

DESIGN, INNOVATION, & SOCIAL CHANGE

Vanderbilt University
HOD 2690-02 – Spring 2011
Friday 1:10 – 4:00
Location: Home Economics 107

Professor

Torin Monahan, Ph.D.
Office: Home Economics 106F
Phone: 615-322-8732
Email: torin.monahan@vanderbilt.edu
Office Hours: TBA & by appt.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description

The goal of this course is to explore the power of design in society. We will question how things are designed and the ways that social and material relations are shaped by the designed world. We will examine the processes of production, distribution, and consumption by which designed objects become a part of everyday life. Examples may range from products such as iPods to largely invisible database architectures, from the concrete highways that we travel upon to hospital systems where we go to be healed. Throughout the course, we will analyze designed artifacts and design processes through the lenses of justice, fairness, and equality. We will draw upon readings and individual experiences of the world as material for this course. No specialized expertise is required for students to take this course, but a willingness to experiment, play, and challenge one's perspective of the world is highly desired.

Required Texts

1. Heskett, John. 2005. *Design: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Greenfield, Adam. 2006. *Everyware: The Dawning Age of Ubiquitous Computing*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders.
3. Thackara, John. 2005. *In the Bubble: Designing in a Complex World*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
4. Woodham, Jonathan M. 1997. *Twentieth century design*. New York: Oxford University Press.
5. Whiteley, Nigel. 1993. *Design for Society*. London: Reaktion Books.
6. Electronic readings linked in OAK.

Grading

Paper #1	15%
Paper #2	15%
Paper #3	15%
Final Project	35%
Participation	20%

[Grading Scale: A =95-100, A- =90-94, B+ =87-89, B =84-86, B- =80-83, C+ =77-79, C =74-76, C- =70-73, D+ =67-69, D =64-66, D- =60-63]

Course Expectations

Attendance: This class will be conducted as a seminar with a focus on in-class discussion. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. Please let me know in advance if you are planning on missing a class. You can miss up to one class throughout the semester without penalty, but you must turn in assignments ahead of time and arrange to get notes from a colleague. Your final grade will go down by 5 points (out of 100) for each additional class missed. Finally, if you fail to show up for a scheduled meeting with the professor without canceling 24 hours in advance, your final grade will be docked by 5 points.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) **prior** to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. You must bring your book or copies of the readings to class each class period. See the course outline below for details on weekly readings.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

Technology: Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Course Assignments & Grading

Design-research Activities: There will be three design-related research activities throughout the course. These activities will include a library information-design assignment (due February 11), a semiotic investigation of a particular product of your choice (due March 4), and an analysis of city design and your experience of it (due April 8). For each of these papers, you will write 6-7 typed pages (double-spaced, one inch margins, please). More information about each of these activities will be provided in class.

Final Project: The final project will be a research paper of 12-15 pages due by email on Friday, April 29. You will research some element of design that most appeals to you, collect materials and conduct an analysis of them, and put together a well-developed final project that includes both an in-class presentation and a formal paper. The course readings and concepts should be mobilized to assist with your framing and analysis. A systems-level approach will be required so that you can trace the “politics” of your designed space, product, or process, which should include a discussion of its social implications and an exploration of possible alternatives.

For instance, you might choose to study the design of children's playgrounds, school classrooms, or hospital wards. You could investigate the design of particular ergonomic or "green" products. You could explore the possibilities of universal design and/or ubiquitous computing for de-marginalizing people, such as the elderly, children, or those with different mobilities or impaired senses. You might research urban design by focusing on one aspect, such as walking paths or bike lanes, or you could explore the intersections of architecture and security, such as the construction of "sacrificial facades" in front of monuments and public buildings. Or you could study the ways in which people's identities are constructed through engagement with fetishized objects, such as iPhones, or through body modification, such as tattoos. The possibilities are endless – just be certain to find something that you are *really* interested in and discuss it with the professor before initiating your research.

The final project is worth 35% of your grade (25% for the paper you turn in and 10% for the presentation you give in class on April 22.) Experimentation is highly encouraged for this project. Be creative and have some fun!

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent.

Academic Honesty

In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Honor Code for complete guidelines on academic honesty: <http://studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/>.

Gender-Fair Language

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like "mankind" or "men" when referring to people in general; alternate between "she" and "he" instead of always using "he", or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use "they" or "them" and avoid the problem altogether.

ESL/LD Students

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the professor's office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductory Discussion and Concepts

Friday, January 14:

Readings:

- Design Cht.1-3 (pp.1-36)
- Woodhouse, Edward, and Jason Patton. 2004. Design by Society: Science and Technology Studies and the Social Shaping of Design. *Design Issues* 20 (3):1-12.
- Nieusma, Dean. 2004. Alternative Design Scholarship: Working toward Appropriate Design. *Design Issues* 20 (3):13-24.
- Fiorilli, Leonard and Richard Sclove. 1997. Technology by the People.

- In-class film clip: *Freedom Machines*

Week Two: Design History and Influence

Friday, January 21:

Readings:

- Twentieth century design Cht.1-2 (pp.1-63)
- Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. 1985. How the Refrigerator Got its Hum. In *The Social Shaping of Technology: How the refrigerator got its hum*, edited by D. A. MacKenzie and J. Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 202-218.

