

## Analysis and Criticism

### Rubén Pater / Jeffrey Swartz

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# Course Description

## Brief description

This Analysis and Criticism course is designed to foster an interest to explore and reinforce their critical skills in relation to cultural and design expressions in today's society. Its main aim is to refine students' knowledge of the ideological parameters and discursive complexities that affect the work of design professionals.

The course will take the form of an analytical and critical seminar, with a strong focus on readings, debates and group discussions, with the aim of dissecting current issues. The course focuses on the theoretical trends observed in modern design in order to identify and contextualise the dominant assumptions and ideas, as well as introduce practical techniques for critical analysis.

The course aims to serve as a stimulus for thought and provide experimental and conceptual foundations that will serve students in the development of their final degree project.

## Course objectives

The course is designed to promote techniques, methodologies and approaches that encourage critical, engaged and politically conscious standpoints.

The aim is to encourage students to develop their own reflections and analyses based on experimental scenarios.

The course will include situations and work processes that put to proof the research done in relation to students' final degree project, as well as support each student individually in its preparation.

# Recommendations

In order to make the most of this course, students taking it should meet the following prerequisites in terms of skills and knowledge:

- Observation and visual description skills
- Capacity for analysis and synthesis
- Cultural interests
- Broad knowledge of history and universal culture
- Information-processing, communication and public speaking skills
- Oral, written, material, spatial and graphic communication skills
- Ability to find connections between ideologies, movements, trends, periods and cultures

# Contents

The course is structured around two interconnected modules, with an approximately even split between the number of activities that make up each module. The modules are complementary; they invite students to explore their analytical capacities through writing, visual description, storytelling and narrative, as well as position themselves as activists in relation to political, social, economic and even aesthetic issues.

All students in the Analysis and Criticism groups will take the two mid-term seminars, with the professors going from one group to another. Halfway through the course, there will be an open, collaborative session where groups will participate in an activity that will drive them to probe deeper into practice-based and/or performative-based research.

Each of the two modules will have a different focus, approach and contents, but both will require students to read texts and confront critical discourse through a variety of genres and formats. Design criticism, critical design, and activism are explored as facets of critical analysis. Among the topics discussed will be the question of rhetoric, methods and tools for presenting a reasoned argument, as well as learning how to filter criticism through exploring narrative, performative and theatrical forms. Furthermore, students will learn about the concept of finding and developing their own personal voice (tonality, attitude, style, social presence), as well as about the risk factors associated with adopting a public position, professionally or personally, as an active agent within society.

## Teaching methodology

- Lectures given by the professor.
- Supporting material and documentation: readings, visual documentation, bibliographic resources (documentaries, magazines, online documentation)
- Practical-theoretical work in the classroom: group work, debates, practical exercises.
- Oral presentations to promote the sharing of knowledge and collaborative work.
- External visits, when possible.
- Autonomous work through written and practical exercises.

## Activities

Each module has two assessable activities, which add up to a grade total of 4.

In addition, the subject groups will get together halfway through the term to present their design research, either orally and/or via another type of practical rendition or performance.

Each assessable activity will be worth 20% of the total grade as a provisional scale, depending on the number of activities, with part of the final grade reserved for participation, attendance, and involvement in group work.

## Assessment system

The aim of the continuous assessment approach is for students to be able to track their academic performance throughout the course, in order to allow them to improve it.

From the second enrolment onwards (i.e. if you have enrolled in the course before), the assessment of the subject may consist, at the discretion of the professor(s), of a final exam, which will allow the professor(s) to evaluate if the learning outcomes listed in the course guide have been achieved. In this case, the grade achieved in the exam will also be the overall grade awarded for the course.

Continuous assessment is the model used here. The assessment takes into account the various abilities expressed through students' work during the course. Each module has a similar weight in the assessment.

## General Assessment Regulations

// In order to pass a course, students must obtain a minimum grade of 5.0.

// Once a student has passed a course, he or she cannot be subject to a new assessment or be re-graded on that course.

// Any student who has not submitted all assignments required to be handed in or has attended less than 80% of the classes without having justified these absences will be considered "Not Assessed" (NA). In the case of justified absence, students must contact their professor(s) once they return to class to determine how they will make up for the classes they have missed.

