

## PDI Studio 6: Organizational Design

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Syllabus, Spring 2017

Monday/Thursday 2-5 PM, SAGE 2211

Professor: Jim Malazita

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Jim's Office Hours: Sage 5410, Tuesday/Friday 1-2 PM

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### Introduction:

This course, the sixth in the PDI studio sequence, introduces students to organizational and semiotic dimensions of new concept design, development, and dissemination. Students will use their previous STS and design experience in to analyze systems of power created by and embedded within objects, structures, systems, and organizations, and to think through and prototype ways of creating alternatives and resistance to those power structures.

As such, this class will have a small focus on artifact prototyping, but a larger focus on systems-building, structures issues of race, class, gender, queerness, and oppression, and leveraging your expertise as designers in spaces where you have little other expertise or social capital.

As a studio course, class time is used for self-guided design investigations as well as structured group activities. Students are expected to participate in individual

and group research, including hands-on exploration of design ideas; interviews or surveys of potential users, researchers, and business practitioners; project reviews; and many informal and formal presentations. The course also requires weekly reading from course texts. In addition to the assigned projects, smaller assignments will be given to each group on a week-by-week basis that are more specifically tailored to that group's project and progress.

## Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students should have the following sets of skills:

- 1) The ability to use interdisciplinary research methods to identify problem and issue spaces, align with those spaces, and begin to co-formulate solutions with those spaces
- 2) The ability to work in teams to form design solution organizations and begin to integrate those solutions into problem spaces
- 3) The ability to bridge their expertise as designers with the expertise and practices of another group, that places that group at the heart of the design process

## Texts:

Readings will be posted on the course's Blackboard Page.

## Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Project 1: Semiotic Design Project: 10%

Project 2: PDI@RPI: 20%

Project 3: Design for Design: Organization and Write-Up: 45%

Reading Responses: 25%

## Project Descriptions:

Project 1: Semiotic Design Project

Due Date: Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>

10% of the Final Grade

### Step 1: Object Identification and Power Analysis

Students will select a physical or digital consumer product that they have the ability to bring into class. On their own and during an in-class exercise, student will read and interpret the various sources of economic, cultural, racial, gendered, and social power built into the object, or built into the object's design process, which is then manifested through the object.

Students will, using research, hack the object, or design a new object, that addresses and attempts to reverse one or more of the power relationships connected to that object. Students will present two rounds of concept sketches, as well as a Looks-Like Prototype, and a short, gallery-style "Designer's Statement" that summarizes the original object, summarizes the chosen power dynamic built into that object, and summarizes how your object attempts to reverse that power dynamic.

## Project 2: PDI@RPI Organizational Concept

Due Date: Thursday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>

Write-up: 5000 words

20% of the Final Grade

Using the design process to do organizational research, PDI students will work in groups of three to prototype an organizational design that advances, augments, or connects the PDI program to other institutional and infrastructural systems at RPI or in Troy. These organizational designs must place, at their center, PDI's commitment to human-centered design practices, and use those research methods and practices to better enable PDI students in some way, or others on campus to better use human-centered design research.

Students will perform a mini institutional ethnography, identify key stakeholders, regulatory blocks and gaps, and budgetary concerns, as well as using interview and panel methods. Students will submit a design write-up that includes the identification of the problem, a polished, narrative version of their design process, an explanation of their design concept, and next steps.

## Project 3: Design for Design: Organization and Write-Up

Due Date: Event: April 20<sup>th</sup>, Write-Up: May 1<sup>st</sup>

Write-up: 8000 words

45% of the Final Grade

Students work in groups of 4 to organize, run, and evaluate a co- design workshop with an underserved/intersectional group off of campus. This workshop will use the student's skills and training in design research and methods to introduce others to design processes, and enable them to leverage their expertise as designers in order to afford others the ability to use design methods in their own contexts. Students will maintain group and individual design journals throughout the project, including, where appropriate, photo documentation.

Focusing especially on the readings from Weeks 5 through 8, student groups will develop design prompts, probes, and toolkits (as deemed appropriate for the organization).

Students will submit, as a group, a final design document that identifies the social and physical spaces of the project, uses peer-reviewed and ethnographic research to contextualize and historicize those spaces, presents a polished version of their design narratives, contains a critical reflection of their event, and next steps for future iterations.

## Reading Responses (Three One-Paragraph Responses Per Reading):

Every class meeting where a reading has been assigned, students will bring a handwritten response to the reading. Every reading will be accompanied by three assigned questions, which can be found in the description section of the reading assignment on LMS. Students must write, on a single page of loose-leaf, a one-paragraph response to each of those questions. These responses will be collected at the beginning of lecture.

Every response will receive a grade of “Check,” “Check Plus,” or “Check Minus.” Responses that demonstrate student engagement with the reading prior to class will receive a “Check.” Responses that show lack of engagement with the reading (**engagement is not the same as understanding!**) will receive a “Check Minus.” Responses that indicate a superior engagement with the reading, both in terms of the intellectual content and length of the response, will receive a “Check Plus.” **A “Check” represents full credit for the assignment. A “Check Plus” effectively represents extra credit, and can theoretically raise a student’s final grade above “100.”**

Every reading assignment is worth 1 point. The grade breakdown per response is:

- Not Turning in a Response: 0 points, plus attendance penalty (unless registered with your recitation leader)
- Check-Minus: .5 Points
- Check: 1 Point
- Check Plus: 1.5 Points

