



LUNDS UNIVERSITET  
Lunds Tekniska Högskola

*Course syllabus*

## Produktsemiotik Product Semiotics

**AFOA30, 6 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

Compulsory for: MD4

Language of instruction: The course will be given in Swedish

### 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 and 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.

### *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.
- in a short text make a semiotic analysis about a design topic.

## **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 (Jakobson, Bühler)
- Design semiotics – objects and their representability (Vihma)
- Design semiotics – semantic functions (Monö)
- Affordance and user perspective (Norman, Wikström)
- Marks and logotypes (Møllerup)
- Branding (Klein)
- Ads and rhetoric (Eco, Sonesson)

The course consists of lectures and exercises that are critically reviewed in group sessions. A short paper should be written and is discussed with course leader. A free choice of working material is preferred and they may be previous own work or existing market products. The tasks require of the student to work relatively fast and conceptual.

## **Examination details**

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

**Assessment:** Four to five exercises are handed in for evaluation and review. All exercises provide the ground for critical group reviews. When all of these exercises are approved, the student has fulfilled the requirements of the course, provided that he/she has also attended 80% of the lectures and reviews.

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

## **Reading list**

- Excerpts from:
- Monö, R, Design for Product Understanding, Stockholm, 1997, ISBN 91-47-01105-x.
- Margolin, V & Buchanan, R, The Idea of Design, Cambridge/London 1996, ISBN 0-262-63166-0.
- 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.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de, Kurs i Allmän Lingvistik, (English version in copies) Cavefors, 1970.
- Lotman, Jurij, The Universe of Mind: A semiotic theory of culture, 1990, copies.
- Sonesson, Göran, Bildbetydelser, Lund 1992, Pictorial Concepts, Lund, 1989, ISBN 91-44-31661-5.
- Eco, Umberto, Den frånvarande strukturen, 197, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, 1986. Cop.
- Norman, Donald A, The Design of Everyday Things, 1990 (1988), ISBN 0-385-26774-6.

## **Contact and other information**

**Course coordinator:** univ. lektor Gunnar Sandin, [Gunnar.Sandin@arkitektur.lth.se](mailto:Gunnar.Sandin@arkitektur.lth.se)

**Course homepage:** <http://www.formlara.lth.se>