

Parsons The New School for Design

MFA in Design and Technology Major Studio: Interface

Fall 2011

PGTE 5200 Major Studio Interface: (course description)

Class Meeting Location and Times:

Monday: 12:00 pm - 2:40 pm, 6 East 16th Street 1204B

Wednesday: 12:00 pm - 2:40 pm, 6 East 16th Street 1204

Instructor: Katherine Moriwaki <moriwakk@newschool.edu>

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday: 9am - 12pm, by appointment only

I. Overview

Human beings are natural inventors of design and technology with which they manage and interface with their environment. They plan, they create, and they design their lives on earth. The goal of Major Studio: Interface is to introduce students to the production and design research process, writing and research methods, the studio critique environment, critical and analytical thinking, and reflective judgment. The MFA in Design and Technology questions and advances aspects of 21st Century design and technological dialectic and its effects on the human condition in a wide range of fields that have been touched by electronics and computing (for example: interaction, the Internet, information design, social networking, game design, storytelling, animation, digital filmmaking, typography, graphic design, software design, and wired physical installations.)

The Interface studio

- Is **not** a traditional computer interface design class. Rather, it is a course designed to interrogate broadly the concept of “interface” within narrative, interactive, and computational contexts. In the studio sessions, students will produce, test and apply projects around issues related to design and technology along physical, social, political, and cultural lines.
- Acts as a hub to guide ideas and projects (tangible expressions of ideas) generated in the first semester MFA DT curriculum. The Creativity and Computation lecture and design and production-based technical support electives as well as the readings and discussions required in the Interface Studio encourages students’ own reactions and expressions to advance issues of Design and Technology. (See

Creativity and Computation reading list in reading resources-all course readings for Interface Studio will be uploaded to the C&C Blackboard site).

- *Is the core course* within the curriculum, and is the first of four studio courses. Interface Studio is followed by the Concentration Major Studio where students may choose a focus from three offerings in Narrative, Computation or Interactive studies. During the summer between the two years, students undertake preparatory and personally focused research for their MFA DT thesis. In the second year the core studio is Thesis I and II which are combined with the Writing and Research labs.
- Is designed as a stepping-stone to a student's own research, investigations, contributions, and interests, as well as a space for inquiry and experimentation with *alternative* design, research, and methodologies. The course is run in a studio format, which means all students are expected to participate in the research, making, discussion, and critique of work. All students are expected to contribute to the dialogue in class as a substantial part of their grade to demonstrate their understanding, questioning, and unique perspectives on the subjects studied.

II. Course Objectives

1. To introduce research methods at the graduate level;
2. To introduce the importance of thoughtful production processes;
3. To introduce the concept of "interface" within a design and technology context;
4. To understand the cultural and social implications of the use of design and technology;
5. To build a common design and technology vocabulary and establish a range of shared perspectives;
6. To develop the ability to conceptualize, critique, and advance arguments in the domain of design and technology epistemologically (i.e. separating opinion from fact);
7. To reinforce and introduce a range of methods for creative expression;

8. To emphasize design process and research and to introduce students to a range of methodologies especially as they relate to iterative design, testing, and prototyping;
9. To explore forms of design writing in parallel to the making process. These forms include but are not limited to critical writing, design briefs, pitches, self-assessment, case studies, concept formulation and use-case scenarios;
10. To engage in ideas related to the social context and history of design and technology;
11. To help students synthesize and practice reflective judgment to unstructured, complex problems that arise in the research process;
12. To articulate concepts, including value fictions (i.e. imagining blue-sky speculative alternatives to products using current technology and why they would or would not work in prescribed situations), concept maps, mind-mapping, user scenarios, rapid low resolution (dirty) prototyping methods, schematics, and physical process models;
13. To learn to work in small teams, within collaborative contexts;
14. To work individually on projects that establishes, and tracks along the student's own interests and research;
15. To introduce techniques of well-prepared and executed public presentation;
16. To understand target audiences and engage participants in testing projects;
17. To publish and exhibit work and submit work to conferences, publications, and other methods of dissemination.

III. Attendance

- Major Studio: Interface meets for two two-hour and forty minute session per week, and at least 20 hours of work per week outside per class is expected from each student. As per University policy, 4 absences are grounds for failure. Two absences will result in an automatic academic warning.
- Elective courses should feed into the projects students are producing in Interface Studio

- Lateness or early departure from class may also translate into one full absence.
- Individual faculty members may, at their discretion, set attendance standards that are more stringent than that described above. Such standards will be made clear, in writing, at the beginning of the semester.
- All students are required to present at the two major critiques during the semester. Any student who does not participate in these scheduled critiques may receive a failing grade at the discretion of the faculty.

