Anthropology 253: Design | Aesthetics | Social Life
Spring 2016
Professor Keith M. Murphy

Time: Tuesday 9:00-11:50
Office Hours: Tuesdays from 2-3 & Thursdays from 10-11; or by appointment
Course Web Page:

Course Description

The central theme of this course is an exploration of design and aesthetics from an anthropological perspective. While anthropologists have long been interested in phenomena like art, architecture, and theater, we have only recently begun to recognize that design demands consideration as both a cultural form and a cultural practice linked to, yet nonetheless distinct from, other aesthetic endeavors. This course is thus largely oriented toward working through a conceptual basis for an anthropological approach to design—one aligned with, but also distinct from, those other aesthetic domains. As such, the material is in many ways rather mixed: some ethnography and some theory; some social science and some philosophy; some art and design and a bit of art history. Over the course of the quarter we'll cover a lot of ground—not all of which is obviously related—exploring some of the possible directions in which an "anthropology of design" might lead.

Required Readings

There are **two** (2) books you'll need to purchase or borrow, both of which are available at the UCI bookstore or at various online retailers. They are also available at the library, I think.

- Murphy, K.M. (2015). *Swedish Design: An Ethnography.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schüll, N.D. (2012). *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

The rest of the readings can be found on the **course webpage**:

Course Requirements and Logistics

In addition to showing up prepared each week to participate fully in the seminar, there are **three** (3) main requirements you'll have to fulfill to perform successfully in the course.

The **first** is to lead class discussion for one week of the course. You'll be responsible for preparing and leading one entire seminar. I'm not expecting slideshows or anything fancy (though it's not discouraged, either). I'm more concerned that we have interesting and lively conversations about the class materials. This means the success of the course rests largely on your collective shoulders. I'll of course bring my own input each week, but I expect the bulk of the discussion to be self-generated and self-propelled. The best approach is to come prepared each week *as if it's your turn to present*, even if it isn't. We'll work out some more specific mechanics, including who is responsible for which readings, on the first day of class, and if you've got any concerns about the materials or about presenting, please talk to me beforehand.

The **second** requirement is a set of design reflections—let's say **two** (2) over the whole quarter—which you'll write up and submit to the class. This is actually really easy: you just need to find something "out there" that somehow relates to the course materials, think about it, write up a page or so about it, and be prepared to talk to the group about it. This something can be a material object, a news article, an internet clip, whatever. The idea is for you to demonstrate some reflexivity with regard to the way we can look at design and the everyday world from and anthropological point of view. We'll discuss the mechanics of this during Week 1.

The **third** requirement is a final assignment, due **Wednesday, June 8, 2016**, via email. This can take one of two forms, but no matter which you choose, it must in some way deal with material we've covered in class, and also include material from outside sources.

- A) a paper on a topic of your choosing (including something you're already working on)
- B) a paper based on a specific question I give you, sometime towards the end of the quarter

Please let me know which option you're choosing by Week 7. The paper should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words, though I'm more interested in the quality and usefulness of what you produce than its length. We'll negotiate the specifics as the quarter progresses, but again, remember that whichever option you choose it must focus on design and anthropology and draw heavily upon the course readings.

Week 1   Introductions and Orientations

- **No reading due for week 1**

Week 2   Six Perspectives on Design and Aesthetics

- Gell, A. (1992). "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in J Coote, A Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; pp. 40–63.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981). "Design and Environment, or How Political Economy Escalates Into Cyberblitz," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, New York: Telos Press; pp. 185-203.
- Rancière, J. (2004). "The Distribution of the Sensible," in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, New York: Continuum; pp. 12-45.
- Latour B. (2008). "A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk)," keynote lecture for the Networks of Design meeting of the Design History Society, Falmouth, Cornwall, 3 September 2008; pp. 1-13.
- Appadurai, A. (2013). "The Social Life of Design," in *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*, New York: Verso; pp. 253-267.
- Papanek, V. (1984). "The Myth of the Noble Slob" and "Do-It-Yourself Murder," in *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (2nd Edition), Chicago: Academy Chicago; pp. 40-85.

Week 3   Design Anthropology, Then and Now

- Wasson C. (2000). "Ethnography in the Field of Design," *Human Organization* 59(4), 377–88.
- Gunn, W., & Donovan, J. (2012). "Design Anthropology: An Introduction," in W. Gunn & J. Donovan (eds.), *Design and Anthropology,* Surrey, UK: Ashgate; pp. 1-16.
- Otto, T. and R.C. Smith (2013). "Design Anthropology: A Distinct Style of Knowing," in W. Gunn, T. Otto, & R.C. Smith (eds.), *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*, London: Bloomsbury; pp. 1-29.

- Hunt, J. (2010). "Prototyping the Social: Temporality and Speculative Futures at the Intersection of Design and Culture," in A. J. Clarke (ed.), *Design Anthropology: Object Culture in the 21st Century,* New York: Springer; pp. 33–44.

