

**Research methods course**  
**Media design and research**

Prof. Lily Díaz-Kommonen

Department of Media, Media Lab

07.10-09.12, 2014

**Course description**

The course is meant for Master of Arts students. It provides an introduction to the tools and methods of research in design. The work aims to develop the participant's analytical capacity to deconstruct, read and re-interpret, cultural contexts and so-called situations of use. From a critical perspective we study and analyze the increasingly important role that digital media plays in the building of our everyday lives and environments.

We review the work of such theorists and practitioners such as: John Chris Jones, Klaus Krippendorff, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, Harold Nelson, Don Norman, Sarah Pink, Erik Stoltermann, among others.

Among of the topics touched with in class are: Activity theory, design thinking, human-centered design, theory of affordances, concept of the artifact, culture as interaction and interface design, design representation, participatory design, ect.

**Learning objectives**

From an interdisciplinary perspective that brings together, art, humanities and science, introduce the student to the methods, theory and terminology particular to research for design and its use, from a perspective of the new media.

The course also seeks to provide opportunities for students to implement the knowledge being acquired.

**Learning outcomes**

- Learn about contemporary theories of design research and its applications in the new media.
- Learn how to use diverse methods and tools including:
  - Artifact analysis
  - Practice-led method
  - Scenario design
  - Ethnographic methods
    1. Observation
    2. Probes
    3. Questionnaires

**Working methods**

Participation in the course is graded. The course consists of lectures, readings, design exercises, and writing. You must keep a diary documenting thoughts and questions about the sessions. This diary is saved to PDF format and submitted at the end of the course. All the work must be completed within the time span of the class. Class participation accounts for 30% of the grading, so attendance is strongly encouraged.

## Calendar of activities

Activity	Date	Topics	Assignment
Research and design	7.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artifact analysis</li> <li>• Human-centered design</li> <li>• Second order understanding</li> </ul>	Reading: Ch. 1 “History and Aim” and Ch. 2, “Basic concepts in human-centered design”, pp. 1- 70.
Practice-led methodology	14.10	Students visit EMMA, select from a list and do artifact analysis.	Reading: Ch. 3, “Meaning of artifacts in use”, in <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 77-145 Exercise: Complete artifact analysis for presentation on 21 October.
Visualizing interaction	21.10	Making and using scenario-based design.	Reading: Ch. 3, “Meaning of artifacts in use”, in <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 77-145. Exercise: Complete scenario design for presentation on 21 October.
Review session	28.10	Presentations and discussions of artifact analysis.	Reading: Ch. 3, “Meaning of artifacts in use”, in <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 77-145
Ethnography	4.11	Introduction to ethnography: Fieldwork, observation, questionnaires and probes. Presentations of scenarios.	Reading: Ch. 4, “Meaning of Artifacts in language”, in <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 147-176.
Embodiment	11.11	Sensory anthropology and data gathering techniques using digital media.	Reading: Ch. 5, “Meaning in the lives of artifacts”, in <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 177-189.
Post-digital	02.12	Develop a concept	Reading: Ch. 6, “Meaning in an ecology of artifacts”, <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 193-203
FINAL day	09.12	Concept presentation	Ch. 7, “Design methods, research, and a science for design”, in <i>The Semantic Turn</i> , pp. 207-260.
DEMO day		PRESENT SELECTED WORKS	

## Additional readings

- Alexander, Christopher, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1964).
  - Cockton, Gilbert, “When and Why Feelings and Impression Matter in Interaction Design”, in *Kansei* 2009.  
[http://www.cs.tut.fi/ihte/projects/suxes/pdf/Cockton\\_Kansei%202009%20Keynote.pdf](http://www.cs.tut.fi/ihte/projects/suxes/pdf/Cockton_Kansei%202009%20Keynote.pdf). (Accessed 6 October, 2014.)
  - Dunne, Anthony, “Hertzian Space” in *Hertzian Tales*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006) pp. 101-122.  
<http://libproxy.aalto.fi/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/aalto/Doc?id=10173606>
  - Jones, Chris John, *Design Methods*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1992).
  - Krippendorff, Klaus, *The Semantic Turn*, (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor Francis, 2006).
  - Lars-Erik Janlert and Erik Stolterman, “The Character of Things”, in *Design Studies* Vol 18, No 3, July (1997), 297-314. <http://transground.blogspot.fi/>. (Accessed September 18, 2013.)
  - Lars-Erik Janlert and Erik Stolterman, “Complex interaction”, in *ACM Transactions in Computer-Human Interaction*, 17, 2, Article 8 (May 2010), <http://transground.blogspot.fi/>. (Accessed September 18, 2013.)
  - Moholy-Nagy, Lazlo, *Ein Lichtspiel Schwarz Weiss Grau*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMrJLhSellk>, (Accessed September 18, 2013.)
- Nelson, Harold and Erik Stolterman, *The Design Way*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, 2002).
- <http://libproxy.aalto.fi/login?url=https://www.dawsonera.com/abstract/9780262305655> ‡z E-kirja/E-book On-Campus
- <https://www.dawsonera.com/guard/protected/dawson.jsp?name=https://idp.aalto.fi/idp/shibboleth&dest=https://www.dawsonera.com/abstract/9780262305655> ‡z E-kirja/E-book Off-Campus (Aalto University login)
- Norman, Don, *The Design of Everyday Things*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988).
- Multiple copies are available in the Media Lab library as well as in other Aalto libraries.
- Pink, Sarah, Kerstin Leder Mackley, “Video and a Sense of the Invisible: Approaching Domestic Energy Consumption Through the Sensory Home”, *Sociological Research Online*, Volume 17, Issue 1, published 28 Feb 2012, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/17/1/3.html>. (Accessed on September 18, 2013.)
  - Purdue Online Writing Lab: The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University houses writing resources and instructional material, and we provide

these as a free service of the Writing Lab at Purdue. Students, members of the community, and users worldwide will find information to assist with many writing projects. Teachers and trainers may use this material for in-class and out-of-class instruction.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>, (Accessed September 18, 2012.)

- Usability guidelines, <http://guidelines.usability.gov> (Accessed, 6 October 2014)
- Williams, Amanda M., Alspaugh Thomas A. “Articulating Software Requirements Comic Book Style” in *Third International Workshop on Multimedia and Enjoyable Requirements Engineering - Beyond Mere Descriptions and with More Fun and Games 2008, (MERE '08)*, <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl/mostRecentIssue.jsp?reload=true&punumber=4797442>. (Accessed September 18, 2013.)

Office hours for course: Thursdays, from 10-12