

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Design History & Theory 2B: Worlds and Words of
Design



Image: Jenny Coyle

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 |

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

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

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| 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 |
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| <p>This course continues and expands discipline-based approaches to key themes and ideas in design history and theory. 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 further 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.</p> <p>The course supports students in articulating, communicating and presenting ideas and information to evaluate, critically reflect on, and connect contextual learning to their discipline of study.</p> <p>All students in participating programmes share an assessment brief for this course. The assessment consists of an illustrated essay (1800 words) in which students use visual and text-based sources to support analysis and synthesis of critical and contextual themes and frameworks.</p> |

| Course Aims |
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| <p>The aims of this course are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. further develop core knowledge and understanding of contextual and critical debates related to design objects, process and practices 2. facilitate a developed application of core of knowledge, skills and understanding to discuss key examples within design contexts |

3. further develop core skills in critical analysis and evaluation to synthesise ideas, concepts, information and issues in relation to design contexts and design objects
4. support and evaluate a core range of skills in structuring, articulating and presenting information and ideas
5. further develop 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 and synthesise core knowledge, skills and understanding in carrying out research and following lines of enquiry
3. undertake core critical analysis and evaluation of design histories, theories, concepts and issues
4. present a discerning argument using textual and visual resources in a structured form to acceptable academic standards
5. manage reflective research and assignments exercising some autonomy and initiative

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 essay (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 essay (indicative word count: 1800 words) | 100 | Semester 2 Week 9 |

Exchange/Study Abroad

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| 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