id723

design cultures & the human body

2016-17 Fall | Mon 9:40–12:30, R207 tbc.
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course description

the human body has been a prominent object of practice and discourse in design cultures, as designers routinely refer in their practice to observations of and speculations about bodies, their capabilities and limitations, as well as the common postures and practices. Such references are value-laden and so politically relevant; design practice is never merely a matter of optimizing products for existing bodies, but through its products empowers or precludes, makes visible or invisible, glorifies or stigmatizes, brings forth or destroys bodies.

the course introduces students to key theoretical frameworks for understanding the mutual shaping of design and the human body: biopolitics and material semiotics, and as a general case, focuses on medical technologies and products. We will be reading and discussing material on these two theories and from medical STS. Our readings will be supported by film and documentary screenings and seminars by visiting scholars. As part of the assessment, we will undertake case study exercises of existing products and design projects in our vicinity.
key topics that we will study in this course include embodiment, discipline, cyborg, posthuman, normalization and quantification, and molecularization of life. cases that we will look into include synthetic biology, biohacking, mobile health; reproductive technologies such as assisted fertility and ultrasound; prosthetics such as cochlear implants; brain machine interfaces, etc.

requirements

1. each week is assigned pieces of reading on the week’s topic. required readings are around 40 pages per week. you are expected to study the required readings in full before the lectures. these will be offered at the faculty photocopy office. it may take a while before all the readings are given to the photocopy office, so you might need to get your reading material in batches.

2. course assessment comprises (1) a topic presentation, in which you will be making a short introduction to the week’s topic (~15 mins.) before we start the discussion, highlighting key issues and offering new examples; (2) a midterm product study paper, in which you will be writing a 1,250-words essay that analyses a product by using the concepts we have studied so far; and (3) a final paper on a medical design process, which will include an interview with a medical design practitioner. details tba in due time.

3. your final grade will be determined by your topic presentation (20%, topics to be distributed in the 1st and 2nd weeks), product study paper (30%, week6 tbc, ~1,250 words), and the final paper (50%, ~4,000 words). late submissions are accepted but graded with a 50% penalty.

attendance is obligatory. not attending the course for more than three weeks without any official excuse, or failing to submit two assignments will both result in outright failure with an “NA” grade.

note that plagiarism is a disciplinary offence, and will result in outright failure and disciplinary sanctions. (On plagiarism, see http://www.fbe.metu.edu.tr/plagiarism)

course outline

week 1 (3 oct) general introduction

week 2 (10 oct) introduction: designing (for) the human body
topics: anthropometry, usability, user experience

Ellen Lupton, “Designing for people”, in Beautiful Users: Designing for People
Thomas Carpentier, “The Measure(s) of man”, in Beautiful Users: Designing for People
Leopold Lambert, “A Subversive Approach to the Ideal Normatized Body”, in The Funambulist blog

week 3 (17 oct) key theory I: discipline
topics: disciplinary society, panopticon, docile bodies; Michel Foucault

week 4 (24 oct) **key theory II: performativity**
topics: gender, discourse, performativity; Judith Butler

Judith Butler, Conclusion to *Gender Trouble*

Judith Butler, Introduction to *Bodies that Matter*

Recommended:
Sara Salih, Introduction to *Judith Butler*, esp. “Performativity” (pp.6ff), Chapter 2: “Gender” and Chapter 3: “Sex”

Seminar:
Dr. Aret Karademir, Asst. Prof., Department of Philosophy, METU

week 5 (31 oct) **key theory III: material semiotics**
topics: networks, translation, scripts, cyborg; Actor Network Theory

John Law and Annemarie Mol, “Notes on Materiality and Sociality”

Donna Haraway, “Syntactics: The Grammar of Feminism and Technoscience”, in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan(c)_Meets_OncoMouse(TM): Feminism and Technoscience*

Recommended:
Albena Yaneva, “Making the Social Hold: Towards an Actor-Network Theory of Design”


week 6 (7 nov) **mid-term assignment: product study**

week 7 (14 nov) **biopolitics I: biopower**
topics: biopolitics, biopower; quantification, normalization

Thomas Lemke, Introduction to *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, pp.1-6

Michel Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life” in *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, pp.130-141

Michel Foucault, excerpts from *Security, Territory, Population*, pp.1-11, 55-63

Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Societies of Control”

week 8 (21 nov) **biopolitics II: the new body**
topics: well-being, risk, susceptibility; self-monitoring; molecular life; somatic self, neurochemical self


Thomas Fuchs, “Being a Psycho-Machine”

Recommended:
Gattaca [film], Andrew Niccol (1997)


week 9 (28 nov) **posthuman: beyond the body**
topics: posthuman

N. Katherine Hayles, “Toward Embodied Virtuality”, in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, pp.1-13

Eugene Thacker, “Data Made Flesh: Biotechnology and the Discourse of the Posthuman”, *Cultural Critique* 53

*We3* [comic], issues 1-3, Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely (Vertigo, 2004)

Serial Experiments Lain [anime], Nakamura Ryutaro, 1998; esp. Episode 1 (“Layer 1 - Weird”) and 11 (Layer 11 - Infornography)
W10 (5 dec) medicine I: post-ANT studies
topics: the body multiple; ethnography in medicine

Annemarie Mol, The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice, Chapters 2 & 3, esp. pp. 29-72

W11 (12 dec) medicine II: brain-machine symbiosis
topics: brain-computer interfaces, human enhancement, ethnography in science

Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”
Recommended:
F. Fukuyama (2002), Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution

Seminar:
Dr. Melike Şahinol, Orient-Institut Istanbul

W12 (19 dec) medicine III: reproductive technologies
topics: feminist STS, reproductive technologies, IVF

Chris Thompson, Making Parents, Chapters 2&3

W13 (26 dec) medicine IV: synthetic biology
topics: synthetic biology, enhancement, biohacking

Drew Endy and Chuck Wadey, “Adventures in Synthetic Biology” [Comic], Nature 438
Recommended:
Sheref Mansy, “Integrating Artificial with Natural Cells” [Video] <https://vimeo.com/117189473>
Tobias Revell, “New Mumbai” <https://vimeo.com/110383932>

W14 (31 dec) work on final assignment