There are no specific prerequisites for this course. Nevertheless, students are expected to have been introduced to the field of Design Theory. Also, a certain academic level of writing and argumentation is expected, developed in the IE Module Writing Skills. Design and Criticism will build upon this previous knowledge and help students expand and further develop it.
SUBJECT DESCRIPTION
During the course *Design and Criticism* students will learn about the relevance of criticism for their work as a designer. But what is criticism? Being critical is often misunderstood as the disapproval of something. In this course, however, criticism is understood, in a broader sense, as the analysis of products, interventions and social structures. Criticism can be seen as a core activity of the contemporary designer. He or she can no longer be regarded as someone who is only concerned with the physical manufacturing of products. Designers are expected to be aware of the ecological, social and financial problems of our times. When solving these problems, often non-physical outcomes, such as research, communication or structural changes are involved. Contemporary design practice therefore demands advanced reading, writing and argumentative skills. In other words: a critical attitude. In this course we will train this attitude by looking at multiple aspects of design: work circumstances, production, societal effects and physical properties.
OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS
In this course students will develop their critical skills, with regard to the field of design. These include, amongst other things:
- to read and correctly interpret complex texts on design
- to make a convincing argument about (own) designs and apply self criticism
- to present such argumentation in oral and written work, according to academic standards
- to judge designs in terms of their ethics and values
- to understand the societal implications of technology
- to situate oneself critically in the discourse on the value of design
METHODOLOGY
In Design and Criticism several methodological strategies will be used. Below, I will elaborate on class material, in-class activities and assignments:

**Class material:** both canonical and contemporary texts on design are selected for this course. The canonical texts will give the students a framework from which to reflect about complex issues in design. The familiarity of the texts, globally and throughout the time, helps them engage more easily with academic literature, where the sources are widely used as reference points. Besides, the selected contemporary writings and audio-visual sources should help students situate themselves in the current discourse on design.

**In-class activities:** the course is scheduled in double sessions. The first session will consist of the professor lecturing. The second session will be dedicated to group assignments. Students are expected to read the weekly literature before coming to class. During the sessions we will use a dialectical approach. Each session is organised around an apparent contradiction, such as 'decoration versus application', or 'the individual designer versus the collective'. The aim is not to choose one side of the comparison, but to learn about nuances during the activity of comparing. During excursions, ideas discussed in class will be tested in a physical, concrete setting.

**Assignments:** During the course, students will make multiple assignments. Each week, they will receive reading questions that will guide them through the texts. The answers to the questions will be discussed during the class debates. For written assignments, students are expected to incorporate academic standards in terms of style, citation and the addressed literature. These skills are assumed to be acquired in the Writing Skills course (IE Module). More information about the writing criteria can be found below, under 'evaluation method'.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching methodology</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>13.33 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
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<td>Group work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other individual studying</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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PROGRAM

DESIGN AND CRITICISM

SESSIONS 1 - 2
INTRODUCTION
One of the first philosophers who explained criticism as analysis was Immanuel Kant. In his famous essay What is Enlightenment (1984) he wrote that reasoning frees people from blindly following common sense opinions and practices. According to the 20th Century philosopher Michel Foucault, this stubborn attitude is still relevant for a contemporary audience. In this session we will relate his ideas to the practice of design. Why should a designer be ‘enlightened’?


SESSIONS 3 - 4
MALE versus FEMALE
During this class, we will take a closer look at gender and how it plays an important role in design. We will use the theoretical framework of philosopher Judith Butler for analysing societal structures and designs. Also, we will discuss how to use gender-inclusive strategies in your own writings.


SESSIONS 5 - 6
THE MEDIUM versus THE MESSAGE
McLuhan’s The Medium is the Message (1964) is a classic text on the meaning of technology for society. Not what we write, but that we write matters. During this session we will study McLuhan’s approach and experiment with it. How can we apply his ideas to modern inventions such as social media, 3D-printing or virtual reality? Also, we will discuss Susan Sontag’s ideas on photography as a case study of how a medium changes the way we perceive the world.


SESSIONS 7 - 8
FUNCTION versus DECORATION
One of the strongest criticisms of decoration can be found in Adolf Loos’ famous essay Ornament and Crime (1910). According to him, design is better off without superfluous ornamentation. Who wants to eat gingerbread in the shape of a happy doll? Doesn’t it taste much better in a simple square form? For Loos, less ornament stands for the aesthetics of the modern man. In this class, we will analyse what the presence or absence of ornament does with design.


