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# Culturally Framing Design

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# Culturally Framing Design

**Disciplines**  
Architecture

# Culturally Framing Design

GREGORY PALERMO

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Design:

- ~ The process of creating and producing a physical artifact;
- ~ A layout or plan for the creation of any given thing;
- ~ You design something, whether it be tangible or not, to your liking or for the appreciation [*and use*] of others;
- ~ The combination of art/visual appeal with function;
- ~ A process of creating an object of organized patterns; to design > create > to make new from imagination.

Culture Is:

- ~ Beliefs, traditions, and products of a certain group of people;
- ~ The customs and characteristics of a group of people – what makes your particular group unique;
- ~ Everything included in a way of life of a certain group of people, including language, art, music, and many other things;
- ~ The values of a society that become apparent in designs, activities, stories/media and other happenings in a society.

—Student definitions; Tuesday, August 26, 2003

## FIRST EXPOSURES

Written on the first day of class before any lectures took place, the cited student definitions set Design Studies 183x: An Introduction to Design Culture (DsnS 183x) into motion. With the exception of minor editing the citations are essentially the full text as written by the students. Taken collectively, quite a bit is on the table. Design is conceived as verb and noun, as active imagination and

invention, as plan, as making, as thing (tangible or not), and as involving aesthetics and purpose. Culture entails the values of a community of people, their traditions and rituals, and their production of language, art, music and implements, etc.

The juxtaposition of “design” and “culture” considered separately, confronts us with the inquiry, “How are they related?” Students arrive with backgrounds that include history, English, mathematics, the natural sciences, perhaps a foreign language, or an art course or two. But the notion that the world they experience is a fabrication, an artifice, that it is a design result, with a history of a different order than that of politics and wars is most often subliminal rather than on the surface. That there are keys to *thinking* design, as opposed to *practicing how to* design, is arguably a radical notion. *Design self-consciousness*, thinking and designing inextricably bound, is new to them. DsnS 183x is designed to initiate an awareness of the connections on these multiple fronts.

On the first day of class, community and regional planning, if known at all, is perceived as some type of political and economic social science, far from sculpture which we ‘know’ to be ‘art.’ What can it be that planning and sculpture share as design disciplines? In this course we present humankind as social, inventive and constructive – constructing life through inventing and making stuff of all scales and sorts as we go about living life. Invention requires labor, resources, material transformation and fabrication to come to fruition, and waste. In contemporary society, it entails economics, politics, social negotiation and ethical choices.

What we design is invented and reinvented and remade as successions of generations, communities of people, and cultures re-inhabit places. The terrain for initiating critical architectural thought

is a messy one, one that has porous boundaries. In DsnS 183x we launch into architecture through some unexpected territories.

#### An Instigation: Establishing the Core

The College of Design embarked upon a revision of the first year curricula of all of the degree programs in the college in the Fall of 2001. While the reputations and specialized accreditation status of a fair number of our programs are quite solid, our sense was that because our curricula direct students into discipline specific studies upon arrival, their perspective about design is narrow. Students fail to obtain an understanding of diverse design disciplines, how they intersect and what interests they share. To counteract these disciplinary isolationist tendencies, the objective in the college curricular revision is to establish a common core, the content of which will support programs in architecture, interior design, graphic design, landscape architecture, community and regional planning, and studio arts.

The college established a Task Force that critiqued all first year curricula and current courses to assess their objectives, and determine overlaps and commonalities. After re-setting the outcomes for first year, faculty are now establishing newly designed required courses common to all first year and transferring students. Two new design courses, a design sciences course, and Design Studies 183x (DsnS 183x): An Introduction to Design Culture, the subject of this paper, comprise a new 'Core' for entering design students.

Underlying the 'design culture' course is the collegiate expectation that students be introduced to design as a cultural phenomenon, and that they initiate abilities to read, experience, critically reflect upon and write about that phenomenon. Due to resource limitations, the course is a large lecture of 3 sections of 200-250 students, rather than multiple sections of a 25 person lecture/recitation type course. Our faculty team from the four departments of the college (1) reframed those rough expectations and crafted what we think is a manageable ambition: to introduce the idea of designing and designed things in a social context to beginning design students in a manner that involves active learning. Early on we decided to go beyond modifying current courses and teaching methods to shape a totally new course, using more active

learning strategies, and contemporary teaching technology.

