Rocking chaise longue, Joaquim Albuquerque Tenreiro, Brazil, 1950s. Victoria & Albert Museum | *A Home for Anybody,* Marc Harrison, US, 1970s, NYTimes | *Shelter in Place*, Stephen Burks, US 2023-2024, PMA | *Action Office*, Herman Miller, US 1970s, Herman Miller | *Prime TC,* Michael Graves Associates, US 2010-Present, Cooper Hewitt

History of Furniture

Fall 2025 - INT 350 (3 credits)

Instructor: Gretchen Von Koenig
University Lecturer of Design History & Theory
Hillier College of Architecture and Design
New Jersey Institute of Technology

Time: Tuesdays & Fridays 10-11:30

Room: Large Conference Room 350

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 am,
Email to schedule
gretchen.a.vonkoenig@njit.edu

<u>**Overview**</u>

History of Furniture is a survey course that spans the history of furniture & interiors from the 1400s to the present, with a focus on 1850-present day. It will focus on furniture's functional and stylistic evolution through social, cultural, political and technological changes of society. Students will analyze

furniture in terms of function and use, cultural and social identities, evolution of taste and style, construction and materials, ergonomics, universal/ barrier-free accessibility, sustainability, and technology. Major stylistic movements will be discussed and critically analyzed for the associations they carry in contemporary interior & furniture design. Class will be conducted as a seminar (lecture-discussion format) and students are expected to participate and contribute to the class as part of their grade. In- class group projects and exercises as well as home research assignments will be included.

Prerequisite: AD 161 and AD 162 or equivalent; or Arch 251, 252 and 381.

Specific Learning Outcomes

- Learn to analyze works of art/design from both Western and non-Western cultures perceptively and to evaluate them critically. (NASAD 2024-2025, VIII.B.– VIII.C.a., page 105)
- Develop an understanding of the common elements and vocabulary of art/design and of the interaction of these elements, and be able to employ this knowledge in analysis. (NASAD 2024-2025, VIII.B.– VIII.C.b., page 105)
- Acquire the ability to place works of art/design in historical, cultural, and stylistic contexts. Apply acquired knowledge and vocabulary to analyze the influence of historical styles and technology on contemporary furniture and design(NASAD 2024-2025, VIII.B.– VIII.C.c., page 105)
- Functional knowledge of the history of art, architecture, decorative arts, and interior design including, but not limited to the influences of work and ideas on the evolution of interior design practice. (NASAD 2024-2025, IX.C.i., page 134)
- Analyze the built environment through the interface of furniture as a means of achieving personal, social and/or inclusionary goals
- The ability to gather information, conduct research, and apply research and analysis to design projects. Proficiency in communication skills: experience in presentation techniques and working as a member of a team.(NASAD 2024-2025, IX.C.l., page 135)
- Familiarization with resources for information in the metropolitan area, including furniture manufacturing, technology, museums, galleries and auction houses.

Suggested Books

I will be posting a variety of readings pulled from books, websites, auction catalogs, design magazines, museum materials, etc. and readings will be discussed in class. Laptops with Internet capability should be brought to each class.There is no central, required textbook from this course, however, I recommend the following general texts for your designer libraries:

1. Mark Hinchman (2024). *History of interior architecture : furniture, design, and global culture*

(Second edition.). Fairchild Books.

2. Pat Kirkham and Susan Weber (2013). *History of Design: Decorative Arts and Material Culture, 1400-2000*. Yale University Press.
3. Raizman, David (2013). *History of Modern Design,* Laurence King Publishing.
4. Mark Hinchman (2009) *History of Furniture : A Global View*, Fairchild Books.
5. Jeannie Ireland (2018) *History of Interior Design*, Fairchild Books.

Assignments and Grading
The grading breakdown is as follows:

In Class Participation (academic engagement, kepler uploads, discussions, presentations)	5%
Weekly Free-Hand Sketches	25%
Weekly Group Project Work	30%
Group Project: Museum Exhibit *Database Project* *Exhibition Proposal* *Mid Review* *Final presentation*	40%

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:
A (90-100) B+ (86-89) B (80-85) C+ (76-79) C (70-75) D (60-69) F (0-59)

Weekly Schedule
Readings are subject to change and can be found in the Canvas Course

Topics	Date	Readings + Assignments
Week 1 Introduction Research Methods Pt. 1: Furniture Databases	Tues 9/2 Fri 9/5	Syllabus Review, Fav Furn Project, Intro to semester long project Intro Lecture: Furniture Types Group Database Presentations

