

ID707 CRITIQUE OF DESIGN I: *object writing*

2017-18 Fall Semester | Wed 10:00–12:30, R20 (UTEST) | Harun Kaygan, R68, hkaygan@metu.edu.tr



Pink BMW E30s from Ankara Piston Fest 2017. Source: www.lastikpark.com

Course description

The course offers an extensive vocabulary of theoretical concepts, with which it aims to help you *think about, talk about and write about objects in a creative and critical manner*.

The emphasis is on *critique*. Together, we will be exploring possibilities of developing creative and powerful critiques of design objects and practices. For this purpose, we will study an eclectic selection of readings and engage in a range of writing exercises. These will be complemented by discussions on pieces of literature and works of art and design, on which you can hone your critical skills, and which you can use as jumping boards for future academic and/or creative work.

Requirements of the course

1. Text is our principal medium. Each week is assigned pieces of reading on the week's topic. These include *required* readings and *complementary* readings.

Required readings are around *40 pages per week*, offered as a bound copy at the Faculty photocopy office. You are expected to read these *in full before* the lectures. This is not only a requirement of the course but also fundamental to the in-class exercises and discussions.

Complementary readings are optional pieces that provide reference to, examples for or further elaboration on the *required* readings. These will be shared with you in digital format.

2. The course outline is organised into three modules: *Representation*, *Consumption* and *Body*. Each module comprises three weeks of lecture, and a concluding assignment where you are expected to write a brief paper. The purpose of the three written assignments is to (a) help you consolidate the new knowledge through application, (b) let you experience different modes of writing (critique, interview and observation), and (c) help you choose a topic for your final paper.

At the end of the course you are expected to submit your *revised* assignments in the form of a portfolio.

3. In addition to the portfolio, the final output of the course will be an essay, minimum 3,500 words. You are strongly encouraged to write the final paper by expanding one of the three assignments in your portfolio, but you are expected to incorporate new literature, acquired through a topical literature review. (As a guideline, the new literature should include one or two books and a few journal/conference papers.) Formal requirements and the deadline for submission will be announced later.
4. Your final grade will be determined by your assignments (20% each) and the final paper (40%). Late submissions are accepted at the following week's class, but graded with a 50% penalty.

Attendance is obligatory. Not attending the course for more than three weeks without any official excuse, or failing to submit two assignments will both result in outright failure with an "N/A" grade.

Note that plagiarism is a disciplinary offence, and will result in outright failure and disciplinary sanctions. (On plagiarism, see <http://www.fbe.metu.edu.tr/plagiarism>)

Course Outline

Note that you are *required* to read *all* the *required* readings, *in full* and *before* the lectures. You are advised to read the *required* pieces in the order they are presented here for they follow a certain logic.

Week 1: Introductory meeting (11 Oct)

Introduction and general discussion

Week 2: Representation I: Semiology (18 Oct)

Gillian Rose, "Semiology", in *Visual Methodologies*, pp. 69–99.

Judith Williamson, "Back to Nature", in *Decoding Advertisements*, pp. 122–131.

Complementary reading on semiology, recommended if you are unfamiliar with the method: Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation", in *Representation*, pp. 15–41.

Week 3: Representation II: Form (25 Oct)

Roland Barthes, "The New Citroën", "Toys", "Ornamental Cookery", "Plastic", "Soap", in *Mythologies*, 10 pp.

Peter Lloyd and Lloyd Snelders, "What was Philippe Starck Thinking of?", *Design Studies*, 17 pp.

Şebnem Timur, "Novel or Museum?", *Design Issues*, 5 pp.

Karin Ehrnberger et al., "Visualizing Gender Norms in Design", *International Journal of Design*, 11 pp.

Week 4: Representation III: Affordances (1 Nov)

James J. Gibson, "The Theory of Affordances", in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, pp. 127–143.

Alan Costall, "The Meaning of Things", *Social Analysis*, 9 pp.

