Parsons MFA Design and Technology: Major Studio Two 2017

Studio Faculty
Class Meeting Schedule
Office Hours by Appointment

Course Description

Major Studio 2 provides first year MFA Design & Technology students with a context for further developing their focus as an artist or designer within a technology-driven environment. While the aims of Major Studio One were to distinguish concept from form, and to introduce the process of iterative design; the focus of Major Studio Two is geared toward working with systems, designing for engagement, and designing for contexts where not all variables are known (i.e. speculation). Emphasis will be placed on process and concept, regardless of the media employed. The end goal of Major Studio 2 is to refine individual creative practice and working methodology by exploring creative modes of prototyping and research; supported by analytical discussion in a critique-based studio environment.

Students will work individually and in groups to produce both theoretical and applied projects. In addition to making, all students are required to contribute to discussion and critique as a substantial part of their grade, to demonstrate their understanding and perspective on the subjects studied.

The course is divided into two sections; a series of short group projects will be followed by a self-initiated final project. Readings, research and writing assignments will complement design projects.

Toward the end of the course, students participate in a Candidacy Review, where they synthesize and present their overall goals & accomplishments for their first MFADT year, and discuss plans for their second year with faculty critics.

This is the second in the series of four MFADT Studio courses: Major Studios 1 & 2, and Thesis Studios 1 & 2. These form the core of the curriculum, which is supported by technical and academic electives. Major Studios focus on developing concept and methodologies for making; support electives are for technical development, and academic electives concentrate on critical discourse. Students are responsible for establishing intersections across different classes in their course of study.

Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate proficiency with iterative design and prototyping processes, incorporating a range of methodologies, as evidenced through both group and individual projects
2. Demonstrate proficiency with research strategies as evidenced through concept presentation & writing
3. Demonstrate ability to think analytically to argue in defense of their own work, or offer constructive criticism in the discussion of others.

4. Demonstrate proficiency describing the context of their work; how their work relates to history of concepts and other creative works in the fields of art, design and technology.
5. Exhibit attention to detail, and command of production and craft skills.
6. Demonstrate command of working with small teams to collaborate on developing concepts, making decisions, executing equitable workloads and maintaining production schedules.
7. Demonstrate proficiency with various forms of design writing, including but not limited to design criticism, design briefs, self-assessment, and user scenarios.

Weekly Schedule

Wk 01	Jan 23-25	Intro, domain mapping
Wk 02	Jan 30 – Feb 1	Project 1: Environments, proposal and prototype
Wk 03	Feb 6-8	Project 1: Environments, iterated prototype and process blog
Wk 04	Feb 13-15	Project 2: Objects, proposal and prototype
Wk 05	Feb 22	Project 2: Objects, iterated prototype and blog; *Feb 20th Is Presidents Day holiday*
Wk 06	Feb 27-Mar 1	Project 3: Play proposal, prototype;
Wk 07	Mar 6-8	Project 3: Play iterated proto & blog; *Due: Final proj concept & research questions*
Wk 08	Mar 13-15	Final project: in class ideation & creative prototyping workshops
Wk 09	Mar 20-24	SPRING BREAK
	Mar 27-29	**Midterms:** final project proposals, initial research, concept prototype
Wk 10	Apr 3-5	Final project: Prototype 2 Aesthetic; 1x1 conferences
Wk 11	Apr 10-12	Final project: Prototype 3 UI/UX, user test; *Due: Research paper outline*
Wk 12	Apr 17-19	Final project: Prototype 4: Tech, user test; *Due: User test report, Final paper draft*
Wk 13	Apr 24-26	**Candidacy reviews:** w primary & outside faculty; *Due: Final paper*
Wk 14	May 1-3	Final Project: mock presentations, presentation strategies
		Major Major 1st Year Pop up Exhibition Sat May 06
Wk 15	May 8-10	**Final presentations** w primary faculty & outside critic; *Due: Final deliverables*

Course Components

Short Assignments
In the first half of the course, students will work on a series of short projects based on the nature of systems. The first critically explores how people engage with the world(s) around them; the second considers the psychological relationships that people have with objects, and the third explores systems in play, or, how people engage with one another. For example project specifications, see below under Assignments.

Final Project
The second part of the class focuses on an individual, long form project which will be determined by the student. This final project will cover approximately seven weeks and will have a strong written component. Students should consider the relationship between their concept, method, and use of tools, media and technology. The goals are for students to research how their work is situated within historical, aesthetic, technological and critical contexts; to gain proficiency with a range of prototyping strategies appropriate for their making; and to demonstrate proficiency the iterative design process (ideating, prototyping, testing, evaluating). Information and specifications here.

Critique and Presentation
Midterms and Finals are formal presentations. Midterms will be conducted in class; Finals will be open to the public, conducted with faculty and outside critics. Students should be able to present their work in a clear and concise manner. In class practice sessions before finals will facilitate testing and refine presentation strategies. The class will be divided into two groups for presentation for most projects, as outlined in the schedule below.

Candidacy Reviews held during week 14 are private advisory sessions with principal and outside faculty where students describe the goals for their MFA in Design and Technology, present their work thus far in pursuit of these goals, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and any questions for the panel.