Topics	Date	Readings + Assignments
Week 2 Pre-1900s Influences from East- West	Tues 9/9 Fri 9/12	Group Database Presentations / Curatorial Direction Group Work Readings: Kwong-Chiu Chiu, "Interior Design and Furnishing in Pre-Modern China," in *Encyclopedia of East Asian Design*, edited by Haruhiko Fujita and Christine Guth (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 54–57. In-class group work: Draft curatorial statement with theme & initial object selection Readings: Mimi Hellman, "Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in 18th Century France," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies, Vol. 32, No. 4, Sites and Margins of the Public Sphere* (John Hopkins University Press) 415-445.
Week 3 1850-1900 Exploring Modernity	Tues 9/16 Fri 9/19	Deyan Sudjic, O is for Ornament, in *Designing the Modern World from A-Z,* Design Museum London (2018); Reading TBD on Shaker Design & Arts & Crafts movement Group Work: Curatorial Statement / Object Selection
Week 4 Early 20th Century: Art Nouveau / Art Deco / Streamline Moderne	Tues 9/23 Fri 9/26	Norman Bel Geddes, "Streamlining," in *The Industrial Design Reader*, ed. Carma Gorman (New York: Allworth Press, 2004), 135-137.; Suggested: Muthesius & Van de Velde - *Statements from the Werkbund Conference of 1914*; Wendy Kaplan, "The Filter of American Taste: Design in the USA in the 1920s," in *Art Deco 1910-1939*, ed. by Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton, and Ghislaine Wood (Boston: Bulfinch Press/AOL Time Warner Book Group, 2003), 335-343.
Week 5	Tues 9/30	Charlotte Perriand. "Wood or Metal?" (1929); "The Homemaker and Her Domain" (1936), in Charlotte Perriand: An Art of Living, ed. by Mary McLeod (New

Topics	Date	Readings + Assignments
1920 - 1940: Interwar Efficiency & German Modernism	Fri 10/3	York: H.N. Abrams, 2003), 1-2; Matilda McQuaid, *Lilly Reich: Designer and Architect* (New York: MoMA) 1996. Christine Frederick, "The Labor Saving Kitchen" in The Industrial Design Reader, ed. Carma Gorman (New York: Allworth Press, 2004), 177-183; Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and Juliet Kinchin, "Passages from Why I Became an Architect." West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture 18, no. 1 (2011): 86-96. doi:10.1086/659385.
Week 6 Group Proposal Presentations	Tues 10/7 Fri 10/10	Exhibition Proposals Presentations Groups 1-4 (12 mins each) Field Trip - Mana Contemporary
Week 7 Exhibition Research and Development	Tues 10/14 Fri 10/17	Exhibition Proposals Presentations Groups 4-8 In class work: Exhibition Spatial Planning & Narrative Outline
Week 8 Functionalism & Intro to Midcentury Modernism	Tues 10/21 Fri 10/24	In Class - Graphic Identity and Wall Label Design Bobbye Tigerman. "'I Am Not a Decorator': Florence Knoll, the Knoll Planning Unit and the Making of the Modern Office." *Journal of Design History* 20, no. 1 (2007): 61-74.
Week 9 Mid Century Modernism in North and South American & Post war Populuxe	Tues 10/28 Fri 10/31	Reading Chapter 2: Joaquim Tenreiro, in *Brazil Modern: Rediscovering 20th century Brazilian Furniture,* Aric Chen (R&Company 2015); Reading: Alice T. Friedman, "Home on the Avocado-Green Range: Notes on Suburban Decor in the 1950s," *Interiors* 1, issue 1-2 (2010): 45-60. Visit Newark Museum of Art

Topics	Date	Readings + Assignments
Week 10 Systems Furniture in Offices and Homes 1960s-1970s	Tues 11/4 Fri 11/7	Museum Visit Review + In Class work on Exhibition Catalog Draft & Scholarly sources analysis and pull quotes Kaufmann-Buhler, "Managing Change," in *Open Plan, a Design History of the American Office.;* Change; Zagaria "Fighting Racism from Office Interiors." Elle Decor, Hearst, August 8, 2019.
Week 11 Radical Design: Nightlife, Restaurant & Experiential furniture	Tues 11/11 Fri 11/14	Excerpt from MoMA Catalog on New Domestic Landscape: *Italian Radical Design ;* Radice - Memphis & Fashion; Watch *2001: A Space Odyssey;* Bill Osgerby, "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon: Masculinity, Consumption and Interior Design in American Men's Magazines, 1930-65." *Journal of Design History* 18, no. 1 (2005): 99-113. In class group work: writing individual didactics, curatorial framing feedback and Exhibition List / Catalog Formatting review
Week 12 DIY Design: Furniture in the age of Sustainability and IKEA	Tues 11/18 Fri 11/21	Buckminister Fuller, "Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth," in T*he Industrial Design Reader*, ed. Carma Gorman (New York: Allworth Press, 2004), 186-87; James Hennessey, and Victor Papanek. *Nomadic Furniture*. 1973. In class group work: final set of deliverables draft review + timeline
Week 13 Post ADA Designing for Disability	11/26 Meet Once* Fall Break week	Graham Pullin, *Design & Disability* selection
Week 14 + 15 Final Presentations	Tues 12/2 Fri 12/5	Final Presentations Final Presentations

Topics	Date	Readings + Assignments
	Tues 12/9	Final Submissions + Final Sketch Project Poster

Policies

Late Assignments: Late assignments may be turned in up to two weeks late for 10% reduced credit (one letter grade). After one week, the work may be turned in for 50% deduction until the last day of classes, Dec 11, 2025.

