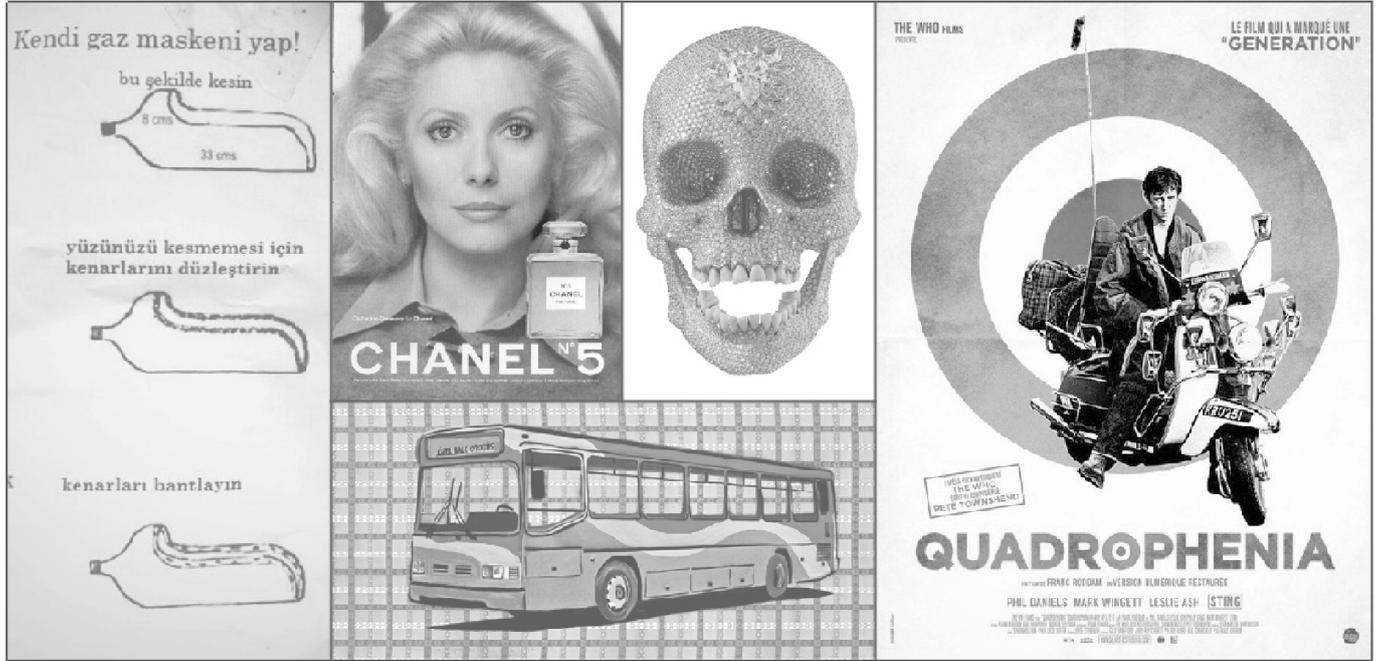


ID321 DESIGN AND CULTURE

2016-17 Spring Semester

Harun Kaygan, Sedef Süner, Nur Nagihan Tuna

Monday, 9.40-12.30, FEAS (İİBF) Building B, G106



Images, from left to right: Anonymus, "Make your own gas mask" pamphlet, 2012; first row, Chanel No.5 ad with Catherine Deneuve, 1970s; Damien Hirst, "For the love of God", 2007; second row, Nalan Yırtmaç, "Lütfen arkaya doğru ilerleyiniz", 2011; poster for the film, Quadrophenia, 1979.

Course description

The objective of the course is to help you develop an awareness of the socioeconomic, cultural and political contexts in which products are designed, produced and consumed. In four modules, you will arm yourself with the concepts, perspectives and a critical attitude that will help you situate yourself as a design professional within global design cultures of today.

Module 1, "Consumer society", introduces the socioeconomic context of design. We review what consumption means from a cultural perspective, and how design practice and design products shape and are shaped by it.

Module 2, "Meaning in design", turns to designed products to study how they are presented as carriers of meaning within consumer culture through advertising and styling. The approach we study is called "semiology."

Module 3, "Design and power", changes our focus away from the socioeconomic context towards the technological and political context. We question how design has been used to shape its users, with cases from architecture, medical design, smart technologies and gendered products.

