

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification

Course Title: Designed Objects: Ideas, Contexts, Histories

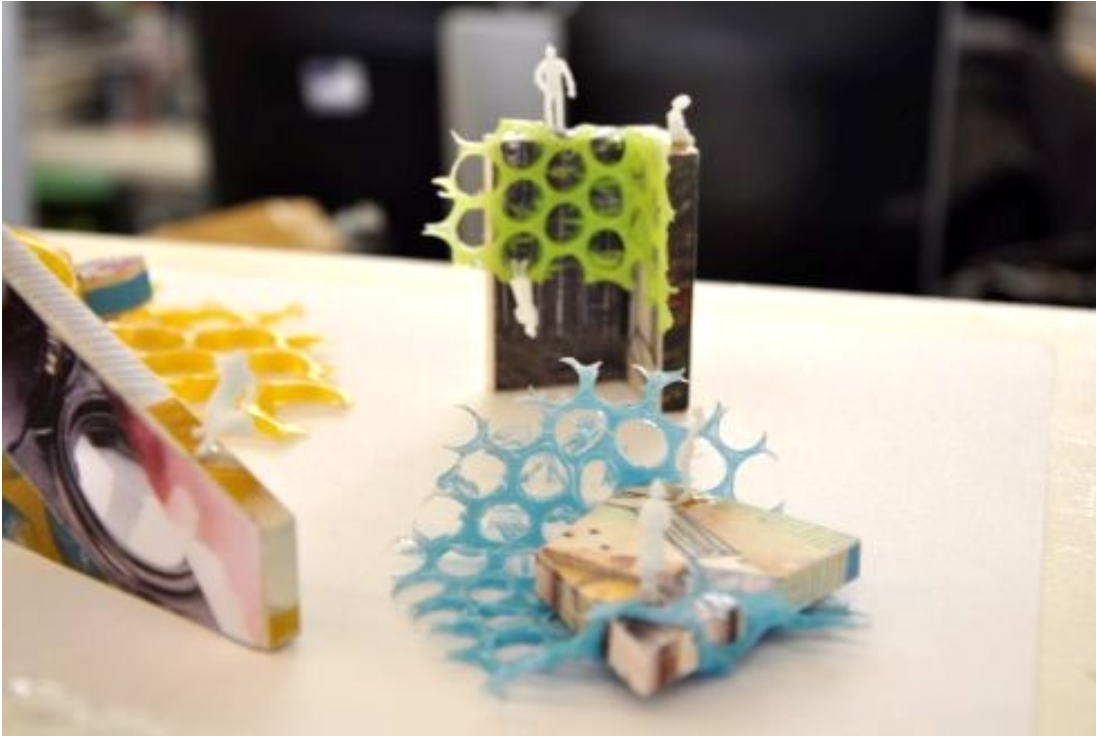


Image: Zoe Muir

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	Designed Objects: Ideas, Contexts, Histories
Course Contact	Nicholas Oddy, Head of Design History and Theory Programme Leaders Steve Rigley / BA (Hons) Communication Design Julia Maclean-Evans / BA (Hons) Fashion Design Paul Maguire / BA (Hons) Interaction Design Pamela Flanagan / BA (Hons) Interior Design Anna Gordon / BA (Hons) Silversmithing & Jewellery Design Dr Helena Britt / BA (Hons) Textile Design

Credits	20
SCQF Level	7
When Taught	Stage 1, Semester 2

Associated Programmes	BA (Hons) Communication Design BA (Hons) Fashion Design BA (Hons) Interaction Design BA (Hons) Interior Design BA (Hons) Silversmithing & Jewellery Design BA (Hons) Textile Design
Lead School	School of Design
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval February 2024

Course Introduction
<p>This course explores designed objects and the stories they tell through the lenses of context, histories, and creative making processes. Our relationship with things is a central part of our lived experience. So, in this course, students consider why designed objects look the way they do, and how things can acquire and communicate powerful emotional, societal, and cultural meanings.</p> <p>The first part of the course takes a critical and contextual approach to explore how we relate to designed objects in everyday life. In shared interdisciplinary talks and cross-disciplinary workshops that foster a community of learning, students consider how designers engage with objects, including found objects; why we archive, collect, and display things; how we build multiple histories and narratives for and through objects; and how we might respond to designed objects we don't know about, or that might have personal resonances. Students build fundamental skills in describing, analysing, investigating, and appreciating objects, developing straightforward critical awareness and new perspectives by exploring historical contexts and contemporary issues to which designed objects connect.</p> <p>The second part of the course brings together contextual research skills and creative making. Students work in their studio disciplines from a shared project brief to develop and make creative work responding to one or more designed objects, ideas, and themes explored within the critical</p>

and contextual talks and workshops. At the end of the course, students show and share how they have responded to the stories designed objects tell.

Course Aims

The aims of this course are to:

1. explore foundational critical and contextual thinking about designed objects in ways relevant to studio-based creative practice
2. build basic skills in information gathering, object analysis and description with an appreciation of multiple histories and narratives
3. engage in foundational critical reflection to inform the development of creative work
4. creatively document, present, and communicate ideas, process, and learning to others

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. apply foundational critical and contextual thinking about designed objects to a shared project brief
2. demonstrate basic knowledge, skills, and understanding in information gathering, analysis, and description in investigating designed objects and design contexts
3. reflect on and evaluate their learning, contextual ideas, and creative making process in response to a shared project brief
4. present documentation of creative process and contextual learning in written, visual, and/or digital ways

Indicative Content

This course will introduce students to:

- investigatory and fundamental approaches to critical and contextual studies related to creative learning in and across design disciplines
- ideas around core contextual themes such as investigating mystery objects, timelines and ideas of histories, designers responding to objects, including found objects, collecting and displaying objects, and responding to personal objects
- approaches to evaluating, critically reflecting on, and connecting contextual learning with creative processes
- ways to document and present creative work and contextual learning

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

This course is designed as a project-based course. Project briefs encourage an independent, tutor-supported approach to directed and self-directed study.

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

- briefings
- interdisciplinary talks and cross-disciplinary workshops
- studio activities
- tutorials, peer review and presentations
- reflection and self-evaluation

In the first part of the course, students join weekly interdisciplinary talks and cross-disciplinary workshops led by Design History & Theory (DHT) staff to explore themes relevant to understanding historical or contemporary designed objects. At the end of this first part of the course, there is a formative review point.

In the second part of the course, students work in their discipline to creatively respond to a project brief shared across programmes, with support and guidance from tutors towards developing, documenting, and presenting a creative response to one or more designed objects, ideas, and themes explored within the critical and contextual talks and workshops.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
20	200

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.

A formative review point bridges the first part and second part of the course. Students have the opportunity to present their progress and ideas for the second phase project work to peers and DHT and studio staff to receive feedback. This formative feedback supports students in developing and refining their project work towards submission for summative assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Summative assessment is designed to support students to review, collate, and communicate work produced in response to project briefs 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
Students are required to submit a body of work produced in response to project brief/s and learning and teaching activities,	100	Semester 2 Week 10

which is assessed holistically against the intended learning outcomes for this course		
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Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	No
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 . This list will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect course content and subject developments.