Week Three: Information Design and Information Infrastructures

Friday, January 28:

Readings:

- Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Leigh Star. 1999. Introduction: To Classify is Human. In *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1-32.
- Passini, Romedi. 1999. Sign-Posting Information Design. In *Information Design*, edited by R. E. Jacobson. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 83-98.
- Design Cht.5 (pp.55-67)
- In the Bubble Cht.8 (pp.161-184)

- In-class film clip: *Helvetica*

Week Four: Ubiquitous Computing and Surveillance

Friday, February 4:

Readings:

- Everyware (entire book)
- Lohr, Steve. 2011. Computers That See You and Keep Watch Over You. *New York*

Times, January 1.

Week Five: Semiotics of Things

Friday, February 11:

Readings:

- Boradkar, Prasad. 2010. Objects as Signs. In *Designing Things: A Critical Introduction to the Culture of Objects*. New York: Berg, 211-248.
- Design Cht.4 (pp.37-54)
- Pfaffenberger, Bryan. 1992. Social Anthropology of Technology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21:491-516.
- Twentieth century design Cht.5 (pp.111-139)

- In-class film clip: *Maya Lin - A Strong Clear Vision*
- **Paper #1 due at the beginning of class**

Week Six: Objects in Contexts

Friday, February 18:

Readings:

- In the Bubble Introduction & Cht.1 (pp.1-27)
- Design Cht.6 (pp.68-83)
- Lupton, Ellen. 2009. Power Tool for the Dining Room: The Electric Carving Knife. In *The Design Culture Reader*, edited by B. Highmore. New York: Routledge, 125-131.
- Forty, Adrian. 2005. Hygiene and Cleanliness. In *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 156-181.
- Norman, Donald A. 1988. The Psychopathology of Everyday Things. In *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Doubleday, 1-33.

- In-class film clip: *Objectified*

Week Seven: Nationalism, Mass Consumption and Beyond

Friday, February 25:

Readings:

- Design for Society. Introduction & Cht.1 (pp.1-46)
- Twentieth century design Cht.3, 4, & 6 (pp.65-109, 141-163)
- Bilton, Nick. 2010. Electronics Designers Struggle With Form, Function and Obsolescence. *New York Times*, August 6.

- In-class film clip: *Affluenza*

Week Eight: Design Constraints and Alternatives

Friday, March 4:

Readings:

- Design Cht.9-10 (pp.112-136)
- Design for Society. Cht.3 (pp.94-133)
- Twentieth century design Cht.10 (pp.221-239)
- Siebers, Tobin. 2009. What Can Disability Studies Learn from the Culture Wars. In *The Design Culture Reader*, edited by B. Highmore. New York: Routledge, 132-140.
- Monahan, Torin. 2002. Flexible Space & Built Pedagogy: Emerging IT Embodiments. *Inventio* 4 (1). Available from <http://www.torinmonahan.com/papers/Inventio.html>
- In-class film clip: *Citizen Architect*
- **Paper #2 due at the beginning of class**

Week Nine: Spring Break

No Classes or Readings

Week Ten: Speed, Mobility, Locality

Friday, March 18:

Readings:

- In the Bubble Cht.2-4 (pp.29-96)
- Design Cht.8 (pp.97-111)
- Patton, Jason W. 2004. Multiple Worlds on Oakland's Streets. *Social Practice and the Built Environment*. *Visual Anthropology Review* 20 (2):36-56
- Scharff, Virginia. 1998. Femininity and the Electric Car. In *Sex/Machine: Readings in Culture, Gender, and Technology*, edited by P. D. Hopkins. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 75-88.
- Keh, Andrew. 2010. European Import Has Cars Spinning. Heads, Too. *New York Times*, November 18.
- In-class film clip: *Divided Highways* or *Who Killed the Electric Car?*

Week Eleven: Research Week

Friday, March 25:

Readings:

- No readings this week; work on your final projects.

Week Twelve: Urban Design

Friday, April 1:

Readings:

- Lynch, Kevin. 1984. *Good City Form*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 109-204.
- Graham, Stephen, and Simon Marvin. 2001. *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. New York: Routledge, 1-16.
- In-class film clip: *No Time for Ugliness*

Week Thirteen: Green Design

Friday, April 8:

Readings:

- Design for Society Cht.2 (pp.47-93)
- Madge, Pauline. 2009. Ecological Design: A New Critique. In *The Design Culture Reader*, edited by B. Highmore. New York: Routledge, 50-60.
- Arieff, Allison. 2010. The Way We Design Now. *New York Times*, June 2.
- In-class film clip: *Greening of Southie*
- **Paper #3 due at the beginning of class**

Week Fourteen: Workplaces / Healthcare Geographies

Friday, April 15:

Readings:

- In the Bubble Cht.5-6 (pp.97-134)
- Forty, Adrian. 2005. Design in the Office. In *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 120-155.
- Martin, Colin. 2000. Putting Patients First: Integrating Hospital Design and Care. *The Lancet* 356: 518
- Lorenzi, N. M., L. L. Novak, J. B. Weiss, C. S. Gadd, and K. M. Unertl. 2008. Crossing the Implementation Chasm: A Proposal for Bold Action. *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* 15 (3):290-296
- Listen to story at this site:
<http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/03/01/pm-hospital-design/>

Week Fifteen: Course Wrap Up

Friday, April 22: Final Project Presentations

Readings:

No readings this week; work on your final projects!

Week Sixteen: Final Assignments Due

Friday, April 29: **Final Project Due** before 5 PM

- Email an electronic version of your project to me at torin.monahan@vanderbilt.edu