

Unit Title	Themes in Contemporary Culture
FHEQ Level	Level 4
Unit Code	C18101
Credit Value	15
Unit Type	Compulsory/Standard Taught

Learning Hours			
Staff – Student Contact Hours		Independent Study Hours	
Classes	30	Independent Study	45
Supervised access to resources	2	Preparation for Assessment	10
		Specific Directed Study	20
		Unsupervised Access to Resources	43
Total	32		150

Unit Description

This unit aims to introduce students to a range of diverse ideas, concepts and debates. Through a series of thematic study sessions focusing on looking at, studying and exploring visual culture, material culture and broadcast culture. Students will be encouraged to nurture independent interests and to locate these within a range of relevant contexts.

Developing skills in the application of a wide range of themes and contexts will contribute to the students' basic understanding of the relationship between theory and practice both in core subject areas and the wider transdisciplinary fields, this unit is the first step in the overarching aim of New Mindsets, which is to transcend any particular discipline in order to try to understand the world in which we operate as creative practitioners, it aims to work holistically with students to introduce the possibility of exploring that which is between and beyond disciplines.

The introduction of a range of academic skills including academic writing, understanding academic protocols, research and writing skills as well as enquiry/self-enquiry and critique will enable students to engage discursively with one another and the wider academic and industry community. The unit aims to introduce the possibility of an autonomous, confident and creative position within design and communication.

The Five Principles that underpin the Mindsets and 'Skillsets' Manifesto are the foundation upon which all course curriculum frameworks and unit specifications are based. The relevant Principles as stated below have been mapped against the Learning Outcomes relevant to each course unit and at each level (see Programme Specifications for full description of the Five Principles):

1. Cultivate / Where the individual thrives.
2. Collaborate / Where disciplines evolve.
3. Integrate / Where education engages industry.
4. Advocate / Where purpose meets practice.

5. Originate / creativity meets technology.

Unit Indicative Content

After completing the 'New Mindsets' induction during term 1, students will begin study of 'Themes in Contemporary Culture' in Term 2. The Unit will continue until the end of Term 3. Through a carefully designed and lively combination of taught sessions, active learning and proactive study this unit introduces a diverse range of key transdisciplinary ideas, themes, concepts, practice, theories, movements and examples of visual language and visual, popular and high culture, primarily but not limited to the 20th and 21st centuries. Emphasising the importance of context, the unit intends to introduce students to a wide range of relevant contexts such as social, cultural, aesthetic, political, historical and global contexts. Through a series of thematically arranged sessions students will be introduced to new ideas, strategies for challenging existing axioms as well as tools and modes of critical thinking and analysis. Introductions to key academic skills such as critical reading, research, critical thinking, debate and reflexive writing will be embedded within the unit.

Unit Aims

Introduce a range of diverse, transdisciplinary ideas, concepts and debates

Develop knowledge of 20th and 21st century visual language and culture

Nurture Independent interests and contextualise these

Develop a range of transferable skills

Unit Learning Outcomes

LO1 Research & Inspiration - Demonstrate your capacity for information gathering techniques using a wide range of sources, providing visual, contextual and industry case-study research as appropriate.

LO2 Concept & Ideation - Generate first concept ideas or strategic project themes drawing upon reference to acquired research materials

LO4 (Pre) Production - Identify, select and apply an appropriate selection of processes, materials and methods that inform creative and academic practice.

LO5 Presentation & Storytelling - Evidence effective communication of projects, whether in visual, oral or written form.

Learning and Teaching Methods

This unit will be delivered through a variety of teaching strategies:
Lectures, Seminars, Directed Study, Tutorials, Workshops, Presentations/Critiques,
Field/External Visits – 32 hours
Specific Directed Study – 10 hours
Online Study & Self-Directed Study – 108 hours

Assessment methods and tasks

The unit contains:

1 x formative assessment point at the end of term 2 with associated written feed forward

1 x summative assessment point at the end of term 3 with associated written feed forward and summative grade

Assessment tasks	Weighting (%) (<i>one grade or multi-grade unit</i>)
Formative Assessment - Research based academic text approx. 1000 words.	0%
Summative Assessment - Research based academic text approx. 2000 words.	100%

Indicative Assessment Criteria

Skills – Students will be expected to demonstrate skills in the finding and organising of appropriate sources, clarity of purpose and an awareness and adoption of appropriate conventions.

Knowledge & Understanding – Students should be able to evidence a broad awareness of different ideas, debates, theories and movements, as well as demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the wider transdisciplinary context.

Context – Students should be able to demonstrate that they are able to explore a range of concepts and debates through specific examples applying reflection and judgment along with an ability to contextualize these within a wider theoretical framework.

Communication – Students will be expected to demonstrate skills in the selected media producing creative solutions that demonstrate risk and ambition.

Essential Reading list

1. BALRAM, S. (2011) *Thinking Design*, London, Sage
2. BERGER, J. (1972) *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin
3. BERGER, J. (2009) *About Looking*. London: Penguin
4. COTTRELL, S. (2005) *Critical Thinking Skills*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan
5. FRANCIS, P. (2013) *Inspiring Writing in Art and Design: Taking a Line for a Write*. Chicago: 4

6. HALL, Sean (2012) *This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics*, Laurence King Publishing Ltd
7. NORTHEGE, A (2008) *The Arts Good Study Guide*. Open University Worldwide
8. TILLEY, C (2013) *Handbook of Material Culture*. Sage

Note: Given the diversity of the student body it is not possible to include here the broad range of cross referenced thematic and course specific physical and online reading materials that will be suggested. The New Mindsets team works very closely with the library team in order to ensure that students are able to access all required resources both physically and/or online. The team also publishes relevant and current resources/sources to the Ravensbourne VLE Moodle as well as academic staff recommendations throughout the teaching calendar.