Stella Boess and Heimrich Kanis, "Meaning in Product Use", in *Product Experience*, pp. 305–329.

Complementary readings that demonstrate two different takes on affordances in design literature:

Donald A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, pp. 123–161.

Tom Fisher, "What We Touch Touches Us", *Design Issues*, 12 pp.

Week 5: Representation: Module Assignment (8 Nov)

Find a print or video advertisement of a designed product. Conduct a representational analysis of the product (and not only the advertisement) explicitly referring to semiological terms and concepts, as well as the concepts of affordance and use-cues. Submit your findings in a report 750–1,500 words long.

Week 6: Consumption I: Consumption as Work (15 Nov)

Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, pp. 3–18.

Ayşe Şimşek Çağlar, "A Table in Two Hands", in *Fragments of Culture*, pp. 265–307.

Diana Young, "Coloring Cars", in *Design Anthropology*, pp. 117–127.

*Complementary reading that focuses on "objectification": Christopher Tilley, "Objectification", in *Handbook of Material Culture*, pp. 60–73.*

Week 7: Consumption II: Subcultures (22 Nov)

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, pp. 100–127.

Mary Celeste Kearney, "Riot Grrrl", 17 pp.

*Complementary reading for a review of the literature on subcultures: Rupert Weinzierl and David Muggleton, "What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway?", in *The Post Subcultures Reader*, pp. 3–23, esp. 3–9.*

Week 8: Consumption III: Crafts (29 Nov)

Colin Campbell, "The Craft Consumer", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 18 pp.

Otto von Busch, "Exploring Net Political Craft", *Craft Research*, 12 pp.

Week 9: Consumption: Module Assignment (6 Dec)

Pick a case in which a group of people consumes a product or a set of products in their own way. (It is best to start with yourself: Are you a dancer, a gamer, a football fan? Then you can focus on dancing shoes, gaming mice, football scarves, etc.) Conduct one interview with a consumer. Prepare your interview schedule beforehand. The interview should take at least half an hour. Make sure that the product is physically there during the interview, so that you can talk about the meanings and values your participants assign to the various qualities of the product. Present your findings as a report, 750–1,500 words long.

Week 10: Body I: Body in Use (13 Dec)

Simon J. Williams and Gillian Bendelow, "Bodily 'Control'", in *The Lived Body*, pp. 49–61.

Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body", *Economy and Society*, pp. 70–88.

Daniel Miller, "The Sari", in *Stuff*, pp. 23–31.

Week 11: Body II: Script Analysis (20 Dec)

Madeleine Akrich, "The De-description of Technical Objects", in *Shaping Technology/Building Society*, pp. 205–224.

Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant, "Paris: Invisible City", plans 32–4 (pp. 64–69).

Ellen van Oost, "Materialized Gender", in *How Users Matter*, pp. 193–208.

Complementary reading for an easy-to-read review of ANT for designers: Albena Yaneva, "Making the Social Hold", *Design and Culture*, pp. 273–288.

Complementary reading for a more theoretically minded review of ANT: Harun Kaygan, "Material-Semiotic Analysis of Design for a Politics of the Material Object", working paper, 15 pp.

Week 12: Body III: Skilled Practice (27 Dec)

Tim Ingold, "On Weaving a Basket", in *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 339–348.

Tim Ingold, "Of String Bags and Birds' Nests", in *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 349–361.

Tim Ingold, "Walking the Plank", in *Being Alive*, pp. 51–62.

Mads Vedel Jensen, "An Anthropological Move Towards Tangible Interaction Design", 7 pp.

Week 13: Body: Module Assignment (3 Jan)

Choose a designed product the use context of which you can observe. Go to the use context in person and conduct non-participant observation, all the while taking notes. Compile your notes in a short paper, 750–1,500 words long, providing a detailed description of the interactions between the user, the product and the context.

Week 14: Concluding Discussion (10 Jan)

Overall evaluation of the course and a discussion toward final papers