Week	Theme	Monday Class	Thursday Class
<b>Week 1, Jan16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup></b>			Syllabus overview, meet and greet
<b>Week 2, Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup></b>	Decolonial Design	<b>Object Selection Due</b> “Why Can’t America Decolonize its Design Education?” by Margaret Andersen	<b>Thumbnail Sketches Due</b> “African Cybernetics,” by Ron Eglash
<b>Week 3, Jan30<sup>th</sup> and Feb 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	"Reading" Objects	<b>Refined Sketches Due</b> “The Authority of Everyday Objects,” by Betts	“Myth Today,” by Roland Barthes
<b>Week 4, Feb 6<sup>th</sup> and Feb 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Community	“DIY Citizenship, Critical Making, and Community,” by Orton-Johnson	<b>Semiotic Design Project Due</b> “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” by Clifford Geertz

<b>Week 5, Feb 13<sup>th</sup> and Feb. 16<sup>th</sup></b>	Socially Engaged Art	<i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> , by Pablo Helguera, Introduction, Chapter 1	<i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> , by Pablo Helguera, Chapter 2
<b>Week 6, Feb 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	Conversations, Collaborations, and Antagonisms	<b>Monday Classes Held on Tuesday</b>  <i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> , by Pablo Helguera, Chapters 3 and 4	<i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> , by Pablo Helguera, Chapters 5 and 6
<b>Week 7, Feb 27<sup>th</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	Transpedagogy	<i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> , by Pablo Helguera, Chapters 7 and 8	<b>PDI@RPI Organizational Concept Due</b>  <i>Education for Socially Engaged Art</i> , by Pablo Helguera, Chapters 9 and 10
<b>Week 8, March 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Co-Design	"Minor Design Activism: Prompting Change from Within," by Halse et. al.	"Probes, Toolkits, and Prototypes," by Sanders and Strappers
<b>Week 9, March 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup></b>	Spring Break: NO CLASSES		
<b>Week 10, March 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	Designers as Interactional Experts	"Rethinking Expertise" pp. 1-44 by Harry Collins and Robert Evans	"Rethinking Expertise" pp. 78-90 by Harry Collins and Robert Evans
<b>Week 11, March 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup></b>	Democratic Decision Making	<i>The Myles Horton reader: Education for social change</i> . Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2003. "Highlander" pgs. 11 -14; "Decision-making Processes" pp. 233-250 by Myles Horton	<i>Our Revolution</i> by Bernie Sanders pp. 259-264  <i>Democracy at work: A cure for capitalism</i> . pp. 117-137 by Richard Wolff

<b>Week 12, April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup></b>	Design from Below	"An Introduction to Generative Justice." By Ron Eglash	"Alternative Design Scholarship: Working Toward Appropriate Design" by Dean Nieuwma
<b>Week 13, April 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup></b>	Organizational Design and Racial (in)justice	<i>The New Jim Crow</i> Chapter 5 by Michelle Alexander	"Anti-racist Practice and the Work of Community Food Organizations" by Rachel Slocum
<b>Week 14, April 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup></b>	Design and the LGBTQ Communities	"Universal Design and LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, and Queer) Issues: Creating Equal Access and Opportunities for Success." By Daniels, Jennifer R., and Tracy J. Geiger.	<b>Design Event(s) must be Completed by April 20<sup>th</sup></b>  "Love, Twine, and the End of the World," by anna anthropy
<b>Week 15, April 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup></b>	Organizing Resistance	The End of Protest pp. 207-240 by Micah White	<i>Freedom is a constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement</i> pp. 81-90 by Angela Davis
<b>Week 16, May 1<sup>st</sup></b>		<b>Final Presentations Given and Posters Due</b>	Study Days: NO CLASS

### Attendance:

Students are expected always to be present during class and recitations. Excellence in submitted work will not make up for delinquency in attendance. **More than three unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your final course grade by one mark. More than eight absences will result in the failure of the course. Three late arrivals will equal one missed class.** If you must miss a class, assignments are due before the class period begins. Excusable absences include illness, family emergencies, and scheduled Rensselaer athletic events. All excused absences must be delivered to the professor via the Office of Student Life.

Attendance in lecture will be recorded via the turning in of the daily reading responses. Attendance in recitation will be taken orally by recitation leaders.

### Academic Integrity:

Student-teacher relationships should be built on trust. Students should be able to trust

that teachers have made responsible decisions about the structure and content of the courses they teach, and teachers must trust that the assignments students turn in are their own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational enterprise and contradict the very reason for your being at Rensselaer. *The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities* defines various forms of academic dishonesty and procedures for responding to them. The policies laid out in the *Handbook* are intended to maintain a community of trust and will be strictly enforced. Please review these policies.

For this course, the following penalties will apply:

- Significant acts of plagiarism (e.g., text copied verbatim from an unidentified source): Failure of the course and a written judgment in the student's official record
- Minor acts of plagiarism (e.g., referencing the findings of others without appropriate citations): Failure of the assignment, plus reduction of final course grade by one letter grade
- Other acts of academic dishonesty: Penalties range from a warning to reduction of final grade by one letter grade to failure of the course, depending on the severity of the violation as determined by the instructor  
As is evident above, penalties for plagiarism are significant. All direct use of another person's words must be placed inside quotation marks. You must also indicate where you paraphrase another's work and where you borrow another's specific ideas or interpretations. If you have questions regarding proper citation practices, see the instructor for clarification *before* the assignment is submitted. While collaboration is encouraged throughout the course, others cannot do work for you. All assignment activities must be carried out by the individual or team members submitting the assignment for a grade. Other people may show you *how* to do something (say, when using computer software), but you must follow up by doing the work yourself.  
*The Rensselaer Handbook* provides specific procedures by which a student may appeal a grade. You should speak to the professor before initiating an appeal. If this does not lead to satisfactory resolution, you have the option of appealing your grade by writing to the head of the STS Department no later than 10 days after your grade has been posted.