Departments of Anthropology, Geography, & Urban & Regional Planning
ANTH 132 (24528)/GEOG 132 /URBP 132 Creating Built Worlds

Spring 2023

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Cari Borja
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Office Hours: by appointment / in person, Thursdays 2-3pm; or by zoom, phone
Class Days/Time: Thursdays 3-5:45pm
Classroom: Clark Hall 204
Prerequisites: Upper division standing

"Give em what they never knew they wanted." ~ diana vreeland

"Out of nothing, something." ~ a mantra in my 4th street studio

"The way you do anything is the way you do everything." ~ tom waits

Course Description

Cross-cultural exploration of material expressions of culture. Analysis of production and consumption of places, shelters, goods and services. Implications for design and policy.

On a more personal note: This class is centered around the three quotes above that have informed my work as an anthropologist, fashion designer, salonniere, strategist and Chief of Staff over the past 20 years. That balance between not knowing and thinking you know, of an idea and a thing, of a singular iteration and a constancy of process ~ is what we will be critically thinking about throughout this semester. Can we as designers ever really know what others want, or think we know what they might want? If we conceive of and make what doesn't exist (yet), how do we create distinct methods of research that help us answer those questions that our prototypes and products, our experiences and expertise, and our platforms solve for?

The structure of this course, alongside the readings, videos, and 3 projects, is designed to help build your skills in ethnographic design research, learning from people and their user contexts to inspire what we create. Also embedded within the assignments is the field research method of participant observation which was popularized by Bronislaw Malinowski in Britain and Franz Boas and Margaret Mead in the US.

We will start by asking research questions and defining 'users' and other people whose experiences we need to consider in designing whatever it is we are transforming from an idea or concept into something physical, interactive, experiential. Then we'll practice methods for gathering data; interpret what the data means for design; and build models to reflect and share that understanding. You will practice these methods with your

classmates and on your own, and use them to complete two to three projects. As you do the projects, you'll modify and adapt the methods as you need to answer your research questions and present what you learn.

The course is roughly divided into three sections: an historical context and analysis of different aspects of culture that we can design for (based on your interests), and then applying two types of research to solve for different types of design questions. Generative research (also called exploratory or discovery research) which is a method that helps to define a deeper understanding of users or customers/clients to innovate around an idea and to solve a problem ~ to essentially create a need, or "give em' what they never knew they wanted," like Steve Jobs, Jony Ive and the industrial design team did for Apple. On the other hand there is evaluative research which is used for assessing a specific design or experience problem and help to ground it in real wants, need and desires of actual customers. This type of research is part of early iterative design and is helpful in designing anything from design products, clothing, recipes to streaming video and map services like Netflix, Amazon and Apple TV plus to Google versus Apple Maps.

Each project within each section will look at the product or service across its different stages, and how ethnographic research and tools will increase the impact of design research in the company or organization you might someday work for or create. Guests from various design backgrounds will share their personal experiences of doing insightful research for themselves or outside companies, and really making that research matter.

Design ethnography (which is the overarching approach we will use in "Creating built Worlds" is the art of learning from the people, culture and contexts you are designing/solving problems for. If design is in fact a human-centered discipline, the question becomes not only who are the humans we are designing for, but also why and when, how and why. Whether we call this type of research market research, usability research, user experience research, or ethnographic research, such methods can be applied in such a wide array of disciplines.

As a designer of things that people use or experience, products and services, you need to understand the various methods of research that can shape your process and outcomes. What are your goals, how will you get there and what happens when you do? At this stage it's all about experimenting and coming up with a set of questions you might be curious about. Then, how might you learn more by interviewing processes and focus groups, and then what? Implement and even changing behavior. This class hopes to ignite your curiosity around how and why we come to make the things we make, by studying the how's and why's of previous designers and visionaries, and how they might have integrated research into their design processes, or not. Ultimately, it is about our own personal explorations of why we do what we do, and how to do it more thoughtfully with an end user in mind, whether to give them what they want or what we think they might want, or to give them something they never knew they wanted.

Course Format

In-person

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. **Be knowledgeable about the diversity of built environments and material artifacts, and the way they are patterned and can be understood. This outcome will be accomplished through course readings, and demonstrated in essay examinations.**

2. **Be able to analyze the relationships of artifacts and the built environment to social organization and ideology. This learning outcome will be accomplished through lectures and readings during the entire semester, midterm examination essays, and the final exam project.**
3. **Be able to analyze aesthetic, functional, adaptive and policy implications of artifacts and the built environment using different theoretical perspectives. This outcome will be accomplished though midterm essays, the final exam project, and an individual term project completed by each student.**
4. **Be able to create alternative scenarios for artifacts and built environments. This outcome will be accomplished by completion of a final exam design scenario project.**

Suggested Texts/Readings

Textbooks

Edgerton, David (2007). The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900. New York: Oxford University Press.

