

Design

Also relevant for Arts and Cultural Studies

Course: Design

Group of courses: Esthetics

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Course objectives:

Students of all fields of design should be made aware of the significance of the category of gender in the context of women's and gender studies with regard to its historical, socio-cultural, economic, ecological as well as technical dimensions. Students should be enabled to recognise the theoretical, conceptual, empirical, design-related and practical implications of these issues, so that they can implement them actively and creatively in their theoretical and practical work. This applies to all fields of design, as the way of teaching (as a lecturer) or learning (as a student) these approaches, theories and methods, which include the idea of gender as an essential category and gender equality as a natural ingredient of the design process, does not differ according to discipline. Only the content perspectives, i.e. in which field of design women's and gender studies are taught, vary.

Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

Due to the particular nature of the subject design, only general content can be introduced here. In most universities and institutions of higher education, "design" is used as an umbrella term for various degree courses (one exception is the Köln International School of Design which offers a general project degree course that explicitly rules out specialisation in one particular area). Specific design degree courses are: visual communication, product design, media design, fashion design, transportation design or design theory.

The topics outlined below should therefore be understood as examples of essential content rather than an exhaustive list. Design is still a relatively young academic discipline. This makes it particularly dynamic and subject to constant change (new technologies, materials, production processes, etc.). The topics covered are very wide-ranging. To date, however, women's and gender studies have had only a marginal impact on design courses.

Gender relations are not equal in society. This is seen in the area of design on all levels:

1. Design courses at university level and the design profession itself are very segregated in terms of gender. Social gender constructions are reflected in "special skills" attributed to gender. This means that there are hardly any female designers working in the automotive industry or the production of industrial goods. The few that do work in these areas are mainly in positions where their so-called "feminine skills" are called upon, and that does not mean technical or design fields.
2. The various design disciplines have gender-related connotations for both teaching staff and students. While product and industrial design are dominated by men, for example, fashion design attracts a lot of women. The same goes for visual communication (at least as far as students are concerned).
3. This gender difference is also found among consumers of design and end users with regard to purchase decisions and forms of usage.

It is therefore essential that the perspective of gender relations is dealt with clearly in the teaching content on all three levels referring to theory, research and methodology and the design process.

Theory:

- (Inter)cultural women's and gender studies theories with a particular focus on (the few) design

approaches. This should also include current debates in sociology, psychology and ethnography/anthropology. These theories are essential for a basic understanding of the (gender-constructed) subject/object relationship and the interface between human being (woman/man) and object. Without them it is impossible to develop an understanding of the emotional, cultural and economic preconditions for the design process.

- Theories of everyday culture as gender culture focusing on design-related issues: private and public space and its gender-based use, living forms, object culture, symbolic systems and systems of signs, body language: designing the body through posture and movement, clothing as a "second skin", body design as a "dressing" of the body (control, identification, branding, etc.), virtual bodies (cyborgs, characters, etc.), sexual body images: trans- and intersexuality and androgyny.
- History revisited: a systematic analysis of developments and movements in design and design institutions from a gender perspective (arts & crafts, art nouveau, Deutscher Werkbund, Bauhaus, fascism, streamline, Ulm Design School, radical design, pop, ecological design, street art, global vs. culture-specific design, universal design, etc.).

Design research:

- Usage studies (studies on gender differences in the use of material and non-material products, and public and semi-public spaces)
- Usability/feasibility studies (application/interface between gender and objects/signs)
- Object studies ("biography of things")
- Communication and advertising: gender-sensitive perception and impact studies
- Service design (what services are used in different situations in life, and what services are lacking?)
- Designer training/evaluation (gender distribution in different fields of design and the possibility of achieving a better gender parity)

These areas of research should, as far as possible, take internationality/interculturality into account, where differences occur particularly in the way the sexes relate to each other. Qualitative methods are of most importance here. Design studies based on qualitative observations have proved very valuable. Their results should include analytical visualizations and infographics in addition to text.

