Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Critical Writing
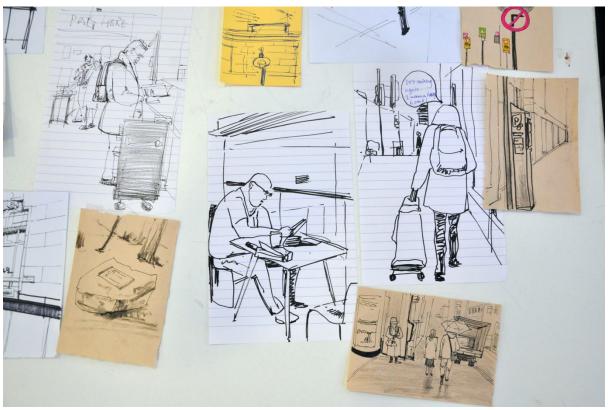

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Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
		2025-26

Course Title	Critical Writing
Course Contact	TBD

Credits	20
SCQF Level	9
When Taught	Stage 3, Semester 2

Associated Programmes	BDes Product Design
Lead School	School of Innovation and Technology
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	

Course Introduction

The course develops key themes and ideas in design history, theory, and contemporary culture in the form of a research proposal leading students to a largely self-directed final project in anticipation of the Year 4 Honours dissertation submission.

Course Aims

This course provides students with the opportunity to:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of defined research methods according to individual research interests
- Facilitate the application of a wide range of key terms, knowledge, skills and understanding in discussing design contexts.
- Recognise that different critical opinion can be reached on any aspect of visual and material culture depending on interpretation of evidence and/or the method selected for criticism
- Support and evaluate an informed and appropriate range of skills in structuring, articulating and presenting information and ideas, verbally, visually and in written form
- Understand the importance of self-directed and original work in critical, historical and contemporary cultural studies

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of defining theories, concepts and issues related to design, process and practice
- Apply knowledge, skills and understanding in carrying out research and methods of enquiry drawing upon a range of sources
- Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of design theories, concepts and issues
- Select and defend thorough, in-depth, arguments using textual and visual resources in a structured form to accepted academic standards

• Manage research and assignments exercising autonomy and initiative

Indicative Content

This course covers the following content:

- The identification of a personal territory of design history, contemporary practice and theory through self-directed study.
- Selection of a topic for personal study that could be worked up as a Year 4 submission.
- Individual source gathering exercise, supported by lectures, workshops and tutorials.
- Submission is a Source Review that makes a critical assessment of the sources presented.

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

In this programme, students will be expected to increasingly take significant responsibility for the management of their learning. Emphasis will be placed on the gradual encouraging of self-reliance and personal academic development.

This course is designed as a text-based experience which supports students in the writing and associated research pertinent to critical writing skills. The principal teaching strategies employed on this course are:

Lectures - often used to introduce key knowledge to support project development, to disseminate theoretical, methodological, contextual and historical knowledge and address specific issues related to each course which can be used to underpin practical studio work. Lectures also have the broad aim of generating further debate in seminars, tutorials, studio sessions or further enquiry in self- directed learning or research.

Tutorial (group and individual) - designed to provide academic support through individual or group meetings with staff to discuss the different directions and aspects of projects or course-based activities as well as progress on the programme/course overall.

Review (group and individual) - enables the development of key presentation skills and encourages students to receive and give constructive feedback regarding each other's work, and an opportunity to debate project input. These may be tutor-led, tutor-facilitated, or peer-led allowing students to fully explore all aspects of practical submissions within a reflective discursive framework.

Presentation (visual, textual and verbal) - an important learning device used to generate peer debate regarding the generation, development or overall success of concepts, and their practical realisation within the context of a brief or proposal. Students present work to their peers, tutors and stakeholders when relevant through appropriate visual, textual and verbal means (including: models or mock-ups, portfolios, videos, slideshows, etc.).

Workshops - are practice-based sessions aimed at supporting students to develop key skills for the course.

Self-Directed Learning - self-directed study emphasises the importance of autonomy, reflection upon personal learning and project work within an individual and/or a collaborative environment.

This course is supported by a virtual learning environment tool (Canvas) for the dissemination, discussion and access to relevant course information, and signpost to other relevant teaching and learning platforms used by GSA, such as Library Services.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
10	200

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Students are supported in their learning through a range of formative assessment activities as they progress through the course. These include:
- Engagement in a range of peer review activities
- Regular feedback from tutors through in-class discussion and question and answer activities
- Individual feedback

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Summative assessment is designed to support students to reflect upon their learning on completion of a course. It provides an evaluation of progress made and the level of achievement identifiable in the work submitted.

Following an assessment briefing, students will submit a body of work for assessment. Grades will be awarded using the GSA marking scheme following/adhering to the assessment regulations in the Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Written assignment (2000 words Comparative Source Review)	100	Week 12

Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	Yes
Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	No
Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
If yes, then please provide the names of the other teaching institutions	N/A

Reading and On-line Resources

An on-line resource list will be provided to students at the start of the course. This will be reviewed annually to remain relevant and current for the course and subject specialism. An indicative list of resources is accessible via Resource Lists.

Students will select a resource and reading list appropriate to their particular research/writing themes and topics.