



**Course Title and Number:** History of Modern Design

**Instructor:** Rosanna Eckersley

**Course Objectives:**

The course starts from the idea that things are important to how we live and how we feel about our lives, and that they were important to people in the past

This course focuses on Britain and looks at a huge range of objects that have been part of people's lives during the last 250 years, from buildings, to clothes, to London's tube and phones. We look at beautiful objects, useful objects, mass-produced objects, hand-made objects, and many more. The course provides an introductory overview of the history of design in Britain from the Industrial Revolution to the present day. Topics are introduced chronologically, but over the course we aim to cover the following topics:

- Design, production, and consumption
- Advertising and retailing
- Design in the public and private spheres
- Gender and class in design, production and consumption
- Modernity, Modernism and Post-Modernism
- New Technologies and New Materials
- Markets for goods and restrictions on marketing (rationing)
- Designers and Design Movements
- Mass Production and Small Scale/Craft Production
- Contrasts and similarities between 20c design in Britain and Europe/the US
- Brief introduction to British 'high art' prints and paintings to put buildings and objects into context

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course the students should

- Have developed knowledge of a wide range of objects, including some buildings, designed in Britain from the Industrial Revolution to the present day.
- Be able to relate a wide range of objects to the socio/historical conditions in which they were produced, and to discuss the work of some designers.
- Have developed an understanding, at an introductory level, of the themes, issues and debates within the study of British design
- Be able to think, discuss and write critically and independently about what they have seen and read

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- Have gained enjoyment in looking at visual culture, from classes, visits and independent study.
- Have completed assessments.

**Required Text:**

Adrian Forty: *Objects of Desire*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1986.

Other readings in course pack (to be supplied).

**Further Reading will include:**

- Cumming, Elizabeth and Kaplan, Wendy: *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1993, chapter 1 pages 9-29.
- Morris, William extract from 'The Worker's Share of Art', first published in *Commonweal*, 1885, this extract taken from Golby JM (ed), *Culture and Society in Britain 1850-90*, Oxford, OUP, 1986, pages 231-233.
- Sparke, Penny: *An Introduction to Design and Culture: 1900 to the Present*, London and New York, Routledge 2004 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Chapter 1, pages 13-33. Pages 44-54 (part of chapter 2).
- Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, London, Pelican Books, 1960 (1st ed 1936). Chapter 4, pages Pages 91-111.
- Cohen, Deborah; *Household Gods*, London and Yale, Yale University Press, 2006 (sections on retailing in 19c and 20c).
- Sparke, Penny: *An Introduction to Design and Culture: 1900 to the Present*, London and New York, Routledge 2004 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition).
- Breward Christopher: *The Culture of Fashion, Manchester and New York*, Manchester University Press, 1995, sections of chapters 6 and 7 on 20c dress.
- Jameson, Frederick: 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', from *New Left Review* 196, June/July 1984. Pages 53-92

**Topics covered will include:**

- Introduction to the course. What is design? Examples from Britain, Europe and the US to introduce the course topics. We will then go on to start to look at neo-classicism in Britain and how it developed from some earlier styles. Reading: the Introduction and chapters 1 and 2 of course book
- neo-classicism, Picturesque, Gothic, a consumer society, the conditions of production and design. We look at the changes in British design from the 18c to 1851 as Industrialisation took hold, Britain was very successful and people became nostalgic for the past. Case studies will include: Pugin and the Great Exhibition, Gothic style churches. Reading: chapter 3, 4 and 5 of course book.
- Public Space, Private Space. We look at the interiors of homes from c 1851 to 1870, focusing on changes through production methods, the design cultures of the Aesthetic Movement and influences from non-European cultures. We contrast this with design for public spaces. Case studies will include: railway stations, town halls, shopping arcades, the