Presentation Guidelines
When presenting, students should explain:
Context: what is your area of inquiry? What are you studying, experimenting with, questioning; and why?
Intention: what do you plan to make, and why? How is this making a response to your inquiry?
Impact: what is the goal of your project, what impact do you think it will have, why is it important?

Reading and Discussion

Reading responses: Students will post a short paragraph (~ 300 words) online in response to assigned readings, and it's URL to their section's Slack channel before each discussion class. A compilation of all reading responses will be submitted as part of the course final deliverables.

Reading Moderation: Students will sign up in groups of 2 - 3 to moderate discussion for at least one reading per semester. The goal of these discussions is not to summarize the reading, but rather to present an opinion on how the text relates to areas of personal interest, current projects, and current events. Moderators will post a more in depth reading commentary (~ 600 words) before their assigned class that

ends with questions for discussion. Presentations should focus on interaction and involve rest of the class with conversation or activities. Short exercises, games or visual presentations are encouraged.

Required Readings

- Environment reading: Madeline Schwartzman, *See Yourself Sensing*, 2011, excerpts Environment and Reframers
- Environment reading: Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984, from Ch VII Walking the City see "From the Concept of the City to Urban Practices," and from Ch IX Spatial Stories see "Spaces and Places"
- Object Reading: Dunne & Raby, *Design Noir,* 2001, chapter 3, "Design Noir"
- Object Reading: Mihaly Csiksentmihalyi, *Why We Need Things*
- Play Reading: K. Salen and E. Zimmerman, selections from *Rules of Play*: "Defining Play" and / or "Defining Games"
- Play Reading: Steven Johnson, *Emergence, The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities & Software*, ch 2, "Street Level"

Writing

The ability to formulate and present a strong argument is essential to all creative work. Students will do a variety of writing, which may include automatic writing, reflection documents, blog posts, design briefs, and user scenarios. Students will also write a 3000 - 3500 word (6-8 page) final paper, to outline the research and defend the concept of their final projects. The paper will be written in three stages: outline, draft and final. Students will be required make an appointment with the writing center after writing their rough draft to get feedback on the development of their argument and assistance with citing their sources. More information about the final paper can be found in a separate design brief.

Research

Domain-specific Bibliography
Throughout the semester students will compile an essential reading list concerning their research domains. Students are encouraged to actively connect with relevant luminaries, scholars, artists, practitioners, critics and peers in their area of interest (community of practice) bother personally and online (e.g., Twitter, reddit, listservs, meetups). Lists should be compiled through independent research and interviews with faculty and other experts. These bibliographies will be an important resource for students as they begin their thesis research.

Summer Research Plan
Students will work with studio faculty to develop a summer research plan in preparation for their thesis. Early in the semester students will be asked to define areas of interest, and begin to formulate design questions that will guide their work through both spring and summer. Beyond reading text and watching video, research may include learning a design, technical or programming skill; building models of interaction, taking field trips, interviewing people as experts or subjects, and developing a community of practice. This research plan will take the form of a written design brief, 2-3 pages in length, which includes an outline of specific deliverables to be produced over the summer. It will also be presented to thesis faculty in the first week of your thesis studio the following Fall semester.

Grading

10% class participation, reading responses & presentation
30% short group projects
25% candidacy review
35% final project and paper

Assignments

[Projects described below are examples to be altered or substituted as needed to facilitate realizing the specified learning goals. Faculty can choose to do three 2-wk projects, or two 3-wk projects, as long as all learning outcomes are met].

Project 1: Environments, or, how people engage with world(s) around them

Goal: to explore methods of designing a speculative environment to consider how humans and other living systems interact with their surroundings; and how new designs, interventions & materials might affect the nature of these relationships.

Example project *Designed World*s, choose from a variety of methods to describe a speculative environment; identify an interesting mechanic, strategy or adaptation that living or intelligent systems employ to interact with it; and use that mechanic as the starting point to build your own reactive system.

Information and specifications here.

Project 2: Objects and how people engage with them

Goals: to critically consider the psychological relationships that people have with objects; how interfaces can create meaning, structure & facilitate relationships.

Example Project *Narrative Objects,* create a physical object with some type of interface that has a narrative association.

Information and specifications here.

Project 3: Play, or, how people engage with each other

Goals: to consider different meanings of "play;" the difference between interactive & reactive, different types of relational systems (i.e. symbiotic, parasitic etc); and the idea of emergence.

Example project: *Transporting Core Mechanics*
(adapted from Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman's Rules of Play)
Rule set: analyze an existing game and identify its core mechanic. Extract the concept of the core mechanic and design a different game around it in a different context.

Information and specifications here.

Criteria for Evaluation

Students in the course will receive feedback on the following areas:

Communication
How well is the student able to express their ideas, both verbally and with other forms of communication such as: writing, drawing, mapping, modeling, pre-visualizing etc?

