

## ID 203 - Innovation: Past, Present and Future of Design

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NJIT Fall 2025  
CKB – Room 314

Instructor: Jose Alcala  
Mondays & Wednesdays 8:30 AM - 9:50 AM

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### Course Description

This intensive survey course marks pivotal design paradigm shifts from ancient cultures, through the industrial revolution, the present day and projected into the future. This course will focus on the human activity called "Design" through a polyfocal lens. Case studies of selected cultures, designers and artifacts will expose the student to the forces, history, methods, styles and meanings that shape the human ecology and the trajectory of human evolution.

We will attempt to understand the fruits of Industrial Design contextually, that is, within the complexity of critical zeitgeists, memes, paradigms, economies, technologies and geographies. As a means to dig deep below the surface we will need to draw from various disciplines including: anthropology, ethnology, zoology, physics, marketing / advertising, sociology, economics, art history and, of course, design. This will be done through various mediums throughout the semester including: projects, film, fine art, TV, WWW, literature, heated in-class discussions and lectures.

### Course Objectives

- Develop depth and understanding of the human ecology and its artifacts
- Broaden the definition of Industrial Design
- Hone research, critical thinking and presentation skills
- Gather and synthesize information from a variety of sources and disciplines
- Produce a presentation and printed document that demonstrate these acquired skills

### Your Responsibility

- **Participate in class** discussions. Contribute individual experiences and opinions when relevant to the topic so that others can benefit and learn. This is a big part of the class!
- **Ask questions...** there is no dumb/bad question.
- **Respect** others opinions, and their social, cultural, political, moral and religious point of view.
- **Cell phones** shall be turned off / silenced at the beginning of class unless you are emergency personnel on-call. Use of a cell phone during class will not be tolerated unless it is an emergency call. In this case please excuse yourself from the class.
- **Headphone / ear buds** shall be removed during class time.
- Take **individual responsibility** for completing and submitting assignments on time.
- **Participate in all team-related** activities, homework assignments, presentations and exercises.
- **Check e-mail and Canvas** frequently. Everyone must have an active e-mail address. You can receive a free e-mail address and access to the Internet from NJIT.
- At the end of semester all work produced for this class shall be uploaded to a Google Drive created by the professor. **ALL work shall also be uploaded to Kepler4.** Failure to do so shall result in a failing grade until this requirement has been satisfied.

- **Regular attendance** is expected. When possible, please give advance notice of your absence. NJIT requires attendance for **ALL** students. After 3 recorded absences, your grade will be lowered by one-half ( ) grade point for each additional absence, if you are not carrying a medical, school or religious related excuse. No excuses will be accepted without a written note from the Dean or a doctor. Students with particular needs and foreseen absences should present them to their instructor within the first week of class. Attendance for student athletes: No student athlete may miss any regularly scheduled classes for any practice activities. This means students can neither miss nor leave class early (or arrive late) to attend a practice. While student athletes may miss class when participating in intercollegiate competition, it is the responsibility of the student athlete to proactively inform the instructor well in advance to make appropriate arrangements to complete or make up any assignments or exams in a timely fashion.
- **Lateness** is inconsiderate and disruptive - and will not be tolerated. Five lates will lower your grade by one-half ( ) grade point.
- **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 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](mailto:dos@njit.edu)
- **Generative AI** may be used as a tool this semester for research and / or creative brainstorming, however, it is only to be used under the permission and guidance of the professor and under specific circumstances. The student is not to use it as a means of answer generation for quizzes, exams or assignments.

### Grading

Final grade will be based on the following criteria: Level of effort and commitment, quality of work, reading assignment comprehension, class participation, project progress, timely submissions and subject comprehension as demonstrated by assignments, exams and attendance.

#### Grade distribution:

- Readings, discussions, participation in class and regular attendance: 15%
- Project 1: 20%
- Project 2: 20%
- Project 3: 20%
- Final Project: 25%

**Required Reading**

The Industrial Design Reader

Author: Edited by Carma Gorman

Publisher: New York: Allworth Press, 2004

There will also be a variety of reading assignments throughout the semester consisting of excerpts from books, periodicals, journals, and on-line articles. Reading assignments will be posted on Canvas. You are expected to check Canvas every week for posted reading material and assignments. Come prepared to engage in a round table discussion for the following class.

**Suggested Reading**

A comprehensive Book List will be posted on Canvas early in the semester.

**Weekly Course Schedule**

The weekly course schedule along with reading assignments and project assignments will be available on Canvas. Schedule and assignments are subject to change so please be sure to check frequently for updates.

**Contact Information**

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Office Location: Weston 679

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM. Please make an appointment.