Murphy, Keith (2015). Swedish Design: An Ethnography. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Zeisel, John (2006). Inquiry by Design, 2nd edition. New York: W. W. Norton Publishers.

Zeisel, John (2006). Inquiry by Design, 2nd edition. New York: W. W. Norton Publishers.

Other Referenced Textbooks

Interviewing Users, by Steve Portigal, is a guide to the mindset of a design ethnographer
https://www.academia.edu/34778394/Interviewing_Users

Observing the User Experience, 2 nd Edition by Elizabeth Goodman, Mike Kuniavsky and Andrea Moed provides similar information about several of the methods we will use / https://www.pdfdrive.com/observing-the-user-experience-second-edition-a-practitioners-guide-to-user-research-d165110205.html

Other Readings

Fallman, Daniel (2003). *Design-oriented human-computer interaction*. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human factors in computing systems (pp. 225-232).

Jupiter, Alex (2017). Jobs To Be Done Framework: Scrapping the persona and approaching product design in a different way. Medium.com

Manzini, Ezio (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (pp. 121-202)

Ranadive, Ameet (2015). Jobs to Be Done, Milkshakes, and Online Learning. Medium.com

Resmini, Andrea, and Luca Rosati (2012). A brief history of information architecture. Journal of information architecture, 3(2).

Rohrer, Christian (2014). When to use which UX research method. NNGroup.com

UXBooth (2018). Complete Beginners Guide to Design Research. UXBooth.com

West, Harry. (2014). A Chain of Innovation: The Creation of Swiffer. Research-Technology Management, 57(3), pp 20-23.

*** there will be weekly short videos in lieu (or in addition to) some of the textbook readings…

Library Liaison (Delete if not applicable)

Silke Higgins is our department's library liaison and she can be contacted at silke.higgins@sjsu.edu. She is a graduate of our program and knows the department very well.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course grades will be based on the following assignments that must be submitted as per the course schedule deadlines. The weighting of assignments follows in parentheses.

This course will cover a range of research techniques, from methods often used at the beginning of a design project, to those used later on. Each time we introduce a new technique, we will read about it, practice it in small teams, and have a chance to practice it with people outside our class as part of an assignment.

There will be two to three projects, depending on our pace:

Project #1 (4-5 weeks): Generative Research Project (15%)

Project #2 (4-5 weeks): Evaluative Research Project (20%)

Project #3 (3 weeks): Research Over Time (20%)

Class Participation (25%)

Weekly Assignments (20%)

Much of the work in this class is best done in groups. For projects #1 and #2, you will work in teams of two to three people. For some assignments, you will be graded as a team. For others, each student will be responsible for specific parts of the project. In general, you are expected to be willing to help fellow students if they need an extra hand while doing research, and can receive extra credit for providing that help.

In this hands-on class, you learn by doing. It's important that you be fully involved in the assignments, whether you are working together as a class, in your teams, or by yourself. Listening and collaboration are a huge part of participant observation and design ethnography, so you need to be involved as much as possible both online and when you meet with your team.

"Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus."

Weekly Workflow

In each week of this class, there will be three kinds of activities: * 1) **Prep work** that you will do to get an introduction to the topic of the week, and prepare for weekly meetings. On the weeks when we meet all together over Zoom, prep work is due before the start of the meeting.

• 2) **Group time** that you spend with your team or with the whole class. When we meet all together over Zoom, we will meet for an hour. Each week, you will be expected to log into Moodle for instructions, then meet in your teams to do specific tasks. I will have "office hours" when you can make an appointment if you need to to speak with me, individually or as a team.

• 3) **Team (or individual) work** that you will do to complete your projects and assignments. It is up to you and your teams to figure out how to work together and your preferred ways to stay connected. You will just need to make sure all your assigned work is submitted via the class Moodle site.

Each week, I will assign a selection of videos and readings on different research methods and applications, and the various ways they are used. It is important to read these to be prepared for the activities of that week, but also to become conversant in the domain of design ethnography. You will sometimes need to compare different approaches and learn when to use them. Some weeks you will be asked to reflect on the topic of a reading, in writing or by recording audio or video.

Our weekly topics will focus primarily on research methods and practical techniques to help you get started with projects or continue projects. The "Course Outline" section below shows the current schedule of topics we will cover, but this schedule may change based on the needs that arise from projects and from distance learning.

Final Examination or Evaluation

The final exam is a FINAL PRESENTATION, that will be in self-selected groups.

 "Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment."

