UCLA Department of Design | Media Arts
Professor Erkki Huhtamo

Syllabus

Design Culture - an Introduction (Desma 10)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Design is a powerful force in culture and society. It surrounds us, whatever we do and wherever we go. It has an impact on us, whether we are aware of it or not. It is not easy to define all the things the word "design" encompasses. It is even becoming difficult to say where design ends and phenomena like art, architecture and popular media begin. One thing is certain: design is not just about creating "cool-looking" things - it is much more. Whatever form it takes, design affects our understanding of the world. Basically design is a form of communication - by creating and using designs we send messages about ourselves to others (in other words, it is a semiotic affair).

Design Culture - an Introduction (Desma 10) offers a broad overview of the roles of design in the lives of human beings around the globe. It demonstrates that design does not only mean the "high designs" created by famous designers and fashion companies. The most efficient and successful design is often invisible - devices like door knobs and traffic lights help us without drawing attention to themselves. To understand design culture we must also pay attention to invisible things and study the motives that guide and inform their planning, marketing, reception and uses.

Design Culture - an Introduction will discuss design from a cultural and social perspective. The interconnections between design and technology will be emphasized. The relationship between design and art will be explored within various contexts, from the Victorian era and early 20th century modernism to the 1960s pop culture and Postmodernism. A rich array of demonstration material, ranging from classical industrial design to recent postmodern design trends and alternative radical design currents will be introduced. The goal is to promote design awareness by instructing the students to observe everyday things in new critical ways. Understanding design is important for everybody regardless of discipline and profession. It is a tool for life.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

MEETING 1 What is Design? What Is Design Culture?
Keywords: / Definitions of design and culture / Design, nature, culture / Can animals design? / Design and Artificial Intelligence
 Readings:
1) John Heskett: "What is Design?," from Heskett, *Toothpicks and Logos. Design in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1-11.
2) Victor Papanek: "What is Design? A Definition of the Function Complex," from Papanek: *Design for the Real World* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2000 [1985]), pp. 3-27.
3) Vilem Flusser, "About the Word Design," from Flusser, *The Shape of Things. A Philosophy of Design* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), pp. 17-21.

MEETING 2 Design Culture – The Basics
Keywords: Visible and invisible design / high and low design / design and art / Etymology of the word "design" / The beginnings of design culture / designers and engineers / early design debates
 Readings:
4) Adrian Forty: "The First Industrial Designers," from Forty, *Objects of Desire. Design and Society 1750-1980* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), pp. 29-41
5) John Heskett: "Industrialization and the Search for Harmony," from Heskett, *Industrial Design* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), pp. 27-49.
6) Wolfgang Schivelbusch: "Shop Windows," from Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night. The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995), pp. 143-154.

MEETING 3 Design, Society and Technology
Keywords: Function and ornament / design display / mass production and assembly line Mechanization and automation
Readings:
7) Peter Wollen: "Modern Times: Cinema / Americanism / The Robot," from Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox. Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 35-41.
8) Adolf Loos: "Ornament and Crime" (1908), from Loos, *Ornament and Crime. Selected Essays* (Riverside, Calif.: Ariadne Press, 1998) 167-176.
9) Ellen Lupton: "Office Politics," from Lupton, *Mechanical Brides. Woemn and Machines from Home to Office* (New York: Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution, Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 42-57.

MEETING 4 Modernism, Streamlining, Urban Design
Keywords: Dreams of Total Design / Art Nouveau / Art Deco / Constructivism / Bauhaus / Streamlining / World's Fairs
 Readings:
10) Penny Sparke: "The Hegemony of Modernism," from Sparke: *An Introduction to Design and Culture. 1900 to the Present. Edition 2.0.* (London and new York: Routledge: 2004), 84-94.

11) Jeffrey L. Meikle: "The Practical Ultimate," Meikle: *Twentieth Century Limited. Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 134-152.
12) Brian Horrigan: "The Home of Tomorrow," from *Imagining Tomorrow. History, Technology, and the American Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986), 136-163.