IV. Course Components

While each member of the faculty will choose to handle the details of their course in different ways, all sections will include the following components in the same time frames:

1. Three Primary Assignments

Students will work on three primary project assignments this semester, each lasting approximately 4-5 weeks in length. Projects will be done both individually and in groups at the discretion of the faculty and will explore design and technology within a physical, social, and cultural framework.

1. **Four Weekly projects** - introduction to design research methods; translating research into a series of roughly prototyped designed artifacts that feature a specific point of view. Objective of the assignment: reflective and analytical thinking (how did they make the choices they made?), research methods, contextualization of work, user scenarios and user testing.
2. **Instruction Sets for Strangers** - 4 to 5 weeks: collaborative interfacing with communities in urban space. Objective of the assignment: creating user scenarios, working in teams and participants in the iterative design process.
3. **Individual project** - 5-6 weeks: research, the flow of concept to design, production, testing and application. Objective of the assignment: articulating a thesis; actualizing and externalizing the thesis idea in a project; analyzing and evaluating the project's success; written documentation.

2. In Class Activities

Each week students will also work on smaller, targeted in-class activities designed to support work on the primary assignment. We encourage writing as an integral part of design thinking. Weekly projects may be done individually or in groups, at the faculty's discretion.

3. Critique and Presentation

The presentation and discussion of work is an important component of the course. As such, students are expected to present their projects in front of the group during more formalized critique sessions, which may include invited guest critics, AMT full-time faculty, or students from other sections of the course. Students should be able to present their work in a clear and concise manner, and should be exposed to a range of presentation strategies in preparation for the reviews. Final reviews of course projects are held the last week of classes (12.14 through 12.18). All students are encouraged to attend Thesis Reviews, held the preceding week (12.07 through 12.11).

4. Writing and Research: Student Blog

Twice in the semester, in week 4 and 8, there will be writing workshops that will help students with research and writing skills. This year, they will most likely fall on a weekend unless otherwise notified.

Design writing and research represents an important of expression with the MFADT program. As a result, students in the Interface Major Studio will be required to actively engage in writing and research as part of their overall studio experience. Each student will be required to post class assignments to the blog on their personal website. Discussions, reactions to readings and other matter should be posted in an area that is clearly labeled for the Interface Major Studio. URL locations for should be reported to faculty in the first week of class.

5. Reading and Discussion

Students should be engaged in reading and discussion of material related to the course. While certain texts have been designated as required reading for the course, individual faculty can use these materials in whatever manner they wish, and might choose to supplement the books with additional reading. Students should be encouraged to discuss and critique the material, and are expected to develop a viewpoint that expresses their own ideas about the assigned texts. Faculty may choose to formalize the reading/discussion process, assigning students to make presentations on particular texts, running seminars, or requiring students to submit written comments on the reading.

Suggested CORE Reading and Writing

Students are encouraged to make use of the University Writing Center at 65 Fifth Avenue. The writing center provides individual tutors to review writing for any purpose whether it be a research paper, an artist's statement or presentation. Proper citation of ideas and quotes, (see **Academic Integrity and Honesty policy** at the end of this document) grammar, spelling, sentence, paragraph and document forms are the responsibility of the student. The MFA DT program expects that students pay great attention to the importance of specific forms of writing as it relates to design practice. Writing for design forwards design thinking and innovation and provides a pathway for the analysis, dissemination, implementation, and funding of the designer/artist's work.

Appointments for the University Writing Center can be made online at:

<http://ramon.newschool.edu/ureserve/uwc/ureserve.pl>

- *The New Media Reader*, by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, MIT Press
- *Everyware: The Dawning Age of Ubiquitous Computing* – Adam Greenfield - **ISBN-13: 978- 0321384010**
- *From Shop Class to Soul Craft*, by Matthew B. Crawford

Suggested use of libraries campus and city-wide:

See: <http://library.newschool.edu> (digital interface to University Consortia of Libraries)
The NYU Bobst and Courant Libraries and the Cooper Union library on Astor Place.

Especially encouraged: Joining the New York Public Library System www.nypl.org where there are a plethora of opportunities for investigating focused research collections.

Don't miss: The Science, Industry and Business Library 188 Madison Avenue,(212) 592-7000

Attend

- The New School events announced on the New School website

<http://www.newschool.edu/news/index.aspx>

6. Final Project and Paper

The final individual project should be accompanied by a 5 to 10 page paper that describes the project's research, precedents, evidence, and methodology as well as offer some conclusions about the design problem that was studied.

