

WELCOME TO GA CONTEMPORARY ISSUES/

As designers, illustrators, photographers and motion graphics designers, you are what Pierre Bourdieu calls “cultural intermediaries”, which is a fancy way of saying that you are the important people who contribute to the cultural content of this wonderful world that we live in. You are not simply making beautiful things to look at; as graphics students you have audiences, users, consumers, readers who have a rich media environment. Developments in digital technologies means that designers increasingly have to work with screens – phones, tablets – along with traditional analogue, like print. In other words, you need to become amphibians – yes you heard me right, you need to be able to thrive both online and offline. Furthermore, it also means that what you produce needs to be strategic – it must be content driven in order to engage with people’s brains as well as eyes.

DR CUI SU/

Module Convenor, GA
Contemporary Issues
Pathway Leader, Advertising
Design Management
c.su@soton.ac.uk
Twitter: @_cui
wsaadm.tumblr.com
www.facebook.com/WSAadm

This is what contemporary issues is all about. On this module, you will learn to intellectually engage with not only design artefacts, but also the debates surrounding their production, distribution and consumption. Some of these include: the impact of electronic publishing, globalization, remix practices, creative commons, form, function and new reading practices.

MODULE AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES/

AIMS/

To introduce you to the ways in which the contemporary context and theory inform design practice. To introduce the ways in which designers engage with ideas. To encourage you to explore your own work through critical reflection on the debates and practices of design and see the applicability of these to your own specialization.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING/

Upon successful completion of the module, you will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

Aspects of a range of contemporary debates, contexts and practices.

Theoretical concepts related to debates in design.

How the interaction between practice and theory works.

Some of the contemporary designers relevant to your work and area of study.

COGNITIVE THINKING SKILLS/

Upon successful completion of the module, you will be able to:

Use theory as a tool for analysing debates around a design artefact.

Evaluate different perspectives on relationships between context, theory and practice, especially their relation to your pathway.

Consider and develop your own sustained argument in relation to debates regarding developments that affect design today

KEY TRANSFERABLE SKILLS/

Upon successful completion of the module, you will be able to:

Write a clear and structured essay supported by substantial research and appropriate examples.

SEMINARS AND FILM SCREENINGS/

We believe that stimulating design work can only come about through thorough reading and through devouring all kinds of visual content. The former provides the backbone support for your design work while the latter provides rich references for your work in the form of narrative, visual culture, form and audiences.

SET READINGS FOR SEMINARS/

Each week there is a set reading that you need to read before attending your lecture on Tuesdays. Some of the texts are easy while others are more challenging and the thing you have to remember is that even if you only understand some of it, at least try to work with it, struggle with it, make it your own. For those of you hungry for more reading, we also have suggested further readings for each week. These are optional bonus material that you may find useful for your essays. Remember to annotate by taking notes and highlighting parts of the text you enjoy. The life of every good essay begins with good annotations.

FILM SCREENINGS/

Film is a die-hard medium of popular culture and therefore, they are great source material that hint at ideas, styles, themes, forms that resonate with all kinds of audiences and fans. We will be screening a selection of films in alternate weeks and inviting you to contribute comments and reviews to the RCS blog and selected ones will be published on Studio Winch.

STUDY TRIP/

There will be a planned study trip to London with your tutors. Usually this consists of visiting a gallery or museum and completing a small writing task. More details on this will follow.

ASSESSMENT/

ESSAY/

Choose ONE designed artefact and ONE contemporary issue below. Write an essay about the design artefact and use the debate to frame the direction of your writing and ideas. Think about what has been discussed in the lectures, seminars and workshops, especially the theories in set readings; try to use these theories as tools to help you engage with the design artefact and the debate that you have chosen. This should be treated as an academic essay – this means that you must provide evidence and academic references (journals and books) throughout your paper. Think about what you are trying to say carefully and what kind of evidence or examples will help you demonstrate your point. Personal opinion is great, but we need you to support it with evidence and academic research. Use images and examples to support your writing.

