Debates in Design (Spring 2021)

Basic Information

Course Information

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Course Number: DESINV 201
Course Title:  Debates in Design
Units:         3
Meeting Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 5p-6:30p
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Instructors

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Bjoern Hartmann
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Kyle Steinfeld
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Course Description

Given the opportunity, designers will endlessly debate. This course aims to enable students to grasp the nature of these debates, and to become an active participant in contemporary design discourse.

Perhaps designers debate simply because *different practices of design fundamentally disagree* - we can plainly see this, in that the important differences that delineate design disciplines and

movements are so hotly contested. New disciplines constantly emerge, and old boundaries are continuously in flux - this course equips students to participate in the the discourses and debates that characterize contemporary design practice. At the same time, we may also plainly see that *different practices of design fundamentally concur*, and that there are ways of thinking and knowing common to designers across different disciplines. This course guides students in uncovering these interdisciplinary forms of design action and design knowledge. The seeds of future design disciplines are sown when dynamic groups of interdisciplinary designers are brought together, such as the cohort of Berkeley's MDes program. *This course prepares students to survey the field of practice, to identify these new potential disciplines, and to compellingly argue for their vision for the future of design.*

In this colloquium-style course, 6-8 speakers from design practice are invited to present to the class, each detailing a specific relevant project that they have worked on in their professional careers. Speakers may share relevant background material and suggested readings ahead of this talk, thereby allowing students to come in with thoughtful questions and discussion points to each class.

Early in the semester, groups of students are assigned to one speaker, and "shepherd" the speaker's engagement with the class, and the class with the speaker. In preparation for their talk, this team is expected to produce a detailed introduction for the speaker. Following the talk, this same team leads a follow-up discussion in-class, and then goes on to produce a structured reflection that contextualizes the practice and work of this speaker within the broader material culture of design.

Pedagogical Goals & Learning Objectives

The primary goal of the course is for students to develop a broad literacy in foundational and current debates across and between design disciplines. In pursuit of this aim, students will:

- Closely interact with accomplished designers.
- Hone critical thinking and communication skills.
  - Express concepts in visual media.
  - Express narratives through writing & audio.

- Collaborate with fellow MDes students in a variety of constellations.

Methods of Instruction

The course is *part colloquium*, in that we are mobilized by a series of invited speakers, *part discussion seminar*, in that we contextualize these speakers through readings and response, and *part studio*, in that we demonstrate our grasp of these topics through project-based work. The class meets twice a week online, and Tuesdays and Thursdays, and includes both synchronous and asynchronous modes of instruction.

On *Tuesdays* we'll begin with whole-class meeting to check in with the group, and reflect on any speakers that we may have heard from the week prior. Following this whole-group meeting, we may break into smaller discussion groups to consider any assigned readings for the week. *Thursdays* will typically be devoted to whole-group meetings, and will typically accommodate our invited talks or lectures offered by your instructors.

Projects & Evaluation

Your work in this course proceeds through individual and group projects, and through weekly readings and responses. We present these in summary below, and offer more detail on each in [the Assignments section of BCourses](#).

Mapping & Manifestos

Includes projects intended to support students' capacity to grasp and participate in interdisciplinary practice. In total, the following work *constitutes 25% of the final grade* for the course.

Mapping Invisible Disciplines

This two-part project seeks to prepare students to apprehend and navigate the fluid and contested arena of interdisciplinary professional activity as it occurs in the wild. In support of this aim, our work centers on a single product: a personal map of design praxis, a graphic that re-imagines the categories and relationships between design practices.

Imaginary Disciplines

Working within the field defined by the mapping project above, here students identify an emerging form of practice or a new design discipline, and author a manifesto that argues for its establishment.

Podcast & Parley

Includes projects intended to support students' familiarity with the discourses that surround contemporary design. In total, the following work *constitutes 50% of the final grade* for the course.

Pod Plot

This short individual exercise seeks to build familiarity with the content, tone, and rhetoric that is found in contemporary design discourses, with a focus on those discourses that are expressed via the medium of a podcast.

The Secret Life of…

This short individual exercise aims to acquaint students with a particular approach to talking about the practices of and the artifacts produced by design, and also to establish basic competencies in conducting effective interviews with practitioners.

The Podcast

In the most ambitious project of the semester, through research, interview, presentation, and the eventual production of a podcast episode, students "shepherd" the class through an engagement with one of the invited speakers in this colloquium.

Reading & Response

Each week, students will read and respond to assigned readings relevant to the speakers or work at hand. In total, these weekly responses *constitute 25% of the final grade* for the course.

Policies

Individual & Group Work

Some projects in this course will call for you to work collaboratively in groups. This might include group assignments, in which a number of students are responsible for together producing some deliverable, as well as informal working groups, in which a number of students participate together in a discussion during class time and are encouraged to work in tandem outside of class. Working effectively in groups is an essential part of professional design practice, the value of which is often understated in educational settings. While group work is evaluated collectively, individual contributions to the group and the overall culture of the class are evaluated individually.

Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do together with one's fellow students. We recommend this. However, individual projects should be completed independently and materials turned in as homework should be the result of one's own independent work. Only certain assignments are meant to be done together in a group.

Absences

Three or more unexcused absences from the course will result in a failing grade. See the section below on "accommodations & scheduling conflicts" for more on under what circumstances an absence is considered "excused".

Climate Statement

In this course, we are committed to an equitable and inclusive educational environment for all. As students, staff, and faculty, we strive to foster a community in which we celebrate our diversity and affirm the dignity of each person by respecting the identities,

perspectives, and experiences of those with whom we work. We intend to support a diversity of perspectives and experiences and respect each others' identities and backgrounds (including race/ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, language, religion, ability, etc.).

As a member of the UC Berkeley community, we are committed to a safe work environment for all.

To help accomplish this:

- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by a lack of inclusion, please contact the instructors, your ESS advisor, or the departmental Faculty Equity Advisor (list and information here
- .
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class (e.g., family matters, current events), please don't hesitate to come and talk with the instructor(s). We want to be resources for you.
- We are all in the process of learning how to respect and include diverse perspectives and identities. Please take care of yourself and those around you as we work through the challenging but important learning process.
- As a participant in this class, recognize that you can be proactive about making other students feel included and respected.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

As a part of ensuring an equitable and inclusive educational environment, we are committed to ensuring equal access to those students with disabilities. Please speak with one of your instructors as soon as possible if you need particular accommodations, and we will take every possible step to work out the necessary arrangements.

Academic Integrity

Everyone in this class is expected to adhere to the Berkeley honor code: "As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty,

integrity, and respect for others."

You are a member of an academic community at one of the world's leading research universities. Universities like Berkeley create knowledge that has a lasting impact in the world of ideas and on the lives of others; such knowledge can come from an undergraduate paper as well as the lab of an internationally known professor. One of the most important values of an academic community is the balance between the free flow of ideas and the respect for the intellectual property of others. Researchers don't use one another's research without permission; scholars and students always use proper citations in papers; professors may not circulate or publish student papers without the writer's permission; and students may not circulate or post materials (handouts, exams, syllabi - any class materials) from their classes without the written permission of the instructor.

Any material in this course that is submitted by you, and that bears your name, is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course, unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment, be sure to seek clarification from your instructor or GSI beforehand. Finally, you should keep in mind that as a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty - including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school - are simply not worth it.

You are encouraged to form study groups and work together to understand course material, but all written work as well as responses to in-class questions should be your own. There are ways to make your work personal and unique even when it seems that there is only

one

way to correctly answer a question, and the instructors will support you in learning these methods.

Student Conduct

Ethical conduct is of utmost importance in your education and career. The instructors, the College of Engineering, the College of Environmental Design, and U.C. Berkeley are responsible for supporting you by enforcing all students' compliance with the [Code of Student Conduct](#)

and the policies listed in [the CoE Student Guide](#)

. The Center for Student Conduct is set up to support you when you have been affected by actions that may violate these community rules. This includes an organized and transparent process, student participation in the process, mechanisms for appeals, and other mechanisms to protect fairness. More details [here](#)

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Accommodations & Scheduling Conflicts

We honor and respect the different learning needs of our students, and are committed to ensuring you have the resources you need to succeed in our class. If you need accommodations for any reason (e.g. religious observance, health concerns, insufficient resources, etc.) please discuss with your instructor or academic advisor how to best support you. We will respect your privacy under state and Federal laws, and you will not be asked to share more than you are comfortable sharing. The disabled student program is a related resource, listed below.

Please notify us in writing by the second week of the term about any known or potential schedule conflicts (such as religious observances, graduate or medical school interviews, or team activities). We will try our best to help you with making such accommodations, but cannot

promise them in all cases. In the rare event there is no mutually-workable solution is found, you may be dropped from the class.

Support during Remote Learning

We understand that your specific situation may present challenges to class participation. Please contact the instructors if you would like to discuss these and co-develop strategies for engaging with the course.

(STEP) is available to help access a laptop, Wi-Fi hotspot, and other peripherals.

You will be alerted as to when synchronous sessions are about to be recorded. If you prefer not to be recorded, you may turn your video and microphone off.

Please set your Zoom name to be the name you would like the instructors to call you. You may optionally include your personal pronouns.

Please set your Zoom picture to an appropriate profile picture of you to foster a sense of community and enhance interactions. If you are not comfortable using an image of yourself, you may use an appropriate picture of an avatar.

We encourage participating with your video on to foster a sense of community and enhance interactions. However, we understand that some students are not comfortable with video or may not be able to participate by video.

Amendments

Any necessary amendments to the information provided in this syllabus or in any course documents will be announced and posted in a timely manner in class. All amendments will be in force effective the date they are announced and posted.

Resources

Center for Access to Engineering Excellence (CAEE)