Syllabus:
Design Culture - an Introduction

DESCRIPTION

Design is a powerful force in contemporary society and culture. 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 provide a definition for all the things the word “design” is supposed to denote. It is becoming increasingly difficult – for some, impossible - 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 about much more. Among other things, it is an ideology that affects our ways of seeing the world. It is also a form of communication - by creating or using certain designs we send messages about ourselves to others. Desma 10 provides a broad overview of the phenomena that make up design culture. It demonstrates that design does not only mean the "high design" of famous star designers and design companies. The most efficient design is often invisible - devices like door knobs and traffic lights help us without drawing attention to themselves as design(ed) objects. To understand design culture we must pay attention to invisible things as well. We also have to explain the motives that guide their planning, their marketing, their reception and their uses. The lectures will discuss the main movements and trends of design as a cultural and social phenomenon. Particular emphasis will be given to the interconnections between design and technology. The relationship between design and art will also be explored in 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 will be presented.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Meeting 1 (Sep. 26) What is Design? What Isn’t Design?
Keywords: / Definitions of design and culture / Design, nature, culture /
Design and cultural difference / Design and sustainable development / Visible and invisible design
Readings: No

Meeting 2 (Oct.3) Design Culture – The Basics
Keywords: High and Low Design / Design and Art / Etymology of the word “design” / The Beginnings of Design Culture

Readings:

Meeting 3 (Oct.10) Design, Society and Technology
Keywords: Function and ornament / mass production and assembly lines / designer and engineer / Mechanisation and automation / Design and power / Streamlining
Readings:

Meeting 4 (Oct.17) SPECIAL SESSION: The Great UCLA Design Game 2.0
Readings:
Erkki Huhtamo: Semiotics Handout (available on the class website)

Meeting 5 (Oct.24) Design for Public Spaces
Keywords: The Dream of Total Design / Art Nouveau / Konstructivism: design as political spectacle / Skyscrapers / World’s Fairs
Readings:

Meeting 6 (Oct.31) Design, Consumers and Corporations
Keywords: Designing and marketing consumer goods / “built-in obsolescence” / corporate design and branding.
Readings:

(MIDTERM PROJECTS TO BE HANDED IN OCT 31)

Meeting 7 (Nov.7) Alternative Design
Keywords: Design and pop culture / Underground and psychedelia / Punk, Situationism / Design as weapon / Sustainable design
Readings:

(MIDTERM PROJECTS WILL BE RETURNED NOV 9)
Meeting 8 (Nov. 14) Design in the Postmodern Era I  
**Keywords:** Design and art – blurred boundaries / Designer as “Superstar”/ Emotional Design / Design within media culture

**Readings:**

Meeting 9 (Nov. 21) SPECIAL SESSION: A Peek at the Design Process.  
**Reading:** No

-------- Nov. 28 Thanksgiving Holiday, No Meeting!  ------------

Meeting 10 (Dec. 5) Design in the Postmodern Era II  
**Keywords:** Proliferation of (de)sign / Interface design / Wearables, mobile interfaces / Design, surface, skin.

**Readings:**

*(FINAL PROJECTS TO BE HANDED IN DEC. 5 !)*

**FINALS WEEK: No Meeting!**

**GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS**

There will be a midterm assignment and a final assignment. The midterm is a homework to be realized individually. The final assignment will be a creative groupwork (4 - 5 people in a group). The exact topics will be announced later. There will also be three multiple choice quizzes based on the previous week’s lecture and / or the assigned readings. Missing one (1) of the quizzes will not affect the grade. There will also be a Special Session, “The Great UCLA Design Game”. The grading consists of the midterm assignment (30 %), the final assignment (50 %), the quizzes (10%) and the Great UCLA Design Game (10%). More than two absences (without the instructor’s permission) will lower the final grade by one step per absence (-). Extraordinary participation in the class meetings may increase the final grade by one step (+).

**TEXTS**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

1. A *reader* which will be available for purchase at CopyMat, Westwood Village, 925 Westwood Boulevard (cross street Le Conte), tel. 310 - 824 5276 .

The student is expected to buy both the reader and Heskett’s book. A limited number of copies of both will be on reserve for consultation at the Arts Library (Public Policy Building).

**RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

The following books are recommended as additional readings. Whenever possible, copies are on reserve at the Arts Library (Public Policy Building):

CLASS MEETINGS:
Fridays from 9:00am to 11:50am at Haines 39.

CONTACTS:

Prof. Huhtamo: by email (erhuhta@ucla.edu) or during office hours (Thursdays, 11:30 – 12:30pm, Dept. of Design | Media Arts, Broad Art Center, room 3251).

The T.A.’s and their office hours:

- Olga Balema (olga.balema@gmail.com), Fridays, 5:15-6:15, Café Untitled, Broad Art Center
- Lisa Boutin (lboutin@humnet.ucla.edu), Wednesdays, 9-10am, Dodd 50
- Madeleine Gallagher (madgala@yahoo.com), Thursdays, 1-2pm, Café Untitled, Broad Art Center
- Anne McCaddon (annemccadden@yahoo.com), Mondays, 11:30-12:30, Café Untitled, Broad Art Center
- Jean Murachanian (jeanmuch@ucla.edu), Fridays, 12-1 pm, Café Untitled, Broad Art Center

Each student will be assigned one of the T.A.’s as the primary contact person. For minor issues and questions it is recommended to use e-mail.

CLASS WEBSITE

http://classes.design.ucla.edu/Fall08/10/index.html

READER
Table of Contents