The content of DsnS 183x occupies an in-between terrain of several more well established disciplines: visual studies, material culture, design history, or design studies which for the most part does not address large scale environmental design. It is a replacement for separate lecture-based introductions to landscape architecture and architecture, and will precede the art history course A&D 181 History of Design, which will move to the second year. It is not about the manufacture of 'high culture', or art and literature in Pierre Bourdieu's terms. Nor is it about "haute couture", or design and consumerism. Yet somehow it seems to have aspects of all.

Supported by university and collegiate grants, the course has had two experimental offerings and has entered the catalog as a required course for all curricula in the college in the fall of 2004.

#### **CONTENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AN INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN CULTURE**

What is it: "... to introduce the idea of designing and designed things in a social context to beginning design students in a manner that involves active learning"? This of course demands some notions about what designing is, the idea of 'things' as the result of creative artifice, what a social context is, and what kinds of learning activities might engage students who have grown up with computers, MTV, CNN and learning in 'bits and bytes'. If we faculty leave our comfort zones – mine was architecture — and the courses we know, how do we envision a non-architecture, non-art history, non-landscape architecture based course that is design rich, supporting all of these? Our process was design, of course!

We mulled over the college learning objectives and decided upon a set that we felt was manageable in a lecture format with students in their first year of university level work. Here they are, as outlined in the syllabus:

"The content of this course is intended as a beginning, *an* introduction to design enterprise, its historical context, and how it fits into contemporary culture. After par-

ticipating in this course we trust that you will:

- ~ *develop the abilities to observe, experience, analyze, critically reflect upon, evaluate & form judgments, and write about design processes and the products of design at a beginning level of mastery. (Italics in the original.)*

Toward obtaining those encompassing abilities, through readings and case study analyses that engage you in many of the historical, social, technological, ethical, and environmental factors which have influenced designers, we expect that *you will develop an enriched understanding of:*

- ~ Design in the context of site, region, and society
- ~ Design in the context of science, ethics, and culture
- ~ The historical, social, political, and ideological context of design
- ~ The communal and ecological nature of all design processes
- ~ The language of design discourse
- ~ Reading and writing about art and design that addresses theory and criticism
- ~ Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary design processes and professional practice"

To *unpack* all of the multi-syllable words, to give life to them became the challenge of content design. We developed several course designs, critiqued them, and re-designed them. The final content design has three parts. Part I is a series of design case studies that are the means for revealing most of the issues outlined above. Do-it-yourself-design and design empowerment, appropriation of precedents and formal design transformation, propaganda and genocide, consumerism, and international design flow and supply chains are introduced via these cases. In Part I cases we hope to address several questions: What constitutes design action? What are design works? What's beauty got to do with design? Is design culture about markets and consumption – or more than this? Are ethics involved in design?

Part II is five-week case study of the university

from inception to today. Iowa State University's origination in the middle 1800's to its current digital virtual face is explored as a sustained design event: a spectrum from political imagination, to physical place, to fashion & ritual, to virtual place. We explore the establishment, planning, landscape design, buildings, artwork and interiors of the campus as well as campus literature and website. Design processes and the quality of the environment are presented and analyzed in the context of encompassing historical national and international design movements. In this way the designing and designs of the university are seen in historical context.

Parts I and II are case study driven. Case examples have the capacity to convey diverse content and collectively become a general model for historical and critical reflection about habitation and place, designing and designs. A digital photo taken of the class of 150 students, hands held high, each with a cell phone driven by miniaturization, IT, and out of this world satellites was an impossibility just five years ago. In inventing the 'flatpack' and fostering assemble-it-yourself furniture, IKEA revolutionized the production, shipping, warehousing, marketplace and architectural space of 'stuff' for the home. A lot can be unpacked in such cases.

Part III – a two-week final segment, driven by necessity for having dropped all the discipline specific courses – focuses on the professions and careers graduates of the various disciplines in the college may pursue. (*This segment has since been dropped from the course.*)

An example from the course may be useful. The opening is a case study of the Rodeo. From the rituals and competition of the contemporary rodeo we work quickly backward through the fabrication of the myth of the 'American West' in the late 1800's and movies of the 1900's to the open trail drives of the 1860's, to artists and photographers of the West beginning with George Caitlin in the 1830's, to displacement of the American Indian, to Hispanic *vaquero* culture, to the Spanish arrival with domesticated animals in Hispaniola, to Spanish *caballero* culture of the middle ages and then back to Attica. With this timeline established, we turn around coming forward to explore designed artifacts (broadly defined), not in strict historical narrative, but rather in a series of independent

sub-cases running in parallel. There are saddles and spurs of Celtic design transformed by Spanish metal craft and then industrial production by J. R. McChesney, transformed from work and war to show. There is the transformation of the lance to prod, importing the Hungarian "lasos" on a stick, and invention of the lariat. Similar threads of the design objects of clothing, music and literature, art, theater, film and photography are woven. We look at the theme song from the TV show *Palladin*, knight-errant of the American West, and search for Don Quixote and Medieval Spain in its English lyrics and guitar driven rhythms. And of course, the site and space of rodeo is traced from its open air roots in the early 17th-C as spirited conclusion to the *rodear*, to corrals of the 19th-C trail driving and ranching era, to its indoor championship sites of the early 20th-C.