Module 4, "Alternate visions", focus on design practices that have a political vision: open design and social design.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE

Readings

Each week is assigned a number of key texts on the week's topic. You will find the readings in bound format at the photocopy office. In some weeks, the text is accompanied by videos. You are expected to read (or watch) all the material before lecture every week. This is not only a requirement of the course but fundamental to the in-class exercises and discussions. At times you may feel that either the language or the concepts used in the reading is difficult, but do not forget that reading is like riding a bicycle: It gets better with practice and you can never unlearn it.

Response papers

In addition to reading and understanding academic texts, you are also expected to engage with them critically in writing. For this purpose you will be writing "response papers".

You are required to submit three response papers, 600-1000 words each. You can find the schedule and submission deadlines below at the Course Outline table. Check the "Response paper writing guide" for information on how to write and submit your response papers.

Product analysis

In response to Module 2, "Meaning in design", you are required to submit a product analysis assignment in which you will be writing a paper on the product that is assigned to you. You are expected to make the readings and participate in the lectures of the module attentively, and use the "semiological" approach that you learn for analysing your product. Please note that even though some of your classmates may be assigned the same or a similar product, this is an individual assignment, and working together will be considered cheating. The final list of products and individual assignments will be announced in the first few weeks. Check the "Product analysis guide" for information on how to prepare your assignments.

Designer presentations

Every week, two teams of students will be making short presentations, displaying and briefly commenting on the work of a designer, a brand, etc. The presentations take a strict 10 minutes, show a number of designs, and briefly discuss what is significant about the designs. The list of designers and the presentation can be found in the Course Outline table; teams will be decided on the first day of class. Check the "Designer presentations guide" for information on how to prepare your presentations.

Grading

Your final grade will be determined by your response papers (10% x 3), the product analysis (10%), the designer presentation (10%), and a final exam (50%).

Note that attendance is obligatory. Students who have not attended the course for more than three weeks will not be admitted to the final exam and fail with an "N/A" grade. If you have an excuse that you think is exceptional, please contact us as soon as possible.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a disciplinary offence, and will result in disciplinary sanctions in addition to outright failure. You will submit all your assignments to Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software; regardless, you are expected to show highest levels of academic honesty.

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas and claiming their ownership. It often happens when a student copies words from online or offline sources; but getting other people to do one's work and collaborating in individual assignments are also considered plagiarism.

Plagiarism can happen unintentionally, when students fail to clearly distinguish in their writing their own words from those of others. Even if it is unintentional, it still counts as an offence. To avoid plagiarism, take extra care to give accurate references. Most importantly, (1) if it is someone else's ideas, start your paragraphs/sentences with phrases such as "According to Marx (1844)...", to indicate where you borrowed the idea from. And (2) put quotation marks around exact phrases and sentences that belong to others. Note that rearranging, rephrasing or translating someone else's sentences without correct referencing, is still plagiarism, and it is easily detected; so use your own ideas and words.

(For more information on plagiarism, go to <http://www.fbe.metu.edu.tr/plagiarism>.)

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: General introduction (21 Feb)

Week 2: Introduction: Contexts (28 Feb)

How do we talk about design and designers? We start with an excerpt from the documentary *Objectified* (2009), where designers talk about their own practice. We would like you to contrast this with Adrian Forty's short chapter in *Objects of Desire*, in which he questions the importance we give to what designers say about their designs. Using the famous example of Raymond Loewy's Lucky Strike package, Forty emphasizes the importance of the cultural and historical context. The last reading is John A. Walker's diagram of the design process, which complements Forty's chapter by providing a snapshot of the social and industrial context in which designers work.

Adrian Forty, "Design, designers and the literature of design", in *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750*

John A. Walker, "Production-consumption model" diagram, in *Design History and the History of Design*

Objectified [documentary film] (2009, Gary Hustwit)

Response Paper 1 due 9.30am

Week 3: Consumer society I: Commodities (7 Mar)

Designers do not only work in the world of production, made of manufacturers, brands, other designers, design exhibitions, etc. They also typically exist within and work for the "consumer society", and take part in the production of "brands" and "commodities" offered to "consumers". Our study of consumer society begins with the "commodity", a concept very well defined by Karl Marx as the starting point of his critique of capitalism. Two chapters from Peter Osborne's helpful little book explains the key terms: "use value", "exchange value" and "alienation". A three-page excerpt from the prominent science-fiction writer Ursula Le Guin's novel, *The Dispossessed*, illustrates the theory. (Briefly, Shevek is a scientist from the anarchist society on the moon Anarres. He moves to Uras, the planet, to pursue his studies, but he is perplexed by the capitalist society he encounters. The excerpt is from the section where Shevek goes shopping.)