V. Criteria for evaluation

Students in the course will receive feedback on the following areas:

1. Communication:

How well is the student able to express their ideas, both verbally and with other forms of communication such as: writing, drawing, mapping, modeling, pre-visualizing etc?

2. Critical Thinking and Reflective Judgment:

To what degree has the student demonstrated and developed critical thinking skills over the course of the semester? Reflective Judgment not only asks the questions with concrete answers such as evaluative questions about form, methodology, materials, utility, ergonomics, aesthetics, style, cultural, experience, research, and process critique, but also attacks difficult problems of the world that require research and evidence to support conclusions that can then be offered to the fields encompassed by design and technology.

3. Design Process:

How is the student incorporating proper use of problem identification, brainstorming (divergent- produce many ideas- and convergent-use analysis to pick one idea), generating ideas, analysis, research, writing of specifications and constraints, real-world costs, feasibility, testing, iterating along a line of thinking and then approaching the problem differently in the next cycle, evaluation of process and evaluation of the form created, integrating and adapting new processes and ideas along the iterative design cycle.

4. Contextualization, Conclusion and Evaluation:

To what degree have the students been able to connect the themes and core concepts of the course to concepts introduced in other classes? Have the students been able to connect their work and ideas to historical and contemporary precedents, and to situate their work within the larger discourse surrounding ideas of design, technology and "interface?" Can the student confidently synthesize several different approaches to a design problem and make conclusions of their own? Can the student evaluate their projects' successes and failures?

5. Integration and Appropriate Use of Technology:

Are the students making good choices about the form and type of technology they are using to express their design concepts? Are the students able to integrate technology into the conceptualization of their

6. Iteration, Production, Time Management

Are the students able to scale their projects to the appropriate time frame and technical//design resources for the assignment? Are the students recording their thoughts and processes on their website so that their knowledge can be shared with the rest of the class?

VI. Graduate Grade Scale Descriptions

A Work of exceptional quality.

A- Work of high quality.

B+ Very good work.

B Good work; satisfies course requirements. Satisfactory completion of a course is considered to be a grade of B or higher.

B- Below average work-. Academic Warnings will be given at any time during the semester for any level work below a B.

C+ Well below average work

C Poor work; lowest possible passing grade for the course.

F Failure.

VII. Grading

Failing Grades

Failing grades are given for required work that is not submitted, for incomplete final projects or for examinations that are not taken (without prior notification and approval). Final semester grades are determined by averaging grades received throughout the semester. Make-up work or completion of missed examinations may be permitted only with the approval of the faculty and the MFA DT Director.

Course Outline [University Academic Calendar, Holidays in blue](#)

Week 1

August 29, 2011

NO CLASS - CANCELED DUE TO HURRICANE IRENE

August 31, 2011

Introduction

- Introductions all around: who you are, where you're from and what is your design specialty
- Explanation of syllabus, 4 initial assignments of one-week duration, two longer projects, critique, readings / groups, writing assignments, blogs, downloadable documentation

Discuss: Identity Assignment & 7 and 7 assignment

Identity Assignment Begins

In-class activity: Self-mapping in groups

Reading: (remember to post a response to your blog or website!)

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- “You are Not a Gadget” excerpt by Jaron Lanier
- “Escaping Flatland” Edward Tufte
- “The Power of Representation” Donald Norman
- Donald Norman, "Natural Interfaces are not Natural" - link <http://bit.ly/coSxQi>
- Fred Vogelstein, The Great Wall of Facebook: <http://bit.ly/8jH47Z>
- Jeffrey Rosen: "The Web Means the End of Forgetting", <http://nyti.ms/atnScD>

Week 2

September 5, 2011

NO CLASS - LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September 7, 2011

Present Results from Identity/Assignment

7 in 7/Assignment starts

Week 3

September 12, 2011

In-Class Activity/Discussion of Identity Reading

Introduce Mashups Assignment

Reading: (remember to post a response to your blog or website!)

Mashups: The new breed of Web app, An introduction to mashups: <http://bit.ly/6JisC>

Michael Hohl, "Calm Technologies 2.0: Visualising Social Data as an Experience in Physical Space, <http://bit.ly/JOTHW>

"A Manifesto for Networked Objects: Why Things Matter", Julian Bleeker: <http://bit.ly/CYQDu>

Grey Album Producer Danger Mouse Explains How He Did It, <http://bit.ly/hEOUS>

September 14, 2011

Last Day to Add a Class

Present Results from 7 in 7/Assignment 2

Mashups Assignment Starts

For next class: Harnessing the Power of Feedback Loops: <http://bit.ly/loopfeedback>

Activity Assignment: Go to Maker Faire NYC This weekend - either Saturday, September 17 or Sunday, September 18th.. Write on the class blog about your experience there. Identify 3 interfaces you found at the faire and write down how effective they were in achieving their goals.

