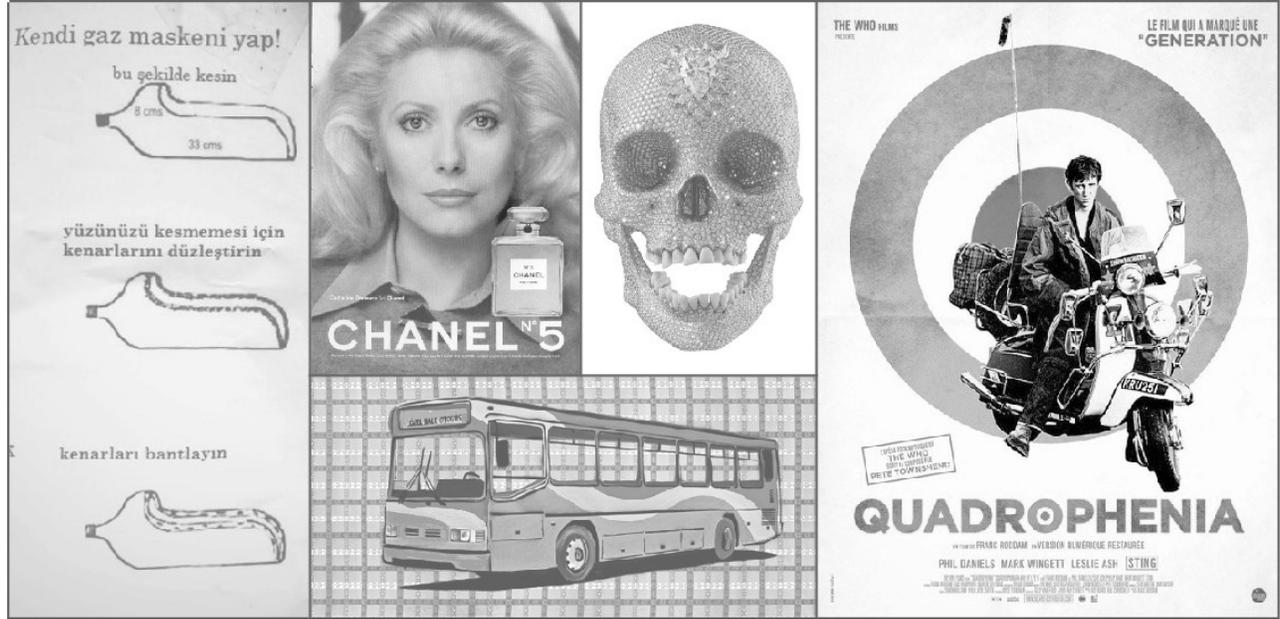


# id321 design and culture

METU Industrial Design 2019-20 Spring Semester  
Harun Kaygan, Sezen Yüksel  
Tuesday, 09:40-12.30, Yuksel Project Lecture Hall, A4



Images, from left to right: Anonymous, "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 I: Consumer society* introduces the cultural and economic 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 II: Meaning in design* turns to designed products themselves 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 III: Users* looks at users of those designed products – and gives the power back to people, even if only in theory. We explore how people make products meaningful for themselves and, in turn, adapt to them.

*Module IV: Issues* applies what we have learned in the previous modules to three separate topics: gender, sustainability, and social design. Doing this, it helps you develop a critical attitude towards the various hegemonic discourses and practices diffuse in today's design cultures.

# Course requirements

## 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 Faculty photocopy office. You are expected to read 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 find either the language or the concepts difficult, but do not forget that reading is like riding a bicycle: It gets better with practice, and you can never unlearn it.

You may also want to explore the supplementary material before or after the class. These include films, online lectures, readings, etc. as well as a list of design examples for each week. All supplementary material is available on ODTÜClass.

## 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, for the *Introductory Module*, and *Modules I* and *III*. You can write an optional, extra response paper for *Module IV*. You can find the deadlines below on the *Course outline*. Check the *Response paper writing guide* for information on how to write and submit your response papers.