Peter Osborne, Chapters 1 and 4, in *How to Read Marx*

Ursula Le Guin, excerpt from *The Dispossessed* [novel]; also available in Turkish: *Mülksüzler* (Metis, 1999)

Week 4: Consumer society II: Consumption (14 Mar)

Marx argued that through commodity fetishism, exchange governs life, and creates alienation. What does this mean for the consumer of commodities? What does everyday life look like in a consumer society? The sociologist Celia Lury's introduction to her book, *Consumer Culture*, provides a brief description of the central tenets of a consumer society. The design professor Guy Julier provides an overview of what consumption is, and how different authors have approached consumption: either as victims or sovereigns. Lastly, a short (and rather difficult) excerpt by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard exemplifies the pessimistic view by drawing a bleak picture of consumer society. He argues that in consumption, consumers navigate the meanings offered to them as commodities piled up, arranged on shelves, and put up on shop displays.

Celia Lury, "Introduction: What is consumer culture?", in *Consumer Culture*

Guy Julier, excerpt from "The consumption of design", in *The Culture of Design*

Jean Baudrillard, excerpt from *Consumer Society*

Week 5: Consumer culture III: Design (21 Mar)

We have developed an overall understanding of what consumption is and what a consumer culture looks like. What about the role of designers in consumer culture? To answer this, we will read a series of excerpts from *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, a key textbook of cultural studies from 1997. The (longish) read uses the example of the Walkman to provide an overview of some of the main arguments and key learnings of our Consumer Culture module (such as "differentiation" through "conspicuous consumption" and "taste", and consumption as "appropriation" and "bricolage"). It also adds a new vocabulary of "cultural intermediaries", "lifestyling" and cultural construction of needs.

Paul du Gay et al., excerpts from *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*:

Section 3.1 "Designers as cultural intermediaries"

Section 3.3 "Lifestyling the Walkman"

Reading E: Thomas A. Harvey, "How Sony Corporation became first with kids"

Section 5 "Consuming the Walkman"

Last week to write Response Paper 2, due 9.30am

Week 6: Meaning in design I: Premises and concepts (28 Mar)

We have established that consumption is making sense. Here we make a detour to better understand what this means. Specifically, we need to understand how the products we design can *communicate* anything at all. Theories of semiology can help us with this. The chapter on representation by Stuart Hall is a very good introduction to semiology. Alternatively you can get a copy of John Fiske's *Introduction to Communication Studies*, and read the 3rd, 4th, and 5th chapters for a detailed explanation of the concepts.

Stuart Hall, excerpt from "The work of representation", in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*

Reference book: John Fiske, Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5, in *Introduction to Communication Studies*, 2nd edn (in ODTÜClass; also available in Turkish as *İletişim Çalışmalarına Giriş*)

Week 7: Meaning in design II: Advertising (4 Apr)

Having learnt the basics of semiology, it is time to apply our new understanding to examples. We start with advertising. The piece by Pasi Falk provides an overview of the social function of advertising and its transformation in the last century. In her book, *Decoding Advertisements* (1978), Judith Williamson writes on how products are given meaning through advertising. The excerpt includes the introduction to the book, and a section called “Differentiation”, in which she gives examples from perfume ads. The third and fourth short pieces are by the literary critic Roland Barthes, who wrote on different aspects of French culture of the period in his *Mythologies* (1957).

Pasi Falk, “The genealogy of advertising”, in *The Consumption Reader*

Judith Williamson, “Introduction: Meaning and ideology” and “(a) Differentiation”, in *Decoding Advertisements*

Roland Barthes, “Soap powders and detergents”, “Ornamental cookery”, in *Mythologies*; also available in Turkish as *Çağdaş Söylenler* (Metis, 2003)

Week 8: Meaning in design III: Products (11 Apr)

Design gives meaning to products, yet not in the same way that advertising does. The excerpt from Guy Julier’s *The Culture of Design*, this time from the chapter on “Consumer goods”, gives the example of Dyson to show how designed products are turned into signs via photography, by changing product shape, color and texture (product semantics), and on moodboards. (His chapter should remind you of the Walkman.) The following two articles complement Julier’s chapter in two different ways. On the more technical side, we read Krippendorf and Butter’s 1984 article, which explains what product semantics is and which features of a product need the designer’s attention for better communication. On the other extreme, two more mythologies from Barthes highlight the political nature of products as signs.