Grading Information

The instructor will return materials submitted for grade within 10 days over Canva. The actual grading will also happen on Canva using comments, or comments will be given on assignment 3 over Google Drive. YOU WILL NOT TURN IN PHYSICAL COPIES, NOR RECEIVE PHYSICAL COPIES OF YOUR GRADED WORK. I am happy to discuss student grades during office hours, but I will not do so by phone or email or in class. You will receive detailed feedback on all assignments submitted and you are invited to discuss with the instructor any questions you have about your grade and how we can work together so you learn the most in the class. Along with the feedback you will receive a numerical score on any assignments submitted for grade that corresponds to the following assignment of letter grades. The instructor will assign plus and minus course grades at the end of semester.

Determination of Grades

Course grades will be assigned as follows:

A plus = 98-100% A = 94-97%
A minus = 90-93% B plus = 88-89%

B = 84-87%
B minus = 80-83% C plus = 78-79%
C = 74-77%
C minus = 70-73% D plus = 68-69%
D = 64-67%
D minus = 60-63% F = lower than 60%

Late Papers, Missed Exams. All assignments must be completed during the designated period. You may be allowed to make up an assignment only if (1) you first provide a compelling *and documented* excuse for your absence via email (e.g. family emergency, sickness, injury, etc. and (2) you contact me immediately via text message. You CANNOT SUBMIT THE FINAL PAST THE DESIGNATED PERIOD. Please remember that it is unfair to both your classmates and the instructor to request exceptions to the official examination dates or other assignment deadlines.

Classroom Protocol

Be on time. No cell phone use. Participation is essential.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9 ,relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on Syllabus Information web page (https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

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Course Schedule / subject to change with fair notice, to be emailed/communicated one week in advance

Week/Lesson/Module	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	
1	Th 1/26	Intro / Genevieve Bell's "Context is Everything" ~ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_A2481RJsUg Biography exercise: mapping Gauguin's 1897 *"Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" ("mapping your life")*	
2	Th 2/2	An Anthropological Approach / Reading: Murphy Ch. 1 Introduction to Built Worlds: Components & Processes Reading: Zeisel Ch. 1 & 2 ** introduction to PROJECT #1 • Participant/observation, the role of collaboration + team assignments	

Week/Lesson/Module	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	
3	Th 2/9	Thinking About Looking: Promises & Pitfalls of Usability Reading Zeisel Chs. 3 & 4 / Thinking About Looking: An Ethnographic Approach and its Implications Reading Zeisel Chs. 5 & 6 ** interviewing techniques + pairing assignment for interviews (terry gross, oprah, joe rogan, katie couric, nick park, etc)	
4	Th 2/16	Getting Started: Observing / Reading: Zeisel Ch. 8, 9, & 13 ** steve jobs, apple, think different, margaret mead	
5	Th 2/23	An analysis framework: Jobs To Be Done Reading: Ranadive (2015), Jupiter (2017) • IDEO, Jen Pahlka/Code for America, Jose Andres and World Central Kitchen, and other case studies	
6	Th 3/2	Back to the Built World: Reading: Edgerton Chs. 1-3 Information & Meaning: Agency & Smartness Reading: Edgerton Chs. 6 & 7 • This Is Water by David Foster Wallace (default settings)	
7	Th 3/9	Information & Meaning: Patterns/Structures Reading: Edgerton Chs. 4-5 Information & Meaning: Agency & Smartness Reading: Edgerton Chs. 6 & 7 • Gillian Tett, silos + Anthro-Vision	
8	Th 3/16	Creating & Constructing: Technological Evolution Creating & Constructing: Innovation & Users Reading: Edgerton Ch. 8 • The senses / from Montessori to the present	
9	Th 3/23	Project #1 Presentations …	
***	NO CLASS Break 3/30	Spring Break	
10	Th 4/6 (no class BUT	DESIGN INTERVENTION ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED Built Worlds & the People they Create Reading: Murphy Ch. 2	

Week/Lesson/Module	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	
	group check-ins)		
11	Th 4/13	*Homo faber*: A Designing Species Reading: Murphy Ch. 3 Designing & Making as Ambiguous Systems Reading: Murphy Ch. 4 A case study in product design: Harry (2014) ** insider/outsider film assignment	
12	Th 4/20	Senses, Proxemics, and Materializing Readings: Murphy Ch. 5 and Zeisel Chs. 7 & 14, Manzini Chs. 6-8 ** anthropology's value to business (and design) / https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/articulating-anthropologys-value-to-business/	
13	Th 4/27	Introduction to building digital worlds and information architecture Reading: Resmini (2012) and Fallman (2003) ** "why we do what we do?" / a reflection on careers	
14	Th 5/4 (zoom TBD)	Introduction to UX Research in Industry Reading: UXBooth (2018) & Rohrer (2014)	
15	Th 5/11	Final GROUP Presentations	