## Mid-term exam

In conclusion to *Module II: Meaning in design*, you will take a mid-term exam. During the exam you will be asked to semiologically analyse a product. Any other questions will also be from the topics of *Module II*.

## Grading

Your final grade will be determined by your response papers (10% x 3), mid-term exam (20%), 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 assignments to Turnitin plagiarism detection software; still 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, visit <<http://www.fbe.metu.edu.tr/plagiarism>>

# Course outline

## Week 1: General introduction (4 Feb)

## Week 2: Introduction: Contexts (11 Feb)

How do we talk about design and designers? In a short chapter in *Objects of Desire*, design historian Adrian Forty questions the importance we give to what designers themselves 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 on the success of a design. Then you are required to watch the documentary film *Objectified* (it's only 50 minutes long!) to see how designers talk today about their work.

### Readings

Adrian Forty, "Design, designers and the literature of design," in *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750 Objectified* [documentary film], 2009, Gary Hustwit

### Supplementary material

Peter Lloyd & Dirk Snelders, "What was Phillippe Starck thinking of?", *Design Studies*

### Design practice examples

*N55, Quirky*. The first is a design practice that deviates from the norm. The second is a crowdsourcing design platform, where anyone can come up with design ideas. Both examples help us question what industrial design is today.

### Response Paper 1 due 9.30am

## Week 3: Consumer society I: Commodities (18 Feb)

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.)

### Readings

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)

### Supplementary material

*Reading Capital* [online lectures], 2007, 2019 <<http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital/>>

### Design practice examples

*Design for the 90%*, *ifixit.com*, *The Toaster Project* (Thomas Thwaites). The first is an example of need-based design. The question is whether we can take use value as a basis for product design. The remaining two inspire a different question: Can we use design to take back our control over the production of our material world?

### You may submit your Response Paper 2 this week.

## Week 4: Consumer society II: Consumption (25 Feb)

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 as 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.

### Readings

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*

### Supplementary material

*Sarı Mercedes (Mercedes Mon Amour)* [film], 1992, Tunç Okan; based on Adalet Ağaoğlu, *Fikrimin İnce Gülü* [novel], 1976

### Design practice examples

*Lidewij Edelkoort, Marti Guixé*. The first is a trend forecaster. The second is a (high) designer. What is the status of design objects with regard to consumer culture?

Response Paper 2 due 9.30am

## Week 5: Meaning in design I: Semiology (3 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. Secondly, you'll be reading French critic Roland Barthes' famous piece on Citroën DS. It is from his book, *Mythologies* (1957), in which he wrote on different aspects of French culture of the period.

### Readings

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

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

### Supplementary material

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

### Design practice examples

*Droog Design, Atelier van Lieshout, Maarten Baas*. Designers who use strong, representational imagery to build objects and sculptures and inspire us by their visual language.

## **Week 6: Meaning in design II: Advertising (10 Mar)**

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 more mythologies from Barthes.

### *Readings*

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)

### *Supplementary material*

Umberto Eco, “Towards a semiological guerrilla warfare”

### *Design practice examples*

*Adbusters, Banksy*. Two examples of culture jamming, where art is used to counter and subvert consumerist and other oppressive imagery.

## **Week 7: Meaning in design III: Product design (17 Mar)**

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, colour and texture (product semantics), and on moodboards. Excerpts from the book, *The Story of the Sony Walkman*, give us another example – that of the Walkman for kids – while discussing the role of design in associating products with specific lifestyles.

### *Readings*

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

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”

### *Supplementary material*

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

### *Design practice examples*

*Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami*. Designers who use strong, representational imagery to build objects and sculptures and inspire us by their visual language.