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- sewing machine, interiors in preparation for our visit. b) Brief introduction to some 18 and 19c prints and paintings to give an art context for buildings and designs. c) Short assessed test. Reading: Cumming, Elizabeth and Kaplan, Wendy: *The Arts and Crafts Movement: London, Thames and Hudson 1991*, pages 9-29 (in course pack). Morris 'The workers' share of art' (in course pack),
- William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. b) Case studies: 19c advertisements, case studies related to the visit. Presentation discussion and preparation time. c) Short assessed essay, to be completed in class. This short essay, 10% of course grade, will provide preparation for the end-of-course essay (30% of course grade). Reading: course book chapter 7; Cohen, Deborah: pages 44-62 of *Household Gods*, part of chapter 2, New Haven and London, Yale, 2006 (on retailing, and in course pack).
  - Arts and Crafts at the turn of the century, including British country houses b) Visit: We will take the tube (or walk) to the V and A for the second part of our class. Reading: Sparke, Penny: *An Introduction to Design and Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004, pages 44-54, part of chapter 2 (in course pack). Victorian Web pages on Victorian fashion: see [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org) (click on section The Visual Arts, then 'What Victorians Wore').
  - Modernity and the consumer. Case studies to include the shop/department store and the car b) Art Nouveau, including women designers Margaret and Frances Macdonald c) 19c Fashion. d) Essay discussion e) Introduction to Modernism in preparation for visit. Reading: Pevsner, Nikolaus *Pioneers of Modern Design*, London, Penguin, 1936, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1964, pages 90-117 on Art Nouveau (in course pack). Design Museum website on Charles Rennie Mackintosh ([www.designmuseum.org](http://www.designmuseum.org), click on Design at the Design Museum, click on CR Mackintosh).
  - Presentations b) Modernism and Art Deco in the late 1920s and 1930s. Case studies will include London Transport. b) Social housing between WW1 and WW2 c) media into the home eg wireless. d) Women designers eg Clarice Cliff. Reading: Design Museum website on Frank Pick ([www.designmuseum.org](http://www.designmuseum.org), click on Design at the Design Museum), course book chapter 10. Sparke pages 73-74 (on women designers, in course pack), Cohen pages 170-188 and 193-197, part of chapter 7, (on Modernism and design in Britain, in course pack) and pages 183-191 of Jonathan M. Woodham *Twentieth Century Design* (in course pack).
  - This class looks at WW2 and the later 1940s and 1950s. We will begin with WW2 Utility furniture, then go on to the Festival of Britain. We'll consider the post-war boom in council (social) housing, with case studies from London and Sheffield. The class ends with 20c advertisements. Essay deadline. Reading: Sparke pages 178-80, 196-197, 209-214 (in course pack), section of Jameson on postmodernism (in course pack).
  - The swinging 60s and the 1970s b) Postmodernism and globalisation of production and design: 1980s to 2006. c) 20c fashion. d) Assessed test. e) Conclusion to course.

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**Note:** Students should prepare for each class by reading as specified in the course outline, and formulating questions inspired by the readings. Readings will be discussed in class. Participation in class and group discussion is strongly encouraged. Site visits are a vital part of learning, enabling students to examine objects at first hand.

Topics for Presentations and Essay and approaches to these tasks will be introduced and discussed in class. Details will be given for Bibliography and References.

**Co-curricular activities will include:**

- **Design Museum**  
Sir Terence Conran founded this museum for International Contemporary Design out of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Temporary exhibitions and a permanent collection make it a required visit for courses with a strong design component
- **Victoria & Albert Museum**  
This museum contains an enormous and varied collection that covers design, textiles and other materials from many countries and different periods of time. The emphasis is on the applied arts in particular and the collections provide a world-class resource for courses with an arts, fashion, design or history focus.
- **Leighton House**  
Former home of the artist Lord Leighton, featuring his Arab Hall and Victorian/Edwardian works of art.
- **Linley Sambourne House**  
Well-preserved home of a successful cartoonist, this house illustrates how Victorian interiors were very cluttered – an example the “more is less” principle .

**Instructional Methods:**

Lectures, class and group discussion, group projects/presentations, field visits.

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance, including classes and site visits, is compulsory. More than three unexplained absences may result in a lower mark for the course. At least 50% attendance is required to pass the course.

**Assessment Plan:**

1 presentation, 30% (this will be a group presentation, but the grade will be given according to the individual's contribution to the Presentation and the preparatory work evidenced by submitted notes).

2 class tests and one short essay to be completed in class, 30%

1 final essay, 30% (essay of 1,000 –1,500 words, Bibliography and references to be included).

Attendance and Participation 10% (students may lose marks for more than 3 unexplained absences).

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