Critical Thinking and Reflective Judgment
To what degree has the student demonstrated and developed critical thinking skills over the course of the semester? Reflective judgment not only asks the questions with concrete answers such as evaluative questions about form, methodology, materials, utility, ergonomics, aesthetics, style, cultural, experience, research, and process critique, but also attacks difficult problems of the world that require research and evidence to support conclusions that can then be offered to the fields encompassed by design and technology.

Design Process
How is the student incorporating proper use of problem identification, brainstorming, generating ideas, analysis, research, writing of specifications and constraints, real world costs, feasibility, testing, iterating along a line of thinking and then approaching the problem differently in the next cycle, evaluation of process and evaluation of the form created, integrating and adapting new processes and ideas along the iterative design cycle.

Contextualization, Conclusion and Evaluation
Have the students been able to connect their work and ideas to historical and contemporary precedents, and to situate their work within the larger discourse surrounding ideas of design and technology? Can the student confidently synthesize several different approaches to a design problem and make conclusions of their own? Can the student evaluate their projects' successes and failures?

Integration and Appropriate Use of Technology
Are the students making good choices about the form and type of technology they are using to express their design concepts? Are the students able to integrate technology into the conceptualization of their projects?

Iteration, Production, Time Management
Are students able to scale their projects to the appropriate time frame and technical/design resources at their disposal? Are students recording their thoughts and processes on their website so that their knowledge can be shared with the rest of the class.

Graduate Grading Scale

A Work of exceptional quality

A- Work of high quality
B+ Very good work
B Good work; satisfies course requirements

Satisfactory completion of a course is considered to be a grade of B or higher

B- Below-average work
C+ Less than adequate work
C Well below average work
C- Poor work; lowest possible passing grade
F Failure
GM Grade missing for an individual

Grades of D are not used in graduate level courses.

Grade of W
The grade of W may be issued by the Office of the Registrar to a student who officially withdraws from a course within the applicable deadline. There is no academic penalty, but the grade will appear on the student transcript. A grade of W may also be issued by an instructor to a graduate student (except at Parsons and Mannes) who has not completed course requirements nor arranged for an Incomplete.

Grade of Z
The grade of Z is issued by an instructor to a student who has not attended or not completed all required work in a course but did not officially withdraw before the withdrawal deadline. It differs from an "F," which would indicate that the student technically completed requirements but that the level of work did not qualify for a passing grade.

Grades of Incomplete
The grade of I, or temporary incomplete, may be granted to a student under unusual and extenuating circumstances, such as when the student's academic life is interrupted by a medical or personal emergency. This mark is not given automatically but only upon the student's request and at the discretion of the instructor. A Request for Incomplete form must be completed and signed by student and instructor. The time allowed for completion of the work and removal of the "I" mark will be set by the instructor with the following limitations: work must be completed no later than one year following the end of the class. Grades of "I" not revised in the prescribed time will be recorded as a final grade of "N" by the Registrar's Office.

Divisional, Program and Class Policies

- Responsibility

Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent. Late assignments, failure to complete the assignments for class discussion and/or critique, and lack of preparedness for in-class discussions, presentations and/or critiques will jeopardize your successful completion of this course.

- Participation

Class participation is an essential part of class and includes: keeping up with reading, assignments, projects, contributing meaningfully to class discussions, active participation in group work, and coming to class regularly and on time.

- Attendance

Parsons' attendance guidelines were developed to encourage students' success in all aspects of their academic programs. Full participation is essential to the successful completion of coursework and enhances the quality of the educational experience for all, particularly in courses where group work is integral; thus, Parsons promotes high levels of attendance. Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly and in compliance with the standards stated in this course syllabus.

While attendance is just one aspect of active participation, absence from a significant portion of class time may prevent the successful attainment of course objectives. A significant portion of class time is generally defined as the equivalent of three weeks, or 20%, of class time. Lateness or early departure from class may be recorded as one full absence. Students may be asked to withdraw from a course if habitual absenteeism or tardiness has a negative impact on the class environment.
Whether the course is a lecture, seminar or studio, faculty will assess each student's performance against all of the assessment criteria in determining the student's final grade.

- Canvas

Use of Canvas may be an important resource for this class. Students should check it for announcements before coming to class each week.

- Delays

In rare instances, I may be delayed arriving to class. If I have not arrived by the time class is scheduled to start, you must wait a minimum of thirty minutes for my arrival. In the event that I will miss class entirely, a sign will be posted at the classroom indicating your assignment for the next class meeting.

- Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops, cameras, etc.) is permitted when the device is being used in relation to the course's work. All other uses are prohibited in the classroom and devices should be turned off before class starts.

- Academic Honesty and Integrity

The New School views "academic honesty and integrity" as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits. Academic honesty and integrity includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of faculty members and other students). Academic dishonesty results from infractions of this "accurate use". The standards of academic honesty and integrity, and citation of sources, apply to all forms of academic work, including submissions of drafts of final papers or projects. All members of the University community

are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty and integrity. Please see the complete policy in the Parsons Catalog.
It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university.

- Student Disability Services (SDS)

In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to meet with Jason Luchs in the Office of Student Disability Services, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter to you to bring to me. SDS assists students with disabilities in need of academic and programmatic accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. http://www.newschool.edu/studentservices/disability/.