

# Theorising Design

## PGVC1026

### MODULE DESCRIPTOR

ECTS credits <sup>1</sup>	5	Programme	MA Design History & Material Culture Professional Certificate in Theorising Design (CFA) MRes PhD
NQF level	9	School	School of Visual Culture
Stage	1	Module Co-ordinator	Dr Anna Moran
Trimester	1	Module Team	Dr Lisa Godson, Dr Anna Moran, David Crowley, Hillary O'Kelly
Contact	Neasa Travers, School of Visual Culture Secretary: <a href="mailto:visualculture@staff.ncad.ie">visualculture@staff.ncad.ie</a>		
Responsibility	The NCAD Academic Council and the School of Visual Culture Board have responsibility for this module.		

## 1. Introduction

This module develops critical understandings of theories of design in their historic context. Rather than offer a survey course on the history of design practice, it encourages students to develop a keen understanding of the historical development of key analytical and interpretive tools for making sense of the material world. It approaches ideas as historical objects which are formed in particular material and intellectual conditions and have particular effects. Attention is not only placed on the historical text but also the media and cultural contexts in which it appeared. As such, it also examines the ways in which criticism and discourse shapes design / design practice and vice versa. Through the module, students examine when and how the activity of history writing can be a kind of critical intervention into the field. This affords engagement with both contemporary commentators and key historical texts. For instance, a class on changing ideas about ornament in the C19th will involve reading Semper, Riegl and Loos as well as the work of historians like Iversen.

The aims of this module are to:

- provide participants with an introduction to key historic and contemporary theories of design.
- explore the impact of theory on design practice in different and distinct historical moments.
- explore how theory can be applied to interpret and understand design.

<sup>1</sup> European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, where 60 ECTS credits equate to the workload of a full-time academic year (two trimesters)

## 2. What will I learn?

---

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

1. Engage in close critical ANALYSIS of texts to understand how historical positions are consolidated and arguments made.
2. CONTEXTUALISE historical arguments, demonstrating how ideas are themselves products of historical circumstances.
3. PLAN, STRUCTURE and DELIVER a historiographic presentation.

### Module content

Class content may include the following topics:

- Theories of the commodity from Marx to the Present
- Conceptualisations of Craft
- The Politics of Ornament
- Abstraction as a Design Concept
- Tropicalism and its Critics
- Theories of Luxury
- Networks and Systems
- Design Activism
- Design and Race
- Critical Design and its Enemies

### Indicative bibliography

- Bieling, T. ed. (2019) *Design (&) Activism: Perspectives on Design as Activism and Activism as Design*
- Cheng, I et al (2020) *Race and Modern Architecture*
- Dunne and Raby, F (2014) *Speculative Everything. Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming*
- Easterling, K (2016), *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*
- Fine, P.C. (2021), *The Design of Race: How Visual Culture Shapes America*
- Horowitz I. (ed) (2002) *Veblen's Century*
- Iversen M (1995) *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*
- Mowl, T. (2000) *Stylistic Cold Wars, Betjeman versus Pevsner*
- Vidler, A. (2008) *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism*

### 3. How will I learn?

---

Each class will take the form of a weekly 2-hour seminar based on key readings. It will run over 10 weeks and culminate in a series of student presentations.

Learning tool	Hours
Seminars	20
Specified Learning Activities	20
Autonomous Student Learning	60
<b>Total Workload</b>	<b>100</b>

### 4. What learning supports are provided?

---

Bibliographic sources and models of writing / research practice will be supplied. Students will prepare for class by reading copies of key historical texts.

### 5. Am I eligible to take this module?

---

#### Module Requisites and Incompatibles

Pre-requisites	None
Co-requisites	None
Incompatibles	None
Prior learning	Where a student can demonstrate that they have achieved at least 80% of the learning outcomes of this module, by academic certified achievement, or through quantifiable and documented experience, they can apply to the School for that prior learning to be recognised. Applications must be received prior to the commencement of delivery of the module.
Recommended	None

### 6. How will I be assessed?

---

This module will be assessed by means of an illustrated presentation. Students will lead a seminar providing an introduction to a key text and engaging the student group in discussion.

Assessment tool	% of final grade	Timing
Presentation	100%	End of the trimester
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Assessment tool	Learning outcomes assessed
Presentation	1,2 and 3

### 7. Feedback, results and grading

---

#### Feedback

Written feedback will be given at the end of the module.

## Grading

Students' assessments will be graded using the [NCAD Grade Descriptors](#).

## 8. What happens if I fail?

---

### Resit Opportunities

Opportunities will be provided to students who do not complete all assessments, but students will not be able to qualify for the award on completion of this programme until the learning outcomes of this module have been met.

## 9. When and where is this module offered?

---

The module is offered in the Trimester 1. It will be offered in one of the seminar rooms at NCAD on our Thomas Street Campus.

## 10. How will I have the chance to evaluate the module?

---

It is important to NCAD that students inform the development of teaching and learning at NCAD. We encourage all students to communicate their concerns and their observations about their study to members of staff so that any changes can be made in a timely manner.

About two-thirds of the way through the year, a student forum will be convened to gather students' comments about their study and the delivery of the programme. In addition, at the end of Trimester 2, students have the opportunity to complete an online evaluation of their study and experience at NCAD. Students are also encouraged to complete the Irish Student Survey of Engagement. These evaluation events are important to current and future students, to ensure we can enhance the delivery of programmes at NCAD.

In addition, students are invited to discuss their experience on the module with their lecturers at any point during the year. Students can also relay your comments to the class student representative who will communicate their comments to the staff.

**For further details on the content of your module and teaching arrangements,  
consult your Programme or Module Handbook**