CHOOSE ONE FROM EACH CATEGORY:

DESIGN ARTEFACTS

Vogue
Wired UK
Guardian newspaper
1 x Cindy Sherman
1 x Martin Parr
1 x Diane Arbus
1 x Helmut Newton
Metropolis film

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Digital vs. analogue
Creativity vs. commercialism
Global vs. local
Creator vs. reader

ESSAY STRUCTURE/

The content should be thoroughly and systematically researched, the writing should follow Harvard referencing conventions.

The structure of your essay should include:

- Context of design artefact and debate
- Statement of Essay Purpose
- Analysis using theory
- Conclusion
- References (using Harvard Style Guide)

PRACTICE ESSAY – 1000 WORDS/

Post a 1000 word version of your essay on the RCS blog. The piece of work is not assessed and will not affect your final grade. The aim of this task is for you to gain constructive feedback on your work that you can use to improve your essay for the final hand-in. You should include: in-text citations and a reference list at the end. Tutors will write post their comments on the blog. You are all also encouraged to write comments on each other's work, as peer feedback can be really useful.

FINAL ESSAY – 2000 WORDS/

Worth 100% of your final grade

DEADLINE/

2 May 2013

WEEK 18 LECTURE REMIX: WHOSE DESIGN IS IT ANYWAY?

In this session, we will look at design practice in terms of remix culture, distributed media and consumption. With the help of the Internet, we have new modes of design: anyone can sample content, culture and other design work, remix it and distribute it globally quickly and at low cost. Source material everywhere. Therefore, we must ask: what does ownership or authorship mean? What is the role of design and the designer?

DVD RIP: *A Remix Manifesto*. <http://ripremix.com/> or Kirby Ferguson, “Everything is a Remix”.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

- Introduce the ethos of remix culture and what it means for designers
- Explore the idea of ‘source material everywhere’

SET READING/

Amerika, M. 2009. Source Material Everywhere: The Alfred North Whitehead Remix. Culture Machine, North America, 1012 01. Available at: <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/351/353>

FURTHER READINGS/

- Barthes R. 1977. *The Death of the Author*. In Image, Music, Text. Trans. Stephen Heath. UK: Harper Collins. Available online here: <http://www.deathoftheauthor.com/>
- Navas, E. 2012. *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*, Springer Verlag.
- Manovich, L [n.d.] *Who is the Author?* Sampling/Remixing/Open Source, from manovich.net/DOCS/models_of_authorship.doc
- Jenkins, H., 2006, *Convergence culture : where old and new media collide*, NYU Press, New York
- Berry, D.M., 2008, *Copy, Rip, Burn: The Politics Of Copyleft And Open Source*, Pluto Press, London

WEEK 19 THE BIRTH OF MODERN ADVERTISING/

MASS PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION/

This lecture offers some historical context for the issues and debates on this module. You can trace the emergence of graphics arts as a commercial practice and profession alongside the Industrial Revolution and the development of production and distribution technologies. As markets become crowded with mass products that are functionally identical, design stepped in to create artificial differentiation to manufacture and stimulate consumer desire in a highly competitive market. This marked the birth of modern advertising.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

Define the characteristics of Fordism and Post-Fordism
Explain the impact of mass production on works of art.

SET READING/

Benjamin, W. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In *Illuminations*, London: Routledge. [Text available on Blackboard]

FURTHER READINGS/

- Lury, C. 2003. *Consumer Culture*. London: Penguin Books, pp.10-52.
- Barnard, M. 2005. *Graphic Design as Communication*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.111–135
- Finck, N, 1999. *Form Follows Function*. [online] Available at: http://www.digital-web.com/articles/form_vs_function/ .
- Hollis, R. 2001. *Graphic Design: A Concise History*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Julier, G. 1993. *The Thames and Hudson Encyclopaedia of 20th-century Design and designers*. London: Thames & Hudson.

WEEK 20 **STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE? THE QUESTION OF VALUE/**

Today we live in a world of abundant information, products, designs and objects. In this type of economy, it is increasingly difficult to stand out. It is not enough for a piece of design to be simply useful, it also needs to be fashionable, social, mobile, interactive, emotional, etc. Businesses try to encompass all of this through the use of branding. And thus, brands are highly valuable assets of any company. How do you, as designers, photographers, illustrators create work of value? How do you become design entrepreneurs? What does the word 'value' mean in commercial creative practice? What is brand value? Are there other kinds of value?