## **Week 8: Mid-term exam (24 Mar)**

## **Week 9: Users I: Appropriation (31 Mar)**

We have been so far interested in critiques of consumption. These often characterise the consumer as helplessly deceived by corporations (or by the designers!). However, there is another approach to consumption which regards consumers as creative in their engagement with the products they use. Guy Julier, in the excerpt we read in Week 5, was explaining exactly this: Consumers can be so creative that they can “de-alienate” themselves through consumption – rather than through labour as Marx originally suggested. You may want to return to his article for reference. This week, we will be reading three examples: The first is written by the anthropologist Diana Young on the cars of the Anangu people in

Australia. The second is Dick Hebdige's study of the mod, a 1960s youth subculture from the UK. Thirdly, the writer Georges Perec provides a more personal example, when he talks about the objects on his desk.

#### Readings

Diana Young, "Coloring cars," in *Design Anthropology*

Dick Hebdige, excerpt from "The meaning of mod," in *Resistance through Rituals*

Georges Perec, "Notes on the objects to be found on my desk," in *Thoughts of Sorts*

#### Supplementary material

*Quadrophenia* [film], 1979, Franc Roddam

Johan Redström, "Towards user design? On the shift from object to user as the subject of design", *Design Studies*

#### Design practice examples

*IKEA Hacking, Instructables*. This week's presentations will show us examples of appropriation by users.

You may submit your Response Paper 3 this week.

### Week 10: Users II: Bodies (7 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.

#### Readings

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*

#### Supplementary material

Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the body" (1935)

Near future laboratory, *Curious Rituals: Gestural Interaction in the Digital Everyday*

#### Design practice examples

*Dunne & Raby, Hussein Chalayan*. The first is a critical design duo, the second is a fashion designer, whose works often includes reflections on human body.

Response Paper 3 due 9:30am

### Week 11: Issues I: Design and gender (14 Apr)

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.

#### Readings

Jane Freedman, "The biology debate: sex and gender", in *Feminism*

Karin Ehrnberger, et al., "Visualising gender norms in design", *International Journal of Design*

### *Supplementary material*

Ellen van Oost, "Materialized gender: how shavers configure the users' femininity and masculinity", in *How Users Matter*

### *Design practice examples*

*Sputniko!*, *Joana Vasconcelos*, *Core77 – Women Designers*. The first two are two feminist artists. Sputniko! is interested in designing controversial gadgets such as the "Menstruation Machine", while Vasconcelos works with everyday objects and techniques such as crochet. The third is a series of articles from the Core77 blog on women in design.

You may submit your Extra Response Paper this week.

## **Week 12: Issues II: Design for sustainability (21 Apr)**

This week's readings take on sustainability from a specific point of view, that of open design and design for change.

Invited lecture: Dr Çağla Doğan

### *Readings*

Stuart Walker, "Temporal objects – design, change and sustainability", *Sustainability*

Mark Richardson, "Pre-hacked: open design and the democratisation of product development", *New Media & Society*

### *Supplementary material*

Bas van Abel et al., *Open Design Now: Why Design Cannot Remain Exclusive*

### *Design practice examples*

Stuart Walker, *Openstructures (Jessie Howard)*. Examples of open and sustainable design.

You may submit your Extra Response Paper this week.

## **Week 13: Issues III: Social design (28 Apr)**

Social design is an umbrella term that is used to describe design practices that are less profit- or product-oriented than focused on social, political or environmental issues. In the two readings, Ezio Manzini talks about *Design for Social Innovation* and Terry Irwin promotes *Transition Design*.

### *Readings*

Ezio Manzini, "Making things happen", *Design Issues*

Terry Irwin, "Transition design: a proposal for a new area of design practice, study, and research", *Design and Culture*

### *Supplementary material*

Ezio Manzini, "Design, When Everybody Designs. An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation" [Talk] <<https://vimeo.com/122184793>> (esp. 28:30–54:00)

Selin Gürdere Akdur & Harun Kaygan, "Social design in Turkey through a survey of design media: projects, objectives, participation approaches", *The Design Journal*

### *Design practice examples*

*Open IDEO*, *Tasarım Atölyesi Kadıköy*. Two organizations that engage in social design, one from Turkey and one from abroad. You may want to compare those with Design for the 90% example from the first week.

Extra Response Paper due 9:30am

## **Week 14: Jury week, No lecture (5 May)**