// In the event that a student commits any irregularity that could lead to a significant variation in an exam or assignment grade, this exam or assignment will be graded 0, regardless of any disciplinary proceedings that may be initiated. In the event of various such irregularities for exams or assignments pertaining to the same course, the final grade for this course will be 0.

## Appeal process

Students may appeal a grade by making a formal request to this effect to the faculty. Any revisions of grades will be carried out according to the academic calendar.

As part of this process, students will repeat and/or improve work already assigned during the duration of the course and be re-graded on it. Only in exceptional cases will a final exam without re-submitting/improving work be permitted.

## Re-assessment process

### General Regulations

It is not possible to appeal a grade in the case of internships external to EINA, final degree projects, and assignments/activities that, due to their eminently practical nature, do not allow it.

To participate in the grade review, students must have previously completed and been graded on other assignments whose total weight is equivalent to a minimum of two thirds of the total grade for the course or module.

They must also have submitted all pending work for the course. In case students fail the grade revision process according to the established criteria, this grade cannot make up more than 60% of their final grade.

Only those students who have attended 80% of the classes and who have taken the assessment tests will be entitled to have their grades revised.

### Assessment Criteria

Attending lectures, participating in class and being up to date with readings and other work and exercises is expected and required of each student. For all assessable works, academic rigour, well-reasoned production and creativity are all factors that will be taken into account. For group work, contributions that advance the collective good will be valued.



# Bibliography and Resources

## Rubén Pater module

- Escobar, Arturo (2018) Designs for the Pluriverse
- Gelderloos, Peter (2023) The Solutions Are Already Here, Pluto Press
- Lugones, Maria (2003). Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes, 2003 Mbembe, Achille (2023). Where are the Oasis? MACBA, Barcelona, 2023. Online conference
- Pater, Rubén (2021). CAPS LOCK
- Prado de O. Martins, Luiza (2022) An Anti-Colonial History of Colors, Futuress. Online conference
- Santos-Granero, Fernando (2013). The Occult Life of Things, Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood
- Scott, James C. (2014). Two Cheers for Anarchism
- Scott, James C. (1998). Seeing Like a State

## Jeffrey Swartz module

- Antonelli, Paola (2011). Critical Design, Domus
- Butler Judith (2001). ¿Qué es la crítica Un ensayo sobre la virtud de Foucault
- Joost, Gesche (2007). Design as Rhetoric
- McCarthy, Steven (2012). Designer as Author Activist
- Pelta, R (2012), Diseño y activismo. Un poco de historia, Monográfica
- Prado, Luiza (2014). Questioning the Critical in Critical Design, Medium
- Twemlow, Alice (2017). Sifting the Trash History of Design Criticism, Ch 5, pp. 234-252
- Manifiestos sobre el diseño / Design Manifestos
- Designers Against Monoculture (2001). ENG+CAT
- Engenström, Ulla (2005). Draft Craft Manifesto, On Making and Consuming Things ENG+ESP
- Jongerius H. y Schouwenberg, L. (2015). Beyond the New a Search for Ideals in Design
- Marí, Enzo (1999). Barcelona Manifesto ENG
- Pettis B. y Stark, K. The Cuit of Done Manifesto, ENG + ESP

# Competencies and Learning Outcomes

**CE12.** Demonstrate knowledge of the institutional and social environment of the professional world of design and the role played by the different social entities.

**CE16.** Demonstrate an ability to comprehend and interpret texts on the history, theory and criticism of design in a pertinent and well-reasoned manner.

**CE18.** Interpret and critically evaluate final products and design projects, both one's own and made by others.

**CE19.** Demonstrate knowledge of research methods relevant to design and art theory, analysis and criticism.

**CE21.** Have the resources and capabilities to relate concepts and languages from different design specialties.

**CT1.** Oral and written communication skills in the students' native language and in other languages such as English that allows them to work in an international context.

**CT2.** Prepare professional reports and academic papers.

**CT6.** Ability to work in a team and communicate effectively with the different roles and across the different disciplines involved in the development of a design project.

**CT19.** Demonstrate a positive affectivity in relation to the aesthetic values and formal qualities of the material and visual environment.