Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Thesis Project Phase 1: Transformative Research through Design (A)
Course Code	96124
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	
Language	English
Degree Course	Master in Eco-Social Design
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	Prof. Secil Ugur Yavuz, Secil.UgurYavuz@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/36117 Dr. phil. Stefan Festini Cucco, Stefan.FestiniCucco@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/43183
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
Course Year/s	2nd year
CP	15
Teaching Hours	120
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	0
Planned Office Hours	78
Contents Summary	"Eco-Social Design 3 supports the development of each student's project and practices. Students are supported collectively and individually in the first phase of their thesis project in elaborating the key issues, focus, aims and co-benefits; in finding leverage points, partners and resources; in learning from each other and from best practices from socially, politically and environmentally

	engaged design; in stitching together theoretical underpinnings with strategic choices; in conceptually framing their project and defining the right scope; in creating a convincing narrative and appealing (visual) storytelling; in exploring possible economic foundations and long-term perspectives; in fieldwork and experimental explorations; and in making things tangible and shaping a (visual) language. Both offers in Eco-Social Design 3 collaborate closely among each other and with the social social sciences modules."
Course Topics	research-through-design, design probes, embodied and situated design, design ethnography, material agency in design, eco-social imaginaries, design artefacts as inquiry
Keywords	eco-social design, research-through-design, ethnography
Recommended Prerequisites	
Propaedeutic Courses	Project 2 in Eco-Social Design
Teaching Format	Lectures, presentations, workshops; Weekly plena & check-in rounds; Collective mapping sessions; Review and support sessions; Guest lectures; (Im)possible partner meetings (A conversational format for engaging with transformation-oriented actors who may become project partners.); Site explorations; Case study sharing and analysis; Reading circles; Master colloquia with external experts (a feedback session supporting students in developing their thesis project proposal) and formats we develop based of needs and ideas of students, colleagues and partners;
Mandatory Attendance	highly recommended
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	Educational objectives Knowledge and understanding Students course will have developed their own individual project practice and will be able to: - design, implement and manage projects - initiate, carry out and lead project-oriented research, development and design activities - develop creative solutions and processes - working with and leading multidisciplinary teams - working with different experts, companies, organisations, groups and people - designing the aesthetic dimension of projects or collaborating in design - developing prototypes or delegating their development - developing interventions and events or delegating their development - test and evaluate prototypes, interventions, events or their individual elements, or delegate their testing/testing

	and evaluation. Applying knowledge and understanding Students will be able to: - develop projects and practices suitable for addressing complex challenges. - make tangible ideas, reports and projects, such as sketches, visualisations, mock-ups, models, prototypes, interventions and prototype events Making judgements Students will be able to: - take responsibility for the development and management of projects and activities - judging independently and critically: concepts and drafts, one's own behaviour and contribution (through reflection and self-criticism) Communication skills Students will be able to: - communicate convincingly in different ways and with different audiences - present projects convincingly - argue creative and strategic decisions - communicate productively within the team - lead creative processes and teams Learning skills Students will be able to: - working independently to learn according to different situations and in a personal way through experimentation and planning - working independently to learn according to different situations and in a personal way through the development of prototypes, models, mock-ups and the feedback they provide
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	
Assessment	At the end of the semester, students exhibit, present, and critically discuss their work and its future perspectives and economic foundation. The complete assessment will be based on all elements: the exam presentation and discussion, the submitted document, a short video and the exhibition. The exam consists of an oral presentation and discussion of the above-mentioned elements. The students submit a document with a description of issues and aims, a contextual review, theoretical and methodological framing, a map of stakeholders and partners, a 'theory of change', an outline of obstacles and potentials. and a project plan. Guidelines for the documentation will be provided. As part of their final assessment, students will create and submit a short video (1–3 minutes) that introduces and explains their