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

- To critically examine the concept of value and what it means for commercial design practice.

SET READING/

Arvidsson, Adam. 2006. *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*. London: Routledge, pp.1-40.

FURTHER READINGS/

- Marx, Karl. *Value, Price & Profit*. New York: International Co.. Available here: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/>
- Miller, Daniel. 2008. *The Comfort of Things*. Polity Press.
- Heller, Steven & Talarico, Lita. 2008. *The Design Entrepreneur: Turning Graphic Design into Goods that Sell*. Rockport Publishers.
"Valued Possessions: The Worth of Things" In *Designing Things: A Critical Introduction to the Culture of Objects*, New York: Berg, pp. 45-74.

WEEK 21

MAGAZINE PUBLISHING/

TECHNOLOGY AND THE PRINTED WORD/

This lecture will explore how technology and the printed word have developed to influence and affect the wider world and will raise questions and ideas about the future of print. With falling circulation and less reliance on the object how are the newspaper and magazine industry adapting to the digital world of the 21st century. Is print really dead or will it will it continue to be relevant?

SET READING/

The story so far: what we know about the business of digital journalism / A report by Bill Grueskin, Ava Seave, Lucas Graves, Grueskin, B. New York : Columbia University Press, 2011.

FURTHER READINGS/

Heller. S, *From Merz to Emigre and Beyond: Avant-Garde Magazine Design of the Twentieth Century*,

WEEK 22

STUDY TRIP/

VISIT AN EXHIBITION

A vital part of being a creative practitioner is taking an interest in your subject by visiting exhibitions, galleries and museums. Engaging with culture through the objects, images and films not only feeds your creativity but also provides contexts to your work. As part of the Contemporary Issues module this semester you have the option of attending a study trip to cultural institutions in either London or the local area. More detail about the study trip will be provided nearer the time

TASK/

As part of the trip you will be required to participate in a short brief in which you post an exhibition review on the RCS blog.

WEEK 23

POWER-FULL THINGS/

ONES AND ZEROES BUT NOT ALL BLACK AND WHITE/

Technically it's easy to distinguish between digital and analogue media. Digital is the world of code, ones and zeros and endless reproducibility while analogue is about waves, imperfection and maybe even uniqueness. One is virtual the other material. This session is about problematising that simple opposition in terms of addressing the materiality of the digital and the hybrid nature of digital cultures. By looking at digital detritus and the infrastructure of the networks, we'll explore questions of power, objects and culture.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

- Understand the context of design practice is affected by corporate ownerships and is made up of complex relations of power with companies, individuals and peers.

SET READING/

- Kannabiran, G. & Petersen, M. G. 2010. "Politics at the Interface: A Foucauldian Power Analysis" In ACM, NordiCHI, Available online: <http://www.interactivespaces.net/data/uploads/papers/157.pdf>
- Foucault, M. 1980, *Truth and Power*, in C Gordon [ed], *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, The Harvester Press, Brighton, pp. 109-3

FURTHER READINGS/

- Sheridan, A., 1980, Michel Foucault : *the will to truth*, Routledge, London
- Nealon, J.T., 2008, *Foucault beyond Foucault : power and its intensifications since 1984*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif.
- Chun, W.H.K., 2006, *Control And Freedom: Power And Paranoia In The Age Of Fiber Optics*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Galloway, A.R. & Thacker, E., 2004, *Protocol, Control, and Networks*, Grey Room[17], pp. 6- 29
- Bucher, T., 2012, *Want to be on the top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook*, *New Media & Society*
- Beer, D., 2009, *Power through the algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious*, *New Media & Society*, 11[6], p. 985

WEEK 24 LECTURE WRITING SKILLS AND ESSAY COACHING/

This week is dedicated to coaching you how to start on your written practice essay. Unlike diary or blog writing, writing academic essays involve a systematic process which involves getting ideas/ brainstorming, finding credible sources, taking notes, annotating your readings and making an essay plan around a critical argument.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

Understand and practice the processes of planning, structuring and writing an essay.

FURTHER READING

- Francis, P. 2009. *Inspiring writing in art and design: taking a line for a write*. Bristol. Intellect Books: University of Chicago Press.
- Cottrell, S. 2011. *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

WEEK 29

GLOBAL AND THE REAL/

As mentioned in the introduction of this module, we are designers in a “global world”. But could global be a misinterpretation of connectivity. What does global mean in the world of perception? Do we perceive design and art as a global consumer, or do cultural and personal experiences interfere in our interpretation of the object? In this lecture, we will look at theories of interpretation and discuss their impact on our role as designer, illustrator or photographer.

DVD: The Many Lives of William Klein

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

- Compare and critically analyse global vs. local design.
- Indicate which theories affect your practice.
- Use denotation and connotation to deconstruct a design.

SET READING/

Merleau-Ponty, M. 2008. *The World of Perception*. London: Routledge, Chapter 1-2.

FURTHER READINGS/

- Westerhoff, Jan. 2012. *Reality: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barthes, Roland. 1972. *Mythologies*. London: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
- Leader, Darian. 2006. *Stealing the Mona Lisa, what art stops us from seeing*. Shoemaker & Hoard
- Berger John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London Penguin

WEEK 30

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE REAL/

Using the Exhibition Klein + Moriyama (Tate Modern) as a starting point, we will interrogate if photography is the medium to be trusted as a document or should we assume that an interference, both from photographer and reader, is fused to the mechanical image. Did photography ever evolved from documenting the world or has it always been photographers interpreting the world? By exploring various photography collectives/photographers we will discover the different approaches and answers throughout the history of photography.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/

- Critically analyse images from a creator and reader point of view.
- Explain photography in its historical context.
- Identify the involvement of the photographer in the real.

SET READING/

Badger, G. 2000. *How you look at it: Photographs of the 20th Century – The Art that Hides Itself, Notes on Photography's Quiet Genius*. New York: D.A.P. Distributed Art Publishers. [Available on BB]

FURTHER READINGS/

- Sontag, S. 1977. *On Photography*. London: Penguin Books
- Barthes, R. *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage.
- Bate, David. 2009. *Photography: key concepts*. Berg Publishers.
- Clarke Graham, 1997, *The Photograph*, Oxford U. Press, New York
- Edwards, S. *Photography: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, J. 1980. "Understanding a Photograph". In ed., A. Trachtenberg, *Classic Essays on Photography*, Connecticut: Leete's Island Books, pp.291- 297.

WEEK 31: NO LECTURES OR SEMINARS/

We will hold sign-up appointments for essay emergencies. These will take place in the studio or our offices.

RESOURCES/

READINGS/

- Baudrillard, J. 1970. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. Translated by Chris Turner. London: SAGE.
- Bignell, J. 1997. *Media Semiotics: An introduction*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press.
- Crow, D. 2003. *Visible Signs: An introduction to semiotics*. Canada: AVA Publishing.
- Du Gay, P. & Pryke, M. 2002. *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*. UK: SAGE
- Hall, S. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE
- MacFarlane, D. 2010. *Photography at the Threshold: Atget, Benjamin and Surrealism*, *History of Photography*, 34(1), pp.17-28.
- Shroeder, J. E. 2002. *Visual Consumption*. London: Routledge.
- Storey, J. 2001. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London: Pearson Prentice Hall.
The Cut-Up Machine. An electronic cut-up generator.
<http://languageisavirus.com/cutupmachine.html>
- Walker, J. A. & Chaplin, S. 1997. *Visual Culture: An Introduction*. Great Britain: Manchester University Press.

RECOMMENDED JOURNALS/

Advertising Society Review
New Media & Society
Journal of Consumer Culture
First Monday
Design Studies

CREDITS/

VEKTR-DESIGN STUDIO

KARO@VEKTR-DESIGN.COM

CJDXN@VEKTR-DESIGN.COM

GRANT@VEKTR-DESIGN.COM

SSIANI@VEKTR-DESIGN.COM

WWW.VEKYTR-DESIGN.COM