

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification

Course Title: Design History & Theory 2A: Worlds and Words of Design



Image: Iona Turner

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 2026-27 Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
		2026-27

Course Title	Design History and Theory 2A: Worlds and Words of Design (Semester 1)
Course Contact	Nicholas Oddy, Head of DHT

Credits	10
SCQF Level	8
When Taught	Stage 2, Semester 1

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 introduces students to key themes and ideas in Design History and Theory related to their programme of study in the School of Design. DHT deliver the course in programme and discipline-specific strands, and the approach is thematic and global with a broad historical and contemporary scope. The course supports students in situating and understanding design objects, processes, and practices within core contextual and critical debates connecting to socioeconomic, global, political, and cultural factors, including production systems and consumption.

The course supports students in articulating, communicating and presenting ideas and information to build confidence and ability in evaluating, critically reflecting on, and connecting contextual learning to their discipline of study.

All students in participating programmes share an assessment brief for this course. The assessment consists of an **illustrated object analysis** (1800 words) in which students engage with visual and text-based resources and situate critical and contextual themes and frameworks.

Course Aims

The aims of this course are to:

1. develop core knowledge and understanding of core contextual and critical debates related to design objects, process and practices
2. facilitate the application of core knowledge, skills and understanding to discuss key examples within design contexts

3. develop skills in critical analysis and evaluation to appreciate ideas, concepts, information and core issues in relation to design contexts and design objects

4. support a core range of skills in structuring, articulating and presenting information and ideas

5. build learners' autonomy and initiative in managing resources and producing defined activities

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. demonstrate core knowledge and understanding of relevant history, theories, concepts and issues related to design, process and practices
2. apply core knowledge, skills and understanding in carrying out research and following lines of enquiry
3. undertake critical analysis and evaluation that shows appreciation of core design histories, theories, concepts and issues
4. present a clear argument using textual and visual resources in a structured form to acceptable academic standards
5. manage research and assignments exercising some initiative and independence

Indicative Content

The course will introduce students to:

- core approaches to critical and contextual studies in relation to a specific design discipline
- critical analysis and evaluation around core design histories, theories, concepts and issues
- approaches to evaluating, critically reflecting on, and connecting contextual learning with a discipline of study
- 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 present an assignment proposal for formative feedback to support developing and refining their work towards submission for summative assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Arrangements

The summative assessment brief is shared across all participating programme cohorts. The assessment brief describes and provides guidelines for the summative assessment, which is an illustrated object analysis (indicative word count: 1800 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
Illustrated object analysis (indicative word count: 1800 words)	100	Semester 1 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	

Reading and On-line Resources

Course indicative reading and online resource lists connecting to each discipline-specific strand are accessible via [Resource Lists](#). These lists will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect course content and subject developments.

Communication Design

Fashion Design

Interaction Design

Interior Design

Silversmithing & Jewellery Design

Textile Design