The tapestry is that of design transformation, and cultural context. 'Branding' for stock ownership is recognized as a precursor to "branding" in contemporary society. Spanish origins of chaps, hats and bandanas and their 'Americanization' are brought into focus, as is the Spanish saddle and its transformation into the US cavalry saddle in 1833 and the contemporary Western saddle. We learn that 'cowboy' is a transliteration of *vaquero* "cow man" in Spanish. We poke into barbed wire, and see it as a political instrument of Manifest Destiny, land ownership, and of course, usurpative and genocidal action toward the plains Indian. And how, apparently, all Hispanic cowboys became stupid shufflers, and how black people and women disappeared from representations of the cowboy West in virtually all of the journalistic and fine arts. We see stockyards and cattle by the millions becoming steaks. We turn to vacation ranches and advertising references to the mythic freedom, integrity, man-beast struggle of the cowboy. And lastly, we return to the contemporary rodeo as a ritual reenactment of this 6,000 year history of the domestication of horses and cattle for work, food and sport (some would say blood-sport), made manifest through design.

It is in this design|culture case study process – much condensed here in this single example – that we present design across the spectrum of college disciplines in environmental, labor production, economic, political, ethical and cultural contexts.

## TEACHING RESOURCES AND STUDENT ACTION

Opening a new large lecture course presented opportunities to draw upon resources that earlier generations of lecturers could not. Virtually all of the lecture halls and classrooms on campus are fully media ready with: air-port net connections, dual slide projectors, computer projection, erasable marker and chalkboards, DVD/VCR/CD players, and ELMOS (opaque projectors connected to digital projection). The university has a number of on-line courseware resources that are noted later in the paper.

A first result is that there is no 'book.' We couldn't find one that seemed suitable; and excerpts from others would be too lengthy to put into a freshman reader or on electronic reserve (another library resource). The copyright clearances were too costly. So, we wrote the book. The core of that book is new lectures specially developed for each course topic, available on-line through the \_\_\_\_\_ e-Library. The course syllabus, an overview of the course with abstracts of each lecture, faculty contact information, and the lectures are on this publicly accessible site. Each lecture component includes an abstract, and the full text or expanded outline of the lecture. As new information was developed during class discussions, that too was written up and provided on line. Slides shown in class are available from the university network through the college's Visual Resources Collection limited access on-line resource "Plato's Cave." The slides are arranged by lecture in the order shown. The course PowerPoints make use of another on-line resource: WebCT. They have been converted to PDF's and students can download them for personal use from this limited access site. Copies of the videos and music played in class are available through the ISU Media Resource center for individual student review.

The 'book' is totally new information developed for the course; available 24/7 at the student's choice of time from the student's choice of location! If outside the ISU network, students are provided with passwords to the limited access WebCT and Plato's Cave sites. One might ask, "If it is all on-line, why show up?" We found attendance to be extremely high (no role was taken) – partly because the down loaded lectures, just as the text of any book, require explication – the glue if you will

– that helps students make sense of the material. Partly because 10% of the course credit was reserved for in-class writing exercises that were unannounced. We found that while the students liked the accessibility of the on-line material – they still missed a conventional *book*. We are currently thinking of adopting Delores Hayden's *The Power of Place*. We like it because it is an accessible text that also provides a wake-up call to the political and ethical dimensions of design. It involves diverse design (i.e., architecture, landscape architecture, graphic design and fine arts) and social science disciplines, illumines racial/gender/power connections to design, and outlines collaborative models for design practice.

However accessible the course materials, and however well coordinated the class production involving diverse media and visiting lecturers, a lecture course without a recitation is still dominated by *lectures*. To involve the students in active learning we used several devices. The first was impromptu in-class writing exercises. A topic related to the day's lecture topic was presented and students had about five minutes to write their short answer response (2). All were handed in for review; virtually all the essays were responsive to the questions. On most occasions papers were exchanged (to preserve anonymity in front of so large a group