



Course syllabus

Produktsemiotik Product Semiotics

AFOA10, 5 credits, G1 (First Cycle)

Valid for: 2023/24

Faculty: Faculty of Engineering, LTH

Decided by: PLED A

Date of Decision: 2023-03-28

General Information

Main field: Industrial Design.

Compulsory for: KID2

Language of instruction: The course will be given in English on demand

Aim

The aim of the course is to train the ability to analyse products from a semiotic perspective, i.e. the way in which everyday objects, packages, ads and marks communicate their qualities to those that will use these products. It is also an aim to train the ability to discuss design in the perspective of a general cultural analysis.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

For a passing grade the student must

- be able to apply a semiotic analysis of products and their relation to different contexts
- understand how semiotics is used as a tool in product presentation

Competences and skills

For a passing grade the student must

- in images or text be able to describe how products communicate their use, their aesthetic qualities, and their cultural belonging.
- in conceptual design sketches, or in written text, be able to interpret semiotic models, i.e. be able to use theories about the mediation and communication of products.

- in conceptual design sketches be able to re-design an everyday product, after an analysis of its semiotic weaknesses.
- at a verbal review constructively present the semiotic advantages of a personal proposal visually to a group of listeners/critics.
- in an exhibition be able to visually communicate the results of the coursework both within the course and externally to a wider target group.

Judgement and approach

For a passing grade the student must

- in a group be able to analyse and present qualities of design products as regards their use, function, construction, family, status and actuality.

Contents

The course introduces product semiotics and the way it is linked to various semiotic theories. The focus is on the way products (home ware, marks, ads, packages, interiors, etc) speak to the user through visual appearance. The course contains the following (with a reference to author/literature):

- The basics of semiotics (Saussure) and sign types (Peirce).
- Models of communication (jakobsson, Bühler)
- Design semiotics – objects and their representability (Vihma)
- Design semiotics – semantic functions (Monö)
- Affordance and user perspective (Norman, Wikström)
- Marks and logotypes (Mollerup)
- Branding (Klein)
- Ads and rhetoric (Eco, Sonesson)

The course consists of lectures and exercises that are presented during group reviews including critique. In the course, within certain limits, you can choose the products you want to work with practically in sketches and in simple models. It can be products that exist on the market but also previous own sketches and prototypes. The course is laid out so that you work relatively quickly and with several different products. The course ends with an exhibition of the student projects of the final course assignment.

Examination details

Grading scale: UG - (U,G) - (Fail, Pass)

Assessment: Examination takes place by giving an account of texts, sketches and models in group discussions, as well as receiving criticism on these. To pass the course, you need an 80% attendance at lectures and reviews, as well as two approved course assignments. These course assignments are presented as visual presentations of product proposals and as material prototypes. The course assignments are group tasks and are reported as such. The course ends with an exhibition of the student projects of the final course assignment.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Admission

The number of participants is limited to: No

The course overlaps following course/s: AFO160

Reading list

- A selection of the literature below is distributed as a Reader that is published in Canvas before each year's course. Different articles are also distributed via Canvas: the articles vary from year to year depending on each year's theme for the course.
- Monö, R, Design for Product Understanding, Stockholm, 1997, ISBN 91-47-01105-x.
- Vihma, S, Products as Representations, Finland, NID, 1995, ISBN 951-9384-89-8.
- Mollerup, Per, Marks of Excellence, Phaidon, USA, 1999.
- Peirce, Charles S, Collected Papers, excerpts, CD, ISBN 1-57085-019-4.
- Norman, Donald A, The Design of Everyday Things, (1990/1988), ISBN 0-385-26774-6.
- Klein, Naomi (1999/2009). No Logo. 10th Anniversary edition. UK: Fourth Estate Ltd.

Contact and other information

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