	semester work. This video should communicate the core ideas and objectives of the project in an appealing and convincing story. Each work is exhibited at the end of the semester in the GOG exhibition of the faculty. The short video will be part of the exhibition. A short documentation needs to be submitted to the faculties online showcase. It needs to speak to all potentially interested audiences, such as current and future students, existing and future external partners, stakeholders and funders, and all who could benefit from the projects and practices and support them. Assessment of non-attending students: Non-attending students have the same assessment criteria as attending students. All requested assignments need to be done, and all deliverables (above mentioned) need to be provided in time.
Evaluation Criteria	The evaluation process will consider these criteria: 1. Eco-Social agency: (Potential) contribution to emancipatory social-ecological transformation; 2. Qualities of the designed artefacts: Aesthetic and technical qualities, and in how far these qualities foster the eco-social agency. How they build upon the state of the art in your chosen field and (design) disciplines. Boldness and vigour of experimentation and design exploration; 3. Conceptual framing, reflection and future perspectives: Clarity and coherence of the conceptual framing, including synthesis of the theoretical underpinnings, empirical basis, transformation strategy, understanding of context and backgrounds, relevance of case studies, planning of and learnings from the iterative development process, critical reflections, possible economic foundations, and future perspectives; 4. Relations, processes and organization: Quality of relations and processes with the project team, collaborators, partners, stakeholders and other actors. Management of time, resources, and persons (project management). 5. Storytelling: Effectiveness and potential in communicating the project to relevant publics. Quality of presentation techniques and narrative. How well the story attracts attention, convinces and touches audiences. Defence of proposition and response to critics. How elements and qualities discussed under 2 – 5 are contributing to (or hindering) emancipatory social-ecological transformation

	(criterium #1).
Required Readings	Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions. Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press. Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press. Sanders, E. B.-N., & Stappers, P. J. (2012). *Convivial toolbox: Generative research for the front end of design*. BIS Publishers. Escobar, A. Osterweil, M. Sharma, K.. (2024). *Relationality: An emergent politics of life beyond the human*. Duke University Press. Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Duke University Press. Vervoort, J. M., Smeenk, T., Zamuruieva, I., Re, L. L., van Veldhoven, M., Rutting, L., & Mangnus, A. C. (2024). 9 dimensions for evaluating how art and creative practice stimulate societal transformations. *Ecology and Society, 29*(1), Article 29. https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-14739-290129 Springgay, S., & Truman, S. E. (2018). *Walking methodologies in a more-than-human world: WalkingLab*. Routledge. Offenhuber, D. (2023). *Autographic design: The matter of data in a self-inscribing world*. The MIT Press. Mareis, C., & Paim, N. (Eds.). (2021). *Design struggles: Intersecting histories, pedagogies, and perspectives*. Valiz.

Supplementary Readings	
Further Information	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	No poverty, Partnerships fot the goals, Good health and well-being, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, Decent work and economic growth, Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduced inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible consumption and production, Climate action, Life below water, Life on land, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Zero hunger

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Design 3
Course Code	96124A
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	CEAR-08/D
Language	English
Lecturers	Prof. Secil Ugur Yavuz, Secil.UgurYavuz@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/36117
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	9
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	90
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	0
Planned Office Hours	60
Contents Summary	Design 3 supports the development of each student's project and practices, in particular, related to the design of objects, spaces and/or services bringing in best practice from socially, politically and environmentally engaged design. The project leader collaborates closely with Designing through ethnography module to foster transdisciplinary dialogue and actions.