MEETING 5
SPECIAL SESSION: The Great UCLA Design Game 9.0
- BRING GOOD WALKING SHOES AND NOT TOO MUCH TO CARRY! If you are unable to walk please contact your TA in advance for an alternative task!
Readings:
Erkki Huhtamo: "Basic Concepts of Semiotics" (**No 22** in the Course Reader)
(MIDTERMS TO BE HANDED IN FOR GRADING!)

MEETING 6
Design, Consumers, Corporations, Branding
Keywords: Designing and marketing consumer goods / "built-in obsolescence" / corporate design and branding.
Readings:
13) Ellen Lupton: "Sex Objects," from Lupton, *Mechanical Brides. Woemn and Machines from Home to Office* (New York: Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution, Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 6-13.
14) Naomi Klein: "New Branded World," from *NO LOGO* (London, New York and Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2001), 2-26.
15) Dieter Rams: "Omit the Unimportant," from *Design Discourse. History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Victor Margolin (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 11-113.

MEETING 7
Pop, Psychedelia and Alternative Design Movements
Keywords: Design and pop culture / Underground and psychedelia / Punk, Situationism / Design as weapon / Design as Bricolage
Readings:
16) Jonathan M. Woodham: "Pop to Post-Modernism: Changing Values," from Woodham: *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 182-203.
17) Dick Hebdige: "Style as Intentional Communication," from Hebdige: *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Methuen, 1979), 100-112.
18) Naomi Klein: "Culture Jamming: Ads under Attack," from *NO LOGO* (London, New York and Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2001), 278-309.

MEETING 8
Design in the Postmodern Era
Keywords: Keywords: / Postmodernism / Design and art – blurred boundaries / Designer as "Superstar"/ Emotional Design / Device Art

Readings:

19) Penny Sparke: "Designer Culture," from Sparke: *An Introduction to Design and Culture. 1900 to the Present. Edition 2.0.* (London and new York: Routledge: 2004), 160-180
20) Ellen Lupton: "Skin, New Design Organics", from *Skin. Surface Substance + Design* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution, 2002), 28-41.
21) Machiko Kusahara: "Decoding Device Art from Cultural Aspects: Playfulness, Love for Technology, and *Mitate*," from *Device Art Reader* (Zagreb: KONTEJNER, 2009), 19-39.

MEETING 9
Design, Technology, Sustainability
Mobile and wearable design / Sustainable design / reinventing the city / design as a strategy for survival
Readings:

23) Adriana de Souza e Silva & Larissa Hjorth, "Playful Urban Spaces. A Historical Approach to Mobile Games," *Simulation & Gaming* (SAGE, published online in 2009, http://sag.sagepub.com/
24) Zoe Laughlin: "The Materiality of Parkour," from: *Actions: What You Can Do With the City*, ed. Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture / SUN, 2008), 40-43.
25) David Ker Thomson: "La Belle Époque: Love and YouTube in Parkour City," from *Actions: What You Can Do With the City*, ed. Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture / SUN, 2008), 46-54.
(FINAL PROJECTS TO BE HANDED IN!)

FINALS WEEK: No Class Meeting!

ASSIGNMENTS

The final grade will consist of the following elements:

1) Midterm assignment. Individual homework (a writing assignment). Topic TBA.

2) Final assignment. Can be realized either individually or as a groupwork (from three to five people in a group). Topic TBA.

3) Three unannounced quizzes based on the *previous* week's lecture *and* the readings for the day when the quiz takes place. Only TWO of the THREE quizes will be taken into account. Notes from the previous lectures will be posted on the website to help you.

4) The Great UCLA Design Game 8.0 (Oct. 30). A specially designed "treasure hunt" game played by the entire class around the campus during the class hours. You will get the assignment (instructions) in the classroom on the day of the game at 9am.

5) You are required to participate in **at least two** design-related events taking place on the UCLA campus (such as lectures, exhibitions, performances, round table discussions, etc.). A list of suitable events will be available on the class website. You must write a comment (minimum 300 words) of each of them and submit these with your final project.