Generative AI: As a whole, NJIT's perspective on AI is to foster intellectual development, critical thinking, and to uphold academic integrity standards while taking ethics, data, and privacy concerns seriously. Responsible Use of generative AI means that these tools are not shortcuts to bypass the learning process, *but tools to advance it.*

This course *aims to develop your ability to communicate complex ideas about design.* In studio and design practice, you will be expected to speak intelligently (and on command) to design decisions you make, and verbalize the validity and applicability of any design precedents you research and use as inspiration. Using AI shortcuts to do your design writing and research bypasses this crucial skill - *and my class is a space to cultivate your designer voice.* You can use AI as a beginning point in the research process–such as getting background information on a designer or a design style (the same way one might use wikipedia or an encyclopedia to gain a general understanding of a topic they are currently unfamiliar with). You can also use AI to generate inspiration or research other artists/designers who tackle similar subjects you would like to become familiar with. But analyzing design work–its language and its meaning in culture and society today–is something YOU should be exercising and getting better at, not asking a machine to do it for you. For final submissions, AI should not be used to generate writing or produce your final visuals. Final submissions that are AI generated will be treated as plagiarism: using content (ideas, words, processes, and results) not written by oneself and sharing it as one's work is considered plagiarism (DOS Plagiarism page & the Writing Center).

Using AI as background research still has its pitfalls. Investigate what claims LLMs/AI might state about a given design style/design history, as there are many biases in the data it rests on:

Training Data Bias: If the data used to train an AI model is biased or unrepresentative of the real-world population, the model may learn and perpetuate those biases.

Algorithm Bias: The algorithms and machine learning techniques used to develop AI systems can also introduce bias.

Interaction Bias: AI systems can also exhibit bias when interacting with different user groups.

Societal Bias: AI systems can inadvertently amplify or reflect existing societal biases and stereotypes in the real world if they are not carefully designed and monitored.

Disabilities: Please comeIf you are in need of accommodations due to a disability please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS) at OARS@NJIT.EDU, or visit us in Kupfrian Hall 201, to discuss your specific needs. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the OARS authorizing your accommodations will be required. See more information at https://www.njit.edu/accessibility/

Syllabus: This syllabus serves as a general outline. I reserve the right to deviate from any part of the plan as necessary. Students will be notified of any such modifications and I will post the new syllabus on canvas.

Grade Disputes for Assignments: If a student has a grade dispute, they should submit a one- page memo to the instructor presenting evidence for their case. The instructor will review and re- grade the original assignment. This review can create a grade increase, but may also create a grade decrease based on the new overall evaluation.

Course Grade Appeals: Grading is done at the sole discretion of each faculty member. A student who wishes to appeal a grade must write a formal letter to the Dean of the College of Architecture and Design specifying the course number, term, year and faculty member, AND reasons for the appeal. The Dean then refers the matter to the Associate Dean for Academics who in turn appoints an ad hoc committee to review the student's work and the manner of grading. Full details of the appeals procedure and required documentation can be obtained from the academic advisor Sasha Corchado.

Violations of Academic Integrity : Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: NJIT Academic Integrity Code.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This includes work generated from Chat GPT. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu"

Incomplete Grades: The grade of "Incomplete" may be given under rare, documented circumstances. Instructors must provide written details of the remaining work and deadlines to the student and the Department Chair. The "Incomplete" grade must be resolved in the next regular semester to avoid automatic conversion to a failing grade. Instructors should not accept work by a student after the end of the semester following the one in which the Incomplete was issued, unless the Dean of Students certifies extenuating circumstances, the instructor is willing to process a late change of grade and the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs pre-authorizes such a change.

Kepler: As per the policies of the School of Architecture and Design, all assignments must be uploaded to Kepler by the deadline. Any work not uploaded to Kepler will receive a failing grade. Any work that

is not uploaded to Kepler will not be counted toward the final grade for the semester (meaning: it will be included as a zero in the final grade calculation).

Participation and Attendance: I do not take attendance. Participation in the course is 10% of your grade as it is a seminar class. If you are frequently absent, you cannot contribute to class discussions which will impact your participation grade. Further, your major project for the semester has bi-weekly inclass presentations and if you are absent for those, you do not get the credit unless you contact me in advance and your group confirms your active participation in what was presented to the class.