Course Topics	research-through-design, design probes, embodied and situated design, design ethnography, material agency in design, eco-social imaginaries, design artefacts as inquiry
Teaching Format	Lectures, presentations, workshops; Weekly plena & check-in rounds; Collective mapping sessions; Review and support sessions; Guest lectures; (Im)possible partner meetings (A conversational format for engaging with transformation-oriented actors who may become project partners.); Site explorations; Case study sharing and analysis; Reading circles; Master colloquia with external experts (a feedback session supporting students in developing their thesis project proposal) and formats we develop based of needs and ideas of students, colleagues and partners;
Required Readings	Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions. Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press. Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press. Sanders, E. B.-N., & Stappers, P. J. (2012). *Convivial toolbox: Generative research for the front end of design*. BIS Publishers. Escobar, A. Osterweil, M. Sharma, K.. (2024). *Relationality: An emergent politics of life beyond the human*. Duke University Press. Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Duke University Press. Vervoort, J. M., Smeenk, T., Zamuruieva, I., Re, L. L., van Veldhoven, M., Rutting, L., & Mangnus, A. C. (2024). 9 dimensions for evaluating how art and creative practice stimulate societal transformations. *Ecology and Society, 29*(1), Article 29.

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Supplementary Readings	

Course Module

Course Constituent Title	Designing through ethnography
Course Code	96124B
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	SDEA-01/A
Language	English
Lecturers	Dr. phil. Stefan Festini Cucco, Stefan.FestiniCucco@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/academic-staff/person/43183
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
CP	6
Responsible Lecturer	
Teaching Hours	30
Lab Hours	0
Individual Study Hours	0
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	"This module accompanies Thesis Project 3 and provides students with the foundations of ethnography for eco-social design. . While the parallel module Sociological Design Research introduces sociological research methodologies, this course focuses on

	ethnographic inquiry and situated understandings of lived experiences, It introduces ethnography as an anthropological approach to research and understanding, emphasizing long-term engagement, situated observation, reflexivity, attention to detail, and lived experience. Rather than approaching design as a primarily solution-driven practice, students learn to engage with communities, networks, institutions, organizations, and more-than-human environments through ethnographic inquiry, developing contextual understandings of cultural practices, social relations, values, and the complexity of socio-ecological entanglements that can inform responsible design processes. Students are encouraged to move beyond premature problem framing and to approach sociocultural and ecological settings as complex, layered fields of relationships, meanings, and practices that require time, openness, and critical reflection. Through lectures, practical exercises, collaborative discussions, and close reading of anthropological literature, they develop the ability to critically reflect on their own positionality, cultivate an emic understanding of the perspectives of research participants, and situate local observations within broader historical, social, political, and environmental contexts. Particular emphasis is placed on generating rich, contextualised understandings that question taken-for-granted assumptions, shift perspectives, and provide a foundation for subsequent design development. The module equips students with the anthropological perspective and ethnographic tools necessary for context-sensitive, socially engaged, and ecologically informed design practice."
Course Topics	• Anthropology and ethnography: origins, history, and key scholars • Culture, meaning, interpretation, and thick description • Field access, participant observation, interviewing, and multisensory ethnography • Fieldnotes, documentation, positionality, and reflexivity • Cosmologies, rituals, and world-making • Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism • Nature-culture, multispecies and more-than-human anthropology • Ecological relations: from local worlds to global dynamics • Ethnographic practice for eco-social design

Teaching Format	Lectures; seminars; workshops; ethnographic exercises (observation, participant observation, interviewing, multisensory perception, and ethnographic documentation); weekly plenary discussions and check-in rounds; collaborative reading circles; site explorations; case study discussions; review and supervision sessions; guest lectures; (Im)possible partner meetings; master colloquia with external experts; and additional formats developed in response to students' projects and emerging needs.
Required Readings	Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, 2011. Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, 2001. Le Breton, David. *Sensing the World: An Anthropology of the Senses*. Routledge, 2020. Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill.* Routledge, 2000. Gunn, Wendy, Ton Otto, and Rachel Charlotte Smith, editors. *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice.* Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
Supplementary Readings	Spradley, James P. *The Ethnographic Interview.* Waveland Press, 2016. Pink, Sarah. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. Sage Publications, 2009. Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. University of California Press, 2013. Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World:*

	On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins. Princeton University Press, 2015. Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. Verso, 2008.