

Culture of Objects

Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

Course prefix: ID

Course number: 4206

Section: 1

CRN (you may add up to five):
23482

Instructor First Name: Joyce

Instructor Last Name: Medina

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This seminar surveys the field of design studies by examining the theories and methodologies that locate meaning within our culture that contribute to the designed object.

Weekly lectures which will summarize different design criteria, followed by student presentations which will address and apply these criteria to specific examples to generate discussion within the class.

Course learning outcomes:

Philosophy, material culture, anthropology and the technology sciences have all posited reciprocal relations between the designed object and culture. This seminar maps these different approaches and theories.

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge, skill and abilities in the following areas: Students will better understand the role of material culture in the design process in abstract theoretical terms and in specific examples.

Required course materials:

Course Textbook (required): Prasad Boradkar, Designing Things: A Critical Introduction to the Culture of Objects, 2010

Supplemental Readings (required): numerous files will be uploaded into the Modules in Canvas in support of the lectures and the various assignments

Grading policy:

Description of Graded Components

The grading components of the course allow students to practice a number of different design-related skills: researching different and varied design criteria, making informed choices about design preferences and synthesizing factual information about design theory to perform well on tests.

There will be **assignments** attached to the weekly lectures that will provide students with experience in applying design protocols. These assignments will be uploaded into Assignments on Canvas and submitted through Canvas as well.

In addition, each student will prepare a well-researched and informed **presentation** on an assigned topic appropriate to the course material. The topics will be assigned via written assignment briefs which will include information about a) format and details of the presented research, b) expectations and evaluation criteria in grading, c) due dates and submission information.

There will also be three **on-line proctored tests**. The tests will be made available on-line through Honorlock proctoring on the scheduled test dates in open testing windows.

These tests are not cumulative and will cover only the material since the last test.

Students will be evaluated on the quality of the completion of assignments (30%), on the quality of their researched presentation (30%), and on grades on tests (30%), and on the quality of their contributions in class discussions and consistent attendance of the lectures (10%).

Final grade averages will be calculated as follows: A: 100-90 (exceeds expectations on all questions); B: 89.9-80 (adequately meets expectations on the test answers); C: 79.9-70 (fails to adequately meet some expectations of test answers); D: 69.9-60 (failure to meet most expectations).

Attendance policy:

Required attendance.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.