

Beyond Design Thinking (NWMEDIA 198) Syllabus

M 5-7pm, Moffitt 340

Course Description

This decal will question the relationship between technology, design, and our inherited value systems. We will use design as a critical lens to understand current technological developments and how they embody our values and beliefs. Topics want to cover are critical theory, science and technology studies, design ethics, postcolonial design, and speculative design.

Course Philosophy

"We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities."

— Pope Francis

More than ever, we must ask ourselves: what are the limits of technology, and who is responsible for technology? At what points do technologies fail those for whom it is intended to support, and what does it mean when this happens? And the question perhaps closest to us — as designers and technologists, creators and future leaders of Silicon Valley, what is our role? Are we complicit in the creation of destructive technologies, whether intentionally or not?

By traversing speculative design, STS, and critical theory, we seek to create a space of open dialogue, to reflect on and critique our commitments and impacts as designers and technologists. We hope that students will walk away with a new perspective on how the objects they use in daily life and their entire environment is designed and constructed, and how those design choices are justified or not.

Instructors

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(Note: please direct non-urgent course-related emails to bdtdecal@gmail.com.)

Homework

- Weekly bCourses reflection (~200 words) responding to all readings of that week, and posing discussion questions based on the reading onto [this doc](#).
- Late Assignment Policy: Late assignments will be docked 10% for each day they are late.

Final Project

Students will be expected to respond to the following prompt:

Choose any real-world object/space and analyze its design through the theories we've discussed in class so far. How does this item support or subvert stereotypes? How does its design serve its intended function? How could this object/space be reimaged?

[Extra Credit] Redesign this object/space in response to your analysis above.

Your analysis is expected to be 3-4 pages long, double-spaced, 12 pt. font. You may use any medium for your redesign as long as you can describe it in depth or attach a photo or video of it. Be prepared to present your project in a 3-5 minute presentation on the final day of class. Due 5/6 by 5pm.

Class Management Policies

1. Office Hours are by appointment.
2. [Anonymous Course Feedback Form](#) — we would love to hear from you!
3. Technology (laptops, phones) allowed if related to course material, but be respectful.
4. We follow the [Berkeley Honor Code](#) for academic honesty.

5. In order to pass the course, no more than two absences (excused or unexcused) are permitted.
6. If you require DSP accommodations for the assignments, please contact the facilitators.

Grading Policy

Students will receive 2 units of pass/no pass academic credit upon successful completion of this course. To earn a passing grade, students are required to earn above a total of 70% in the weighted categories below, with no more than two absences.

Discussion: 20% (66)

Attendance: 20% (66)

Homework and In-Class Design Exercises: 30% (100)

Final Project: 30% (100 pts, +20 extra possible)

Total: 332 (extra credit ~6%)

Schedule

Week 1, Feb 4 — **Introduction + What is Design (Thinking)?**

- a. Overview of Course, Design Thinking, Critical Design
- b. Design Code of Ethics
- c. Enrollment

Week 2, Feb 12 — **Foundations of Modern Technology & Design; *why does technology matter, and how do we currently understand it? What do assume about technology, and how is it legitimized?***

1. Required Readings

- a. Latour: [Moral Dilemmas of a Safety Belt](#)
- b. Winner: [Do Artifacts Have Politics?](#)
- c. Flusser: [About the Word Design](#)

2. Optional Readings

- a. Winograd: [Chapter 3 of Understanding Computers and Cognition](#)

Week 3, Feb 19 - No Class

Week 4, Feb 26 — **Ethics and Values in Design**; *how are the values of designers and technologists embedded in their work? What are the implications of such?*

1. Required Readings

- a. Nissenbaum, Helen: [How Computer Systems Embody Values](#)
- b. Sinderson, Caroline: [Microsoft's Tay is an Example of Bad Design](#)
- c. Iskander, Natasha: [Design Thinking is Conservative](#)

Week 5, March 4 — **Postcolonial, Feminist/Queer Design**; *an overview of counter-narrative design frameworks?*

1. Required Readings

- a. Irani, Lily: [Postcolonial Computing: A Lens on Design and Development](#)
- b. Tunstall, Dori: [7 Principles of Design Anthropology](#)
- c. Myers, Monika & Crockett, Jason: [Manifesto for Queer Universal Design](#)

2. Optional Readings

- a. Schultz, Tristan, et al.: [What Is at Stake with Decolonizing Design? A Roundtable](#)

Week 6, March 11 — **Socio-Political Implications of Design**; *What are some examples of the implications of design in society and politics?*

1. Required Readings

- a. Starbird, Kate & Leysia Palen: [\(How\) Will the Revolution be Retweeted? Information Diffusion and the 2011 Egyptian Uprising](#)
- b. Weiser, Mark: [The Computer for the 21st Century](#)
- c. Hostile Design (Podcast)
 - i. 99% Invisible, [Half a House](#)

2. Optional Reading

- a. Toyama, Kentaro: [Technology Won't Fix America's Neediest Schools](#)

3. Speaker: Abigail De Kosnik

Week 7, March 18 — **Technology and Design for Social Justice, Participatory Design**; *exploring the application of design for social change*

1. Required Readings

- a. Dombrowski, Lynn, Ellie Harmon & Sarah Fox: [Social Justice-Oriented Interaction Design: Outlining Key Design Strategies and Commitments](#)
- b. Spinuzzi: [The Methodology of Participatory Design](#)
- c. Courtney Martin: [The Reductive Seduction of Other People's Problems](#)

Week 8, March 25 — No Class; Spring Break

Week 9, April 1 — **Critical Design**; *introducing critical design as a strategy for reflecting on the social implications of technology and the design process itself.*

1. Required Readings

- a. Agre et. al: [Toward a Critical Technical Practice: Lessons Learned in Trying to Reform AI](#)
- b. Bardzell et. al: [What is 'critical' about critical design?](#) (see attached PDF!)
- c. Flood, Catherine & Gavin Grindon: [Disobedient Objects](#)
- d. Sengers et. al: [Reflective Design](#)

Week 10, April 8 — **Speculative Design, Design Fiction**; *using speculative design methods to (re-)imagine our future with technology.*

1. Required Readings

- a. Gaver, et al.: [Cultural Probes](#)
- b. Bleecker: "Part 1: Design Fiction"; pp 3-8 only of [Design Fiction: A short essay on design, science, fact, and fiction](#)
- c. Luiza Prado: [Questioning the "critical" in Speculative & Critical Design](#)

2. Optional Reading, for reference

- a. Dunne & Raby: [Speculative Everything](#), Chapter 1 and 2

Week 11, April 15 — Mental Health Week, no official class – enjoy snacks, jamming out, and having an open study space during busy times.

Week 12, April 22— **Expanding design framing**; *how do you decide what the problem is you are trying to solve? How can we expand our imaginations about how technologies — or non-technologies — can make change?*

1. Required Readings

- a. Reinsborough, Canning: [Points of Intervention](#)
- b. Baumer, Silberman: [When the implication is not to design \(technology\)](#)
- c. Liboiron: [How the Ocean Cleanup Array Fundamentally Misunderstands Marine Plastics](#)

Week 13, April 29 — **Final Presentations**

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