- Gatt, C., & Ingold, T. (2013). "From Description to Correspondence: Anthropology in Real Time." in W. Gunn, T. Otto, & R.C. Smith (eds.), *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice,* London: Bloomsbury; pp. 139–158.

- Rabinow, P., & Marcus, G. E. with J.D. Faubion & T. Rees (2008). "Dialogue V: In Search of (New) Norms and Forms," in *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary,* Durham: Duke University Press; pp. 73-92.

- Murphy, K. M., & Marcus, G. E. (2013). "Epilogue: Ethnography and Design, Ethnography in Design...Ethnography by Design." in W. Gunn, T. Otto, & R.C. Smith (eds.), *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice,* London: Bloomsbury; pp. 251–268.

Week 4   Deconstructing Design Thinking

- Brown, T. (2009). *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation.* New York: Harper Collins; pp. 1-38.

- Lockwood, T. (2009). "Foreword," in *Design Thinking: Integrating Innovation, Customer Experience, and Brand Value*, T. Lockwood (ed.), New York: Allworth Press; pp. vii-xvii.

- Cross, N. (2011). *Design Thinking: Understanding How Designers Think and Work*, New York: Berg; pp. 1-30.

- Rowe, P.G. (1987). *Design Thinking*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press; pp. 1-37.

- Simon, H. (1996/1969). "The Science of Design: Creating the Artificial, in *The Sciences of the Artificial*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; pp. 111-138.

- Schön, D. (1983). "From Technical Rationality to Reflection-in-Action," in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, New York: Basic Books; pp. 21-69.

Week 5   Making as Social Action | Theories and Methods

- Arendt, H. (1958). "Work", section IV of *The Human Condition* (2nd Edition), Chicago: University of Chicago Press; pp. 136-174.

- Ingold, T. (2013). "The Materials of Life" and "On Building a House," in *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, New York: Routledge; pp. 1-16 & 47-60.

- Suchman, L.A. & R.H. Trigg (1991). "Understanding Practice: Video as a Medium for Reflection and Design," in *Design at Work: Cooperative Design of Computer Systems,* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; pp. 65-89.

- Murphy, K.M. (2012). "Transmodality and Temporality in Design Interactions," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44(14), pp. 1966–1981.

Week 6   Forms, Qualities, and Objects

- Levine, C. (2015). "Introduction," in *Forms: Wholes, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network,* Princeton: Princeton University Press; pp. 1-23.

- Ingold, T. (2007). "Traces, Threads, and Surfaces," in *Lines: A Brief History*, New York: Routledge; pp. 39-71.

- Harkness, N. (2015). "The Pragmatics of Qualia in Practice," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, pp. 573-589.
- Miller, D. (1987). "Artefacts in Their Contexts," in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption,* London: Blackwell; pp. 109-130.
- Attfield, J. (2007). "The Meaning of Design: Things with Attitude," in *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*, London: Berg; pp. 11-43.

Week 7   An Anthropology of Brand

- Moore, R. E. (2003). "From Genericide to Viral Marketing: On "Brand," *Language & Communication*, 23(3-4), 331–357.
- Foster, R.J. (2007). "The Work of the New Economy: Consumers, Brands, and Value Creation," *Cultural Anthropology*, 22(4), 707–731.
- Nakassis, C. V. (2012). "Brand, Citationality, Performativity," *American Anthropologist,* 114(4), pp. 624-638.
- Agha, A. (2015). "Tropes of Branding in Forms of Life," *Signs and Society,* 3(S1), pp. S174-S194.
- Shankar, S. (2012). "Creating Model Consumers: Producing Ethnicity, Race, and Class in Asian American Advertising," *American Ethnologist* 39(3), pp. 578-591.

Week 8   Aesthetic Communities

- Danto, A.C. (1964). "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* 61(19), pp. 571 - 584.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, New York: Columbia University Press; pp. 29-73.
- Geertz, C. (1983). "Art as a Cultural System," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology,* New York: Basic Books; pp. 94-120.
- Luvaas, B. (2010). "Designer Vandalism: Indonesian Indie Fashion and the Cultural Practice of Cut 'n' Paste," *Visual Anthropology Review* 26(1), pp. 1-16.
- Chumly, L. (2013). "Evaluation Regimes and the Qualia of Quality," *Anthropological Theory* 13(1/2), pp. 169-183.

Week 9   Design and Politics

- Winner, L. (1995). "Political Ergonomics," in *Discovering Design: Explorations in Design Studies*, R. Buchanan & V. Margolin (eds.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press; pp. 146-170.
- Murphy, K.M. (2015). *Swedish Design: An Ethnography.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Week 10   Design and the Subject

- Schüll, N.D. (2012). *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.