ADDITIONAL NON-REQUIRED EVENTS / TASKS

- A special evening screening of Japanese Device Art, including the rare Paris Concert DVD from the cult artist group Maywa Denki. Place and time TBA. Attendance voluntary. Can count as one of the two required design-related events (see above) if you submit a comment (minimum 300 words) about it. Bring your friends !

- Class Blog. Five (5) or more blog postings will raise your final grade by one step (+). A topic will be posted after each lecture. Your blog comment must by posted before 9:00 am the next Friday following the lecture.

GRADING

The final grade (100 %) consists of:

- Midterm assignment (35 %)
- Final assignment (40 %)
- Quizzes (2 x 5% = 10%)
- The Great UCLA Design Game 8.0 (5%)
- Two mandatory event reports (2 x 5 = 10%)

Posting five (5) or more blog comments (if submitted on time) will raise the final grade by one step (+).

More than two absences (without the instructor's permission) will automatically lower the final grade by one step (-) per absence.

In borderline case, the final grade will be decided by Professor Huhtamo based on his estimation of the student's overall performance.

REQUIRED READINGS

The required readings are all included in the *Course Reader*, edited by Professor Huhtamo. The assigned weekly readings have been numbered in the weekly schedule (above). The course reader is mandatory. It is available at CopyMat, 10919 Weyburn Avenue (Westwood Village), tel. 310 824 5276. It is **NOT** available at the UCLA Store! Course Reader from 2015 can also be used.

A copy of the Course Reader will be on reserve at the UCLA Arts Library (Public Policy Building).

RECOMMENDED (ADDITIONAL) READINGS

The following books are **NOT** mandatory, but are recommended as additional readings. Whenever possible, copies are on reserve at the Arts Library (Public Policy Building):

- Antonelli, Paola: *Design and the Elastic Mind* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008).
- Corn, Joseph J. & Horrigan, Brian: *Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996.
- Danesi, Marcel: *Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things. An Introduction to Semiotics*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Victor Margolin (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).
- *Design History. A Students' Handbook*. Edited by Hazel Conway. London and New York: Routledge, 1999 (orig.1987).
- Flusser, Vilém: *The Shape of Things. A Philosophy of Design*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999.
- Forty, Adrian: *Objects of Desire. Design and Society 1750-1980*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.
- Gorman, John Michael: *Buckminster Fuller. Designing for Mobility*. Milano: Skira Editore, 2005.
- *Graphic Design in America: A Visual Language History*. Edited by Mildred Friedman and Phil Freshman. Minneapolis and New York: Walker Art Center and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989.
- Heskett, John: *Industrial Design*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.
- Heskett, John: *Toothpicks and Logos: Design in Everyday Life*, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Julier, Guy: *The Culture of Design*, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2000.
- Lupton, Ellen: *Mechanical Brides. Women and Machines from Home to Office*. Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design/Smithsonian Institution and Princeton Architectural Press, 1993.
- Lupton, Ellen and Miller, J. Abbott: *Design Writing Research. Writings on Graphic Design*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996 (A Kiosk Book).
- Lupton, Ellen: *Skin. Surface Substance + Design*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution, 2002.
- Margolin, Victor: *The Politics of the Artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Mijksenaar, Paul and Westendorp, Piet: *Open Here. The Art of Instructional Design*. New York: Joost Elffers Books, 1999.
- Norman, Donald A.: *The Design of Everyday Things*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998.
- Norman, Donald A.: *Emotional Design*, New York: Basic Books, 2004.
- Papanek, Victor: *Design for the Real World*, Second Edition, Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1985.
- Petroski, Henry: *Invention by Design. How Engineers Get from Thought to Thing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Sparke, Penny: *An Introduction to Design & Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.

- Woodham, Jonathan M.: *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 182-203 (Oxford History of Art).

CONTACTS

Prof. Huhtamo: Office hours (Thursdays, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm, Department of Design | Media Arts, Broad Art Center, room 3251). **COURSE WEBSITE** To be announced **BLOG** To be announced