SESSIONS 9 - 10

08th January 2020
SEDUCTION versus SATISFACTION

Designers are very good in the play of seduction. Often we buy products, we do not really need. Their shiny surfaces, original forms or new applications promise us a better, fancier and easier life. Before these promises are fulfilled, we already have new desires. In this session we will use a semiotic approach for analysing this play of seduction. How can human beings be manipulated so easily? Roland Barthes writes in an almost humorous way about soap, cars and plastic! A more serious tone can be found in the critical judgement of overconsumption by Victor Papanek. Should designers stop playing these games? How can a design satisfy a real need?

Video: BMW Design Commercial

SESSIONS 11 - 12

EXCURSION TO THE MADRID DESIGN FESTIVAL

More information will follow, during the course. This session might take place on another day.

M.D.: Website: Madrid Design Festival

SESSIONS 13 - 14

THE CHAIN versus THE END PRODUCT

Usually when you visit a web shop, the things you see are products you can buy. Invisible are the raw materials, the costs and the working circumstances that led to these products. Usually the price of the products is not determined by the effort in this chain, but rather by the supply and demand of the market. This is why Karl Marx writes that goods appear as fetishes in the market. They are attributed value and powers that have nothing to do with their origins. Fairtrade coffee, biological cotton or vegan sneakers can be seen as the first signs of a society that has more eye for the chain behind the product. Are we heading to the right direction?

Video: Fashion Revolution. 'The 2 Euro T-Shirt - A Social Experiment'
Video: Tony's Chocolony. The story of an unusual chocolate bar (Comercial)

SESSIONS 15 - 16

MASS versus ELITE CULTURE

Technical reproducibility made it possible to produce complex items for large numbers of people. According to the German philosopher Theodor Adorno, the effects of mass produced culture can not only be seen in the standardisation of products, but also in the homogenization of taste and desires of the people who form part of what he calls the ‘cultural industry’. How can we understand mass culture in our age? How do social media, for instance influence the songs we like, the clothes we buy or the way we see ourselves? It is important that human beings distinguish themselves from mass culture? And if so, how can this be reached?

Video: Katy Perry - Chained To The Rhythm (Official) ft. Skip Marley
Video: Stromae - Carmen (2015, oficial video clip)
SECTIONS 17 - 18

PUBLIC versus PRIVATE

The theoretical distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ can be a helpful tool to look at the society we live in. Traditionally, in philosophy, ‘public’ refers to all actions related to communal spaces, work or politics. The word ‘private’, in contrast, is used to talk about family and domestic practices. Today, we find a strange mix of public and private practices on the internet. We seem to use all kinds of private details of our lives – family photo’s, our gym-trained bodies or the food we consume – for generating a public image on social media. Is this mix of public and private desirable? How can a designer facilitate better private and public spaces?


SECTIONS 19 - 20

EXCURSION IN SEGOVIA

During this session, we will visit a museum, workshop or other design-related place.

SECTIONS 21 - 22

TRADITION versus INNOVATION

It has almost become a cliché to say that the internet radically changed our experience of the world. Nevertheless, to analyse what exactly happened is a difficult challenge. Also, even a correct hypothesis would not tell us anything about how to deal with these changes. Pre-internet culture seems to have become an endanger animal specie. Physical newspapers have to fight for their existence, libraries are more and more replaced by EBooks and gay bars have to close because of Grindr. Is it important to put effort in preserving pre-internet culture? Or, do we have to reinvent ourselves, as Alessandro Baricco seems to suggest?


SECTIONS 23 - 24

EXPERIENCES versus PRODUCTS

In a world of abundance, people seem more and more interested in buying experiences instead of products. A widely used term for this immaterial market is post-Fordist or post-industrial. Not only the ‘products’ but also work circumstances change, with this new focus on immaterial trade. We sell ideas, travel experiences or advice. How to understand this new world of immaterial business?


SECTIONS 25 - 26

THE GENIUS versus THE COMMUNITY

In 2015, the collective Assemble was awarded the prestigious Turner prize. It was remarkable that this prize, traditionally given to a single artist, was awarded to a group of architects and designers. By choosing this group of young people, the jury seemed to value collective action over individual genius. How can we understand this new trend of collective activism and community projects? Would you like to be in a collective as well? What topics or ideals would connect you with others?