Maker Faire New York: <http://makerfaire.com/newyork/2011/>

Week 4

September 19, 2011

Last Day to Drop a Class

In-Class Activity/Discussion: Feedback Loop!

September 21, 2011

Present Mashup Assignment

Start Scrapyard Challenge Assignment

Find Junk for Scrapyard Challenge

Reading: (remember to post a response to to the class blog!)

- Interaction Relabelling and Extreme Characters:Methods for Exploring Aesthetic Interactions Gaver, Djajadiningrat, Frens
- “Hertzian Tales,” Anthony Dunne (excerpt)
- “The Design of Everyday Things”, Donald Norman (excerpt)
- “Why We Need Things”, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- “The Computer Revolution Hasn't Happened Yet” Alan Kay\

September 25, 2011

12pm - 6pm Scrapyard Challenge Workshop

Location TBA

Making musical controllers out of found materials and Junk. Bring your video camera, still camera, iPhone, and/or laptop. Be prepared to take things apart, make a mess, make some stuff, and document everything. We will not meet for class the following week. Presentations will be conducted the last hour on Saturday, but documentation is required after the event.

Week 5

September 26 & 28 2011

Rosh Hashanah - 9/28 evening through 9/29

No Class, Complete documentation for Scrapyrd Challenge

Begin Reading for Instruction Sets for Strangers

- “The Social Life of Urban Spaces” William Whyte
- “Cultural Probes” Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne, & Elena Pacenti
- “What Do Prototypes Prototype?” Stephen Houde and Charles Hill
- “Experience Prototyping” Marion Buchenau and Jane Fulton Suri
- “Cardboard Computers” Pelle Ehn and Morton Kyng

Week 6

October 3, 2011

Instruction Sets for Strangers Begins

Screening of “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces.” Introduction to the new assignment + discussion of reading.

October 5, 2011

Yom Kippur-10/7 evening through 10/8

Instruction Sets for Strangers in-class discussion: Initial Observations

Week 7

October 10, 2011

Instruction Sets for Strangers in-class discussion: Initial Probes

October 12, 2011.

Oct. 14 - Last day to drop with a W

In-Class Activity/Discussion

Week 8
<p>October 17, 2011 Instruction Sets for Strangers in-class critique: Iteration 1</p>
<p>October 19, 2011 In-Class Activity/Discussion</p>
Week 9
<p>October 24, 2011 Instruction Sets for Strangers in-class critique: Iteration 2</p>
<p>October 26, 2011 In-Class Activity/Discussion</p>
Week 10
<p>October 31, 2011 Instruction Sets for Strangers: Final Presentations (including iteration 3)</p>
<p>November 2, 2011. Assignment 3 Begins: Brainstorming/Ideation Session I</p>
Week 11
<p>November 7, 2011 In-Class Activity: Visualization Scenario</p>
<p>November 9, 2011 In-Class Critiques /Activity</p>
Week 12
<p>November 14, 2011 In-Class Critiques /Activity</p>

November 16, 2011

In-Class Critiques/Activity

Week 13

November 21

In-Class Critiques/Activity

Thanksgiving- 11/23-11/27

NO CLASS ON WEDNESDAY

Week 14

November 28, 2011

In-Class Critiques /Activity

November 30, 2011

In-Class Critiques /Activity

Week 15

December 5, 2011

In-Class Critiques /Activity

December 7, 2011

In-Class Critiques /Activity

Week 16

December 12, 2011

Final Reviews

Interface Studio Final Reviews with outside critics

December 14, 2011.

Winter Break-12/20/11 - 1/20/11

Final Reviews

Interface Studio Final Reviews with outside critics

All class materials must be posted to your website as downloadable files, emailed with a link no later than Sunday, December 18th at 11:59 pm. No materials will be accepted for submission after this date.

