

SENSORY DESIGN

IML 499: Special Topics / Spring 2023

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Office Hours by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

IML 499: Sensory Design is an interdisciplinary and project-based introductory course to multisensory design and media arts practice. The human senses are biological information systems that assist us in understanding the environment and are foundations to how we perceive and experience the world and human knowledge systems. Vision, and to some degree sound, prevail as the primary human sense in art, design, technology and the cinematic. What about the senses of smell, taste/flavor and touch/haptics that compose the basic human senses?* What are the possibilities for designing beyond just vision and sound and creating multiple sensory systems in media art?

While regarded as quirky and offbeat, sensory design is considered an inclusive embodied design and art practice. Ellen Lupton and Andrea Lipps argue that multisensory design embraces and celebrates human diversity; “Sensory design activates touch, sound, smell, taste, and the wisdom of the body. Sensory design supports everyone’s opportunity to receive information, explore the world, and experience joy, wonder, and social connections, regardless of our sensory abilities.” (Lupton & Lipps, *The Senses: Design Beyond Vision*, 9) Ultimately, sensory design is human design and a holistic toolkit that challenges the hierarchies of sensory functions and modernist notions of knowledge and aesthetics.

This exploratory course will introduce students to basic understandings of smell, taste/flavor and touch/haptics, cultural and historical understandings of these senses, and how artists, designers and technologists have experimented and designed with smell, taste/flavor and touch/haptics. Students will workshop their own sensory design ideas and develop a final project of their choice in consultation with the professor. No prior experience or prerequisite is required.

With regards to structure, the course will spend four weeks on smell/olfaction, touch/haptics, and taste/flavor/gastronomy, respectively. Introductory concepts, histories and theories will be explored for each along with case studies and examples. Hands-on workshops will also occur and students will design project ideas for each of the three human senses covered. This will culminate in a multi-sensory final project.

[*Traditionally, Western culture identified five basic human senses (sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing), but today more senses beyond these basic five are recognized.]

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Lipps, Andrea, and Ellen Lupton, editors. *The Senses: Design Beyond Vision*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2018.
- Assorted readings available on Google classroom

GRADING BREAKDOWN

- Participation / 10%
- Weekly assignments / 20%
- Design Concept Exercises / 30%
- Final Project prospectus / 10%
- Final Project 30%

Weekly Assignments

Each week there will be either a reading response and/or a design exercise with an accompanying critical reflection. All writing should be written and structured as a formal writing assignment and properly edited and cited.

Design Concept Exercises

There are three design concept exercises. Students will turn in and present a design concept based on the human sense that was covered in the previous weeks: scent, flavor/taste, and touch/haptics. The design concepts should demonstrate an understanding of the human sense, and propose a project idea designed with the specific human sense in mind. A critical reflection and design statement will accompany the project idea which will address the cultural and historical context and critically expound on design decisions.

Final Project Prospectus and Project

Students will create a final multisensory project of their choice in consultation with the faculty that engages with the course material. A final project prospectus will be due (week 13) that describes the project idea and lists research that the project is engaged with. Specific details will be in the assignment prompt.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

*[*Sample Syllabus subject to change. Please consult the Course Google Classroom for the most recent version.]*

Week 1 – Introduction to Sensory Design

Topics: Introduction to sensory design and overview of the course

Week 2 – Sensory Design, Art and Methodologies

Topics: Continued discussion of sensory design; sensory ethnography and other methodologies

SMELL / OLFACTION

Week 3 - Introduction to Smell and Olfaction

Topics: Introduction to Smell and Olfactory Art

Week 4 - Workshop with Smell

Topics: Introduction to Making Scents; scent wheels, categories and the problem of language

Week 5 - Cultural and Historical Understandings of Scent; Workshop with Smell, cont.

Topics: Cultural and historical understandings of scent; making smells, continued; working with scents in space

Week 6 - Design Concept #1: Smell/Olfaction

Smell/Olfaction Design Concept and Presentation Due

TASTE / FLAVOR

Week 7 - Introduction to Taste and Flavor

Topics: Introduction to Taste/Flavor; taste/ flavor in art, design and technology

Week 8 - Workshop in Taste/Flavor

Topics: Understanding taste/ flavor; flavor wheels; tasting session

Week 9 - Cultural and Historical Understandings of Taste/Flavor: Workshop with Taste/Flavor, cont.

Topics: Cultural and historical understandings of taste/ flavor

Week 10 - Design Concept #2: Taste/Flavor

Taste/Flavor Design Concept and Presentation Due

TOUCH / HAPTICS

Week 11 - Introduction to Touch/Haptics

Topics: Introduction to Touch/Haptics; touch/haptics in art, design and technology

Week 12 -Touch/Haptics workshop

Topics: Understanding touch/haptics; haptic design workshop; Final Project Prospectus Draft Due

Week 13 - Cultural and Historical Understandings of Touch/Haptics / Final Project Prospectus

Topic: Cultural and historical understandings of touch/haptics; Final Project Prospectus Due

Week 14 - Design Concept #3

Touch/Haptics Design Concept and Presentation Due

Week 15 - Studio and Prototype Session for Final Project

Topic: prototype and studio session for final project

Finals Week – Final Project and Presentation Due