

**Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Introduction to Critical Studies**



Credit: Jiayi Wang 2023

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 Academic Year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
		2026-27

Course Title	Introduction to Critical Studies
Course Contact	Kirsty Ross

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

Associated Programmes	BDes/MEDes Product Design
Lead School	School of Innovation and Technology
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	PACAAG April 2026

Course Introduction

This course will introduce key themes and theories in design history, to current debates and future realms of design practice. It will allow students to engage in debate and discussion through exposure to a range of design practices, including materials and technologies that have shifted the focus from solely industrial to socially oriented design practices. It will address the environmental and ethical impact of design practice and its role in shaping the society we live in presently and will speculate on the role that design will have in our future lived experience.

Course Aims

The course aims to:

- Introduce students to the theories of design, past, present, and future.
- Develop skills in critical studies and/or writing using analysis and evaluation to synthesise ideas concepts and information.
- Engage students in critical debate.
- Encourage the formulation of an individual argument or stance.
- Introduce appropriate research methods and approaches to support the exploration and/or writing of a reflective narrative

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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

- Present an informed argument using textual and visual resources in a structured written format.
- Select and interpret a range of research materials to develop written content.
- Demonstrate the application of appropriate research methods to support a written narrative.
- Apply appropriate referencing mechanisms to ensure that the work of others is acknowledged.

Indicative Content

This course covers the following content:

- Historical and theoretical content/lecture series
- Synchronous and asynchronous materials/lecture notes
- Critical studies and writing skills

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

In this course, 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 their introduction to theory-based learning and practice.

The principal teaching strategies employed on this course are:

Lectures and seminars - 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 aspects of critical thinking 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 project brief or proposal. Students present work to their peers, tutors and stakeholders when relevant through appropriate visual and verbal means (including: models or mock-ups, portfolios, videos, slideshows, etc.).

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.

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 formative assessment activities that enable students to reflect on their learning as they progress through the course. This includes:

- Regular feedback from tutors/supervisors through engagement in individual and group tutorials, reviews, and presentations
- Class discussion and peer input

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.

Students will submit their completed assignments on Canvas for assessment. A grade will be awarded using the GSA marking scheme adhering to the assessment regulations in the Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Students are required to submit a visual essay with 2000-word text with supporting images.	100	Week 12

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	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](#).