VIII. Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy

The purpose the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy is to protect the rights of authors, artists and fellow members of the academic community as well as to support the education of the individual student, who derives no educational benefit from cheating. Studio faculty are expected to educate students about the legal and ethical restrictions placed upon creative work and about the consequences of dishonesty in the professional world. Faculty assigning papers are expected to educate students about the appropriate incorporation of quoted material and other thinkers' ideas. Most important, students are expected to keep themselves informed on these matters, to seek clarification from faculty regarding academic honesty and its relationship to specific assignments, and to conduct themselves accordingly. All incoming students are required to sign an Academic Integrity Statement declaring that they understand and agree to comply with this policy. Students who cheat in any way primarily cheat themselves; but they also compromise the academic climate for all members of the Parsons community. Dishonest students, whether directly or indirectly involved in an act of cheating, will be held accountable for violations of the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy. "Academic dishonesty" is defined as:

- cheating on examinations, either by copying another student's work or by utilizing unauthorized materials.
- any act of plagiarism, that is, the fraudulent presentation of the written, oral or visual work of others as original.
- theft of another student's work.
- purchase of another student's work.
- submitting the same work for more than one course.
- destruction or defacement of the work of others.
- aiding or abetting any act of dishonesty.
- any attempt to gain academic advantage by presenting misleading information, making deceptive statements or falsifying documents.

Guidelines for Studio Assignments

Work from other visual sources may be imitated or incorporated into studio work if the fact of imitation or incorporation and the identity of the original source are properly acknowledged. There must be no intent to deceive; the work must make clear that it emulates or comments on the source as a source. Referencing a style or concept in otherwise original work does not constitute plagiarism. The originality of studio work

that presents itself as “in the manner of” or as playing with “variations on” a particular source should be evaluated by the individual faculty member in the context of a critique.

Incorporating ready-made materials into studio work as in a collage, synthesized photograph or paste-up is not plagiarism in the educational context. In the commercial world, however, such appropriation is prohibited by copyright laws and may result in legal consequences.

Guidelines for Written Assignments

Direct quotations and references to the statements and ideas of others in written work do not constitute plagiarism if the fact of quotation or reference and the identity of the original source are properly acknowledged. Written work from other sources may be directly quoted so long as (1) the source is identified before the quotation or in a subsequent citation, footnote or endnote and (2) the fact that the passage is directly quoted is indicated by quotation marks, if a phrase or sentence, or by indentation, if more than one sentence.

Any student who paraphrases the statements of another or brings in ideas or information from a published source must attribute the paraphrased content, ideas or information to the original source, either by using an introductory phrase like “Mr. Smith argues that” or “According to The New York Times” or by identifying the origin in a citation, footnote or endnote. A bibliography listing the sources used in any written assignment should be appended. Students should ask faculty members for detailed instructions or recommended reference materials on proper formats for quotations, citations, footnotes, endnotes and bibliographies.

Procedures and Penalties

Any violation of the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy is a matter for disciplinary action. When a faculty member suspects that cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty has occurred, the faculty member should first inform the student privately that he or she suspects a violation of the Policy. The faculty should explain the alleged violation clearly, concisely and specifically and should advise the student to review the Policy in the Student Handbook. The faculty should schedule a second meeting with the student to discuss the accusation fully following the student’s review of the Policy. Whenever possible, this full discussion should take place within **72** hours of the initial meeting. If a violation comes to the faculty’s attention during finals or a school break, the discussion should take place as soon as possible, but no later than a month after the incident or before the start of a new semester.

Each party may elect, but is not required, to have an impartial advisor present at the meeting. The faculty should select the Chair or Associate Chair of the department that offers the course. The student should select an Advisor from the Office of Advising or from his or her major department. The role of the department Chair or Associate Chair is to help facilitate discussion between the student and the faculty by calling all parties to the meeting, providing a private meeting space and allowing the different points of view to be expressed. The role of the Advisor is to help the student to understand the Policy and the alleged violation.

During the discussion, the student should be prepared to present the work in question, along with any supporting drafts, sketches, digital files or other documentation. The faculty may ask the student to reconstruct the process involved in creating the work. After the discussion, the faculty member, in consultation with the department Chair or Associate Chair, will consider the facts and determine whether the charge is valid and, if so, will recommend what penalty ought to be imposed. The penalty for academic dishonesty should take into account the severity of the violation. The department Chair will refer in writing all violations to the Director of Advising for disciplinary consideration. The Director of Advising will convene a committee to determine the appropriate penalty for the course and the appropriate disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include Disciplinary Warning, Probation or, in severe cases, even for a first offense, Expulsion from the program. A record of disciplinary action may impact future educational and employment opportunities.

In cases where the student confesses to the violation, the procedures and penalties for academic dishonesty may be altered at the discretion of the department Chair or Associate, and the Director of Advising. In cases where the work in question is submitted at the end of the semester and/or the faculty member is unavailable, the department Chair or Associate will discuss the incident with the student.

Appeals

A student found guilty of academic dishonesty may appeal the Committee's decision to the Associate Dean, whose decision will be final. The appeal review will test the fairness and effectiveness of the procedure used to determine the facts. If disciplinary action was taken, the student has the right to appeal the decision in accordance with the New School University Code.