



id707 critique of design

2019–20 Fall, Tue 09:30–12:30, R20 (UTEST)
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Image: Banned music on X-ray film, USSR 1940–60

The course aims to help you *think about, talk about and write about objects in a creative and critical manner.*

Together, we will be exploring possibilities of developing creative critiques of design objects and practices. We will study a selection of readings and engage in writing assignments, focusing on actor-network theory (ANT) and material semiotics, post-phenomenology and material engagement theory (MET). These will be complemented

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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 two modules: *Material semiotics* and *Material engagements*. Each module comprises four weeks of readings and classroom discussions, and a concluding assignment.
- (3) In addition to the two assignments, the final output of the course will be an essay, 3,500-5,000 words. You are strongly encouraged to write the final paper by expanding one of the two assignments, 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 (30% 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 *two weeks* without any official excuse, or failing to submit any one of the 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. (See <http://www.fbe.metu.edu.tr/plagiarism>)

Course Outline

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. General introduction (26 Sep)

Week 2. Cultural analysis of objects (3 Oct)

Dick Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony," in *Subculture*, pp. 5–19.

Diana Young, "Coloring Cars," in *Design Anthropology*, pp. 17–127.

Christopher Tilley, "Objectification," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, pp. 60–73.

Week 3. Material semiotics I: Introduction to ANT (10 Oct)

Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law, "General Introduction" in *Shaping Technology / Building Society*, pp. 1–14.

Read one or more of the following three papers:

Michel Callon, "The Sociology of an Actor-Network: the Case of the Electric Vehicle," in *Mapping the Dynamics of Science and Technology*, pp. 19–34.

Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation", in *Power, Action and Belief*, pp. 196–233.

John Law, "On the Methods of Long Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation, and the Portuguese Route to India," in *Power, Action and Belief*, pp. 234–263.

Complementary – an easy-to-read review of ANT for designers: Albenya Yaneva, "Making the Social Hold," *Design and Culture*, 16pp.

Complementary case study – an actor-network study of design practice: Harun Kaygan, "Material Semiotics of Form Giving", *Design Issues*, 13pp.

Week 4. Material semiotics II: Nonhumans in ANT (17 Oct)

Bruno Latour, "Folding Humans and Nonhumans into Each Other," in *Pandora's Hope*, pp. 176–193.

John Law and Vicky Singleton, "Object Lessons," *Organization*, 19pp.

Complementary – a longer and more relaxed reading on nonhuman agency: Bruno Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses?" in *Shaping Technology / Building Society*, pp. 225–258.

Complementary case study I, a medical ethnography: Anemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple*.

Complementary case study II, of models in architectural practice: Albenya Yaneva, "Scaling Up and Down," *Social Studies of Science*, 25pp.

Week 5. No lecture. (24 Oct)

Week 6. Material semiotics III: User constructions (31 Oct)

Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch, "Introduction," in *How Users Matter*, pp. 1–16.

Sampsa Hyysalo and Mikael Johnson, "User Representation," in *The New Production of Users*, pp. 75–100.

Complementary case study I: Ellen van Oost, "Materialized Gender," in *How Users Matter*, pp. 193–208.

Complementary case study II: Sampsa Hyysalo, "Representations of Use and Practice-Bound Imaginaries..." *Social Studies of Science*, 20pp.

Week 7. Material semiotics IV: Design things (7 Nov)

Erling Björgvinsson, Pelle Ehn and Per-Anders Hillgren, "Design Things and Design Thinking," *Design Issues*, 16pp.

Bruno Latour, *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik*, 18pp.

Complementary case study: Christopher A Le Dantec and Carl DiSalvo, "Infrastructuring and the Formation of Publics in Participatory Design," *Social Studies of Science*, 20pp.

Week 8. Material semiotics: Assignment (14 Nov)

From a material-semiotic perspective, study a completed or ongoing (design) project to which you have access. Conduct at least one (informal) interview and an analysis of the available project documents (such as sketches, renderings, brochures etc.). You may optionally make observations. Try to understand the key actors, and analyze the processes of interest, and successful or failed trials. You may want to focus on one aspect as your subject allows: role distributions, user constructions, uses of specific design tools and methods, etc.

Present your findings in the form of a large map, and submit a 1,500-word short essay that describes your method and findings. No literature review expected.

30% of the final grade.

Week 9. Material engagements I: Introduction to Post-phenomenology (21 Nov)

Robert Rosenberger and Peter-Paul Verbeek, "A Field Guide to Postphenomenology," *Postphenomenological Investigations*, pp. 9–41.

Highly recommended for browsing: Don Ihde, "Program One: A Phenomenology of Technics," in *Technology and the Lifeworld*, pp. 72–114.

Complementary taste of Heidegger: Martin Heidegger, "The Being of the Entities Encountered in the Environment," in *Being and Time*, 8 pp.

Week 10. Material engagements II: Protheses (28 Nov)

Helena de Preester, "Technology and the Body," *Foundations of Science*, 17pp.

Kirk Besmer, "What Robotic Re-embodiment Reveals about Virtual Re-embodiment," in *Postphenomenological Investigations*, pp. 56–69.

Stacey O. Irwin, "Technological Reciprocity with a Cell Phone," *Techné*, 10pp.

Week 11. Material engagements III: Material engagement theory (5 Dec)

Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind*, Chapters 7, 8 & 10, 68pp. (You may start with Chapter 10, "Epilogue", to understand the theory, then read Chapters 7 & 8 as case studies.)

Complementary reading that compares MET with post-phenomenology: Don Ihde and Lambros Malafouris, "Homo Faber Revisited," *Philosophy and Technology*, 20pp.

Complementary reading – a design PhD research that uses MET: Bilge Merve Aktaş and Maarit Mäkelä, "Negotiation between the Maker and Material", *International Journal of Design*, 13pp.

Complementary reading from cognitive science point of view: Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind," *Analysis*, 13pp.

Week 12. Material engagements IV: Skilled practice (12 Dec)

Tim Ingold, "Point, Line, Counterpoint," in *Being Alive*, pp. 76–88.

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.

Complementary case study of user interaction design: Mads Vedel Jensen, "An Anthropological Move Towards Tangible Interaction Design", 7 pp.

Complementary – Ingold's critique of actor-network theory: Tim Ingold, "When ANT meets SPIDER: Social Theory for Arthropods," in *Being Alive*, pp. 89–94.

Week 13. Material engagements: Assignment (19 Dec)

From the perspective of material engagements that is offered in this module, study a hands-on practice. Conduct at least one observation session, combined with an (informal) interview. Take good field notes during observation. Focus on the tools, movements and skills, and environments, and attempt a complete account of the practice.

Present your findings in the form of a series of drawings, diagrams and/or photographs, and submit a 1,500-word short essay that describes your method and findings. No literature review expected.

30% of the final grade.

Week 14: Writing week (26 Dec)

Discussion on writing, end-of-semester evaluation