. (directed independent study), *(available Spring 2027)*

# Design Studies Minor

**18 credits\***

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## Course Checklist

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**PICK THREE COURSES  
9 CREDITS REQUIRED**



### **ELECTIVES**

Elective courses span departments across the university, enabling students to construct their unique course path through design-driven courses.

- UNCP 4604 Ethical Design for Social Impact, 3 cr.
- FORM 6150/CSCI2265 Tech Tools for Playful Learning, 3 cr.
- UNAS 3307 Design for Impact, 3 cr.
- ARTS / BSLW 2207 Urban Design for Complexity and Sustainability, 3 cr.
- BSLW 2208 / ECON 1208: Urban Action Lab, 3 cr.
- ARTS 2310 Sustainable Futures by Design (study abroad, ARTS Core), 3 cr.
- ARTS 1156 Imagemaking with Photoshop and Illustrator, 3 cr.
- ARTS 2252 Architectural Design 1 (*only offered in fall semester*), 3 cr.
- ARTS 2250 Graphic Design 1 (*ARTS 1156 pre-req*), 3 cr.
- ARTS 3335 Designing Space: Rhino 3-D (*ARTS 1156 pre-req*), 3 cr.
- MGMT 2143 Idea Work: Making Things That Matter, 3 cr.
- MGMT 2144 Design-Driven Innovation Consulting, 3 cr.
- MGMT2139 Social Impact and Entrepreneurship, 3 cr.

# Design Studies Minor

## Fall 2026 Course Offerings

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### FOUNDATION

#### **UNAS 1025 / ARTS1125 Innovation through Design Thinking**

Would you like to be innovative in whatever you pursue? Innovation is about solving important and complex problems to create value for the greater good. Innovating through design thinking is a structured, human-centered process for creatively solving problems, which can be adopted by anyone. In this foundational course we will introduce the mindset, process and methods at the core of design thinking. Students will see inspiring case studies, hear from cutting edge practitioners, and work on a project to internalize this learning. Students will discover design thinking is a practical toolkit that helps them reliably innovate in the face of changing social needs, business disruptions, and technology shifts.

### FOUNDATION

#### **ENGR 1026 Innovation Through Engineering Design**

Would you like to harness your agency and engineering practice to help solve complex sociotechnical problems? "Innovation Through Engineering Design is about developing skills and practices to work on important and complex problems for the common good. Engineering design involves working through a structured framework and practices to creatively understand, work on, and iterate on problems, which can be learned and practiced by anyone. In this foundational course, we will introduce the framework, mindset, processes, and methods at the core of Engineering Design and Design Thinking. You will see inspiring case studies, practice active reflection on your learning, and work in teams on a variety of projects to internalize this learning.

### FOUNDATION

#### **ENGR 1801 Making the Modern World: Design, Ethics & Engineering**

*This is a Complex Problem course, open to FRESHMEN only. You must take HIST1627 with this course.*

Together we will consider how engineers and other stakeholders navigate risks related to industrial and environmental disasters, balance financial, technological, and regulatory pressures associated with complex socio-technical problems, and negotiate technical and political liabilities surrounding artificial intelligence, surveillance, and climate adaptation. Engineering systems present pressing technical, ethical, and moral problems that we must grapple with as engaged global citizens. In this course, students will explore the social, cultural, and institutional history of engineering, learn foundational skills in quantitative analysis of real-world engineering designs, and understand the political, environmental, economic, and ethical tradeoffs associated with building the modern world. Students will collaborate on group design projects based on human-centered engineering.

# Design Studies Minor

## Fall 2026 Course Offerings

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### **INTERMEDIATE UNAS / ARTS 2205 Information and Communication Design**

This studio-based undergraduate course focuses on the theory and practice of designing information graphics and visual systems with purpose. Building on design thinking methodologies and core principles of design, students investigate audience needs, contexts of use, and levels of visual literacy to create effective and impactful visual communication for applications such as signage, exhibitions, wayfinding, instructional materials, and public communication. Emphasis is placed on visual hierarchy, typography, layout, accessibility, narrative, and iterative design using manual and digital tools. *This course was previously titled: "Data Visual Communication Design"*. Prerequisite: (UNAS1025 or ARTS1125 or ENGR1025) or ENGR1026 or ENGR1801 or HIST1627).

### **INTERMEDIATE UNAS2301 Design Research Methods and Implementation**

How do insights drive impact? This undergraduate course explores how design research supports the implementation of ideas within real-world systems such as organizations, communities, and services. Students learn human-centered research approaches including ethnographic research, co-design, and participatory design methods to understand peoples experiences and needs in context, and work collaboratively to translate insights into ideas that can be tested, adapted, and implemented in practice. Emphasis is placed on qualitative research, shared inquiry, and reflective practice, and on how systems, constraints, and coordination shape feasibility, ethics, and impact across education, healthcare, technology, policy, and community settings. Prerequisite: (UNAS1025 or ARTS1125 or ENGR1025) or ENGR1801 or HIST1627 or ENGR1026).

### **INTERMEDIATE UNAS / BZAN2175 Physical Computing - Interactive Art, Robotics, and Tech for Good**

Low-cost microcontrollers, sensors, and computing devices like the Raspberry Pi make it possible to create technical projects that humans can physically interact with. This course assumes no prior programming experience but will progress quickly through block-based MakeCode programming, then CircuitPython programming so that all students have coding knowledge necessary to create hardware projects. Students will purchase an amount of hardware and tools similar to the cost of books in a standard course, and we'll use these parts to build a series of projects that control lights, read sensors, produce sound, respond to touch and app control, capture camera images, and more. We'll also build a wheel-based robot, and students will have an opportunity to create and present several original projects and share their work with classmates. This course was formerly numbered: ISYS2170. Cross-Listed Courses: BZAN2175 (Primary), UNAS2175