

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification

**Course Title: Design History and Theory 3B: Self-Directed Research
Proposal**



Image: Kirstie Lackie

Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2025-26 Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
		2025-26

Course Title	Design History and Theory: Self Directed Research Proposal
Course Contact	Nicholas Oddy, Head of DHT

Credits	10
SCQF Level	9
When Taught	Stage 3, Semester 2

Associated Programmes	BA (Hons) Communication Design BA (Hons) Fashion Design BA (Hons) Fashion Narrative BA (Hons) Interaction Design BA (Hons) Interior Design BA (Hons) Silversmithing & Jewellery Design BA (Hons) Textile Design
Lead School	School of Design
Other Schools	
Date of Approval	Programme Approval February 2025

Course Introduction

This course supports students in developing a **self-directed research proposal** (2000 words) informed by individual approaches to design history and theory.

The self-directed research proposal is an exploration of an individual research topic. Students critically analyse and outline the topic they have selected and evaluate methods and sources that might support exploring it.

The course offers tutorials with an assigned tutor, lectures on broad themes within research, and workshops exploring particular methods to support students in evaluating source types and constructing their research proposal.

The learning within the Stage 3 Semester 2 research proposal can help inform the DHT self-directed research project in Stage 4 of study.

Course Aims

The aims of this course are to:

1. advance knowledge and understanding of defined research methods according to individual research interests
2. facilitate the critical application of a wide range of key terms, knowledge, skills and understanding in discussing design contexts

3. recognise that different critical opinion can be reached on any aspect of visual and material culture depending on critical interpretation of evidence and/or the method selected for criticism
4. support and evaluate an advanced range of skills in structuring, articulating and presenting information and ideas, verbally, visually and in written form
5. understand the importance of self-directed and critically reflective work in critical, historical and cultural studies

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. demonstrate advanced knowledge and critical understanding of research methods according to individual research interests
2. critically apply a range of key terms and definitions within an individual research interest drawing upon a range of sources
3. evidence critical engagement with different critical opinion within an individual research interest
4. apply advanced principles of critical writing and presentation for an individual research interest
5. demonstrate understanding of reflective, self-directed and critical work in an individual research interest, exercising autonomy and initiative

Indicative Content

The course will introduce students to:

- informed, reflective and self-directed approaches to critical and contextual studies in relation to individual research interests
- critical analysis and evaluation around research methods and individual research interests
- approaches to gathering, evaluating and critically reflecting on sources as research tools
- ways to engage with critical and contextual learning in visual, verbal, and written form

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

A range of learning and teaching methods are used to support students to engage in an explorative approach to learning in Design History and Theory. These include:

- briefings
- tutorials and workshops
- talks, lectures, seminars
- presentations and writing
- reflection and self-evaluation

Independent learning skills will be developed and supported through guided activities and digital online learning resources available on Canvas.

A variety of teaching and learning approaches, including in person, blended and online learning and delivery, are employed to support student engagement with the curriculum and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
12	100

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Students are supported in their learning through a range of activities with staff and peers, such as workshops, reviews and tutorials offering ongoing formative feedback as they progress through the course.

Students have the opportunity to have a mid-point review of progress with their assigned tutor for formative feedback that supports developing and refining their work towards submission for summative assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

The assessment brief describes and provides guidelines for the summative assessment, which is a self-directed research proposal (indicative word count: 2000 words).

Summative assessment is designed to support students to reflect on and communicate work produced in response to the assessment brief and learning and teaching activities associated with the course.

Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment, which outlines reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Self-directed research proposal (indicative word count: 2000 words)	100	Semester 2 Week 9

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	

Reading and On-line Resources

The course indicative reading and online resource list is accessible via [Resource Lists](#). Tutors and peers will provide further recommendations appropriate to student's chosen area of research and focus.