Guy Julier, excerpt from “Consumer goods”, in *The Culture of Design*

Klaus Krippendorf, “Product semantics: Exploring the symbolic qualities of form”

Roland Barthes, “Toys”, “The new Citroën”, in *Mythologies*; also available in Turkish as *Çağdaş Söylenler* (Metis, 2003)

Week 9: Design and power I: Bodies (18 Apr)

We have seen that design produces consumers, even if partly. In fact, this is only one of the myriad ways in which design shapes its users. Two chapters from the book, *Beautiful Users*, illustrate this fact beautifully. Ellen Lupton writes the history of how designers have imagined their users from the anthropometric drawings of Dreyfus to the current focus on user experience. Thomas Carpentier’s drawings complement Lupton’s chapter; he designs houses for extreme users, to highlight how conventional design practice thinks of the user (and their bodies) rather conservatively. The French novelist Georges Perec’s short essay provides a similar counterpoint to conventional design thinking by putting bodily practice in cultural context.

Ellen Lupton, “Designing for people”, in *Beautiful Users: Designing for People*

Thomas Carpentier, “The measure(s) of man”, in *Beautiful Users: Designing for People*

Georges Perec, excerpt from “Reading: A socio-psychological sketch”, in *Thoughts of Sorts*

Week 10: Design and power II: Smart technologies (25 Apr)

In his paper, Weiser introduces the term “ubiquitous computing” and gives example scenarios on our interaction with invisible and networked computers that surround us. Embedding internet information in everyday objects is pointing towards a future of internet of things where our experiences with smart devices are augmented. Rose focuses on the future which is shaped by the impact of technology, and discusses whether it is possible to turn an ordinary object into an enchanted one through the use of technologies.

David Rose, “Enchanting everyday objects” in *Enchanted Objects*

Mark Weiser, “The computer for the 21st century”

Week 11: Design and power III: Gender (2 May)

The article by Jane Freedman provides a basic explanation of what “gender” is, and especially how and why it is different from “sex”. The following article from the *International Journal of Design* makes an overview of gendering in product design.

Jane Freedman, “The biology debate: Sex and gender”, in *Feminism*

Karin Ehrnberger, et al., “Visualising Gender Norms in Design”, *International Journal of Design*

Week 12: Alternate visions I: Social design (9 May)

Let’s make a tentative definition: Social design is an umbrella term (or in fact, one of the many umbrella terms) that are used to describe design practices that are less profit or product oriented than focused on social, political or environmental issues. The only reading for the week is by Cameron Tonkinwise, who argues that “social design should be a thing.” The reading is followed by a talk by Ezio Manzini on his 2015 book, *Design, When Everybody Designs*.

Cameron Tonkinwise, “Is social design a thing?”

“Ezio Manzini: Design, When Everybody Designs. An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation” [Talk]
<<https://vimeo.com/122184793>>

Week 13: Alternate visions II: Open design (16 May)

Let’s make another tentative definition: Open design is the name given to the many ways in which design processes and products are opened up to use and modification by non-designers. In line with the spirit of the week, the week’s readings are available from the website opendesignnow.org. Read at least the articles listed below. Explore the website, including “the visual index”.

Bas van Abel et al., “Preface”

Jos de Mul, “Redesigning design”

John Thackara, “Into the open”

Tommi Laitio, “From best design and just design”

Jan Stappers et al., “Creation & co: User participation in design”

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Module	Topic	Assignment	Designer presentations		
21 Feb	Introduction	General introduction				
28 Feb		Contexts	Response paper 1	N55	Superflux	
7 Mar	Module I Consumer society	Commodities	Response paper 2 (any week)	Design for the 90%		
14 Mar		Consumption		Dunne & Raby	Natali Jeremijenko	
21 Mar		Appropriation		Make / Maker Faires	Instructables	
4 Apr	Module II Meaning in design	Semiology	Product analysis Due 2 May	Maarten Baas	Andrea Zittel	
11 Apr		Advertising		Lidewij Edelkoort	Adbusters	
18 Apr		Products		Remy and Veenhuizen		
25 Apr	Module III Design and power	Bodies	Response paper 3 (any week)	Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg	Do-It-Yourself Biology	
2 May		Gender		Sputniko!		
9 May		Smart technologies		Near Future Laboratory	Hussein Chalayan	
16 May	Module IV Alternate visions	Social design	Extra response paper	TAK	OpenStructures	Open IDEO
–		Open design	<i>You are responsible for the readings for this topic.</i>			