Design process:

- The specific nature of design resides in the fact that theoretical and empirical work must be combined with the design process itself, a feature shared only with architecture. Design practice reflects certain gender-related conditions. Designers' experience in different fields of design, spaces, products, signs and so-called "skills" differs in content and intensity according to gender. Gender justice means taking these differences into account and valuing them equally. However, it also means compensating for or better still correcting this lack of experience by means of appropriately designed curricula. This could be achieved by offering extra "service" courses, for example.

Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:

Gender is a fundamental component of our culture. There is no genderless or gender-neutral reality. For this reason, any measures and projects should take into account the different life situations, experiences and interests of men and women. The same goes for design courses. This means that

gender is not an optional subject that can be taught as an add-on or extra topic. Gender is relevant for all topics. Accordingly, gender studies should be integrated into all design degree courses and projects. If this cannot be implemented immediately, we recommend creating a number of study modules and making them a compulsory part of basic and advanced courses. These should include:

- The module "Everyday Culture and the Construction of Gender" as a theoretical basis
- 1-3 modules from the area "Usage and Gender" as an empirical basis
- The module "Approaches to Problem Formulation and Solving" (taking into account potential gender differences and gender sensitivity).

Degree Stage:

As mentioned above, gender should ideally be made a basic component of design courses, with additional projects for greater focus. It is essential that the content outlined above is made compulsory at Bachelor's level, and as a separate research module at Master's level. We recommend making students sensitive to gender inequalities and implementing gender mainstreaming right from the start of their courses (this can be done via an introductory/orientation course in the first or second semester, with examples of good practice from joint projects as motivation).

Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:

- Bippus, Elke/Mink, Dorothea (Eds.) (2007): Fashion Body Cult. Mode Körper Kult. Schriftenreihe der Hochschule für Künste Bremen, Stuttgart (Arnoldsche).
- Bischoff, Cordula/Threuter, Christina (Eds.) (1999): Um-Ordnung. Angewandte Künste und Geschlecht in der Moderne. Marburg (Jonas).
- Blohm, Manfred/Schütz, Norbert (Eds.) (2005): Die Kunst – Der Körper – Das Textile. Biographische Spuren in ästhetischen Prozessen. Köln (Salon).
- Bohnet, Iris (2016): What Works. Gender Equality by Design. Cambridge, MA (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).
- Bordo, Susan (1993): Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body. Berkeley and Los Angeles (University of California Press).
- Breuer, Gerda/Meer, Julia (Eds.) (2012): Women in Graphic Design 1890-2012. Berlin (Jovis).
- Buchmüller, Sandra (2016): Geschlecht, Macht, Gestaltung – Gestaltung Macht Geschlecht. Der Entwurf einer machtkritischen und geschlechterinformierten Designmethodologie. Berlin (unpublished dissertation).
- Colomina, Beatriz (2011): Sexuality & Space. New York, NY (Princeton Papers on Architecture).
- Ehrnberger, Karin/Räsänen, Minna/Ilstedt, Sara: „Visualising Gender Norms in Design (2012): Meet the Mega Hurricane Mixer and the Drill Dolphin“. In: International Journal of Design, 6/3, S. 85-98, www.ijdesign.org/ojs/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/1070/531 (accessed 22.12.2017).
- Moebius, Stephan/Prinz, Sophia (Eds.): Das Design der Gesellschaft. Zur Kultursoziologie des Designs. Bielefeld 2012 (Transcript), pp. 301-312.
- Joost, Gesche/Bredies, Katharina/Christensen, Michelle/Conradi, Florian/Unteidig, Andreas (Hg.) (2016): Design as Research. Positions, Arguments, Perspectives. Basel (Birkhäuser).
- Löw, Martina (2001): Raumsoziologie. Frankfurt a. M. (Suhrkamp).
- Moss, Gloria (2009): Gender, Design and Marketing. Hants/Burlington, VT (Gower).
- Oudshoorn, Nelly/Pinch, Trevor (Eds.): How Users Matter: The Co-Construction of Users and

Technology. Cambridge, MA (MIT Press).

- Weller, Birgit/Krämer, Katharina (2012): Du Tarzan – Ich Jane. Gender-Codes im Design. Hannover (Blumhardt).

Journals:

There are no journals in design focusing on gender.