SESSIONS 27 - 28
RECAP: DESIGN AND CRITICISM

SESSIONS 29 - 30
FINAL EXAM
EVALUATION CRITERIA

In-class participation

Behavior that will positively impact the participation score:
- Collaboration: being able to listen to (and rephrase) arguments of your peers
- Qualitative questions: not the frequency, but the quality of your questions will be noted
- Informed questions and comments that show serious preparation of the lectures

Behavior that will negatively impact the participation score:
- Not following the code of conduct (find it below)
- Not paying attention in class
- A lack of preparation of the class material
- Repeating disturbing behavior, after a warning

Essays

Two essays will be written for this course. Essays will be marked according to Structure (25%), Style (25%) and Content (50%) which also includes the appropriate and correct use of sources. In each of this criteria, the following points have to be observed:

Structure:
- the general plan of the essay
- the connection between ideas exposed
- the inclusion of a conclusion
- the existence of paragraphs corresponding to ideas or concepts.

2. Style:
- the absence of grammatical mistakes,
- the proper use of academic English corresponding to college level;
- the adequate use of sources and quotations,

3. Content:
- the level of originality in the essay,
- the argumentative level of the essay;
- the relevance of the information contained in it, without being a mere summary;
- the adequacy of the content to the question proposed;
- the logical connections between presentation of ideas and final conclusions
- the relevance of such conclusions without being a mere tautology.

Presentation

A short duo presentation will be given about one of the topics. More information will be given during the course.

Final Exam

The Final exam will be in-class exam about all the literature studied during the course.

SCORES

- Sobresaliente/Outstanding: 9.0-10.0 (A to A+)

Consistently produces work of the highest quality and craft; exhibits notable progress and development over the course of the semester; meets all course objectives at highest level; attendance is near-perfect, and contributions to course discussions are extremely valuable.
- Notable: 7.0-8.9 (B to B+)
Notable: 7.0-8.9 (B to B+)
Completes all assignments with work of above-average quality and craft; exhibits significant progress and development; meets most course objectives; attendance and participation are very good.

- Aprobado: 6.0-7.0 (C to C+)
Aprobado: 6.0-7.0 (C to C+)
Completes all assignments with work of acceptable quality and craft; exhibits some progress and development; meets a majority of course objectives. Attendance and participation are acceptable.

- Aprobado: 5.0-6.0 (D)
Aprobado: 5.0-6.0 (D)
Assignments are delivered but are incomplete and/or of low quality and craft; exhibits little progress and development; meets few course objectives. Attendance and participation are poor, but absences do not total more than 30%.

- Suspenso: 0-4.9 (F)
Suspenso: 0-4.9 (F)
Work is incomplete, missing, or does not meet course objectives. Attendance and participation are poor.

- Automatic Failure/Suspenso: 0 (F)
Automatic Failure/Suspenso: 0 (F)

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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

RETAKE POLICY
Each student has 4 chances to pass any given course distributed in two consecutive academic years (regular period and July period).

Please note that a student who misses 30% or more of the scheduled sessions receives an automatic 0.0, and loses his or her right to the second "convocatoria."

Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance rule will lose their 1st and 2nd chance, and go directly to the 3rd one (they will need to enrol again in this course next academic year).

Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:

- Students failing the course in the first regular period will have to do a retake in July (except those not complying with the attendance rules, which are banned from this possibility).
- Dates and location of the July retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed.
- Please take this into consideration when planning your summer.
- The maximum grade that a student may obtain in any type of retake will be 8 out of 10.
- The retakes in the same academic year (2nd chance) will consist on a comprehensive exam. The grade will depend only on the performance in this exam; continuous evaluation over the semester will not be taken into account. This exam will be designed bearing in mind that the passing grade is 5 and the maximum grade that can be attained is 8.
- The students in their third and fourth attempts must do a comprehensive examination (50%) and submit one long essay (3,000 words) (50%) before the exam on a topic previously agreed upon with the professor.
Professor: **CARMEN HELENE DOMENIQUE VAN BRUGGEN**  
E-mail: cvanbruggen@faculty.ie.edu

Carmen van Bruggen’s academic expertise lies in the fields of art and philosophy, which she both studied at the University of Groningen (The Netherlands). Currently, she is working as a freelance lecturer, writer and organizer of small cultural events in Madrid. Carmen has a wide experience working in and for educational institutions, and she has been involved in introducing critical reflection to various professional areas. Carmen holds a Bachelor in Arts, Culture and Media, a Bachelor in Philosophy and a Research Master in Literary and Cultural Studies.

**OTHER INFORMATION**  
Email: cvanbruggen@faculty.ie.edu  
Office hours will be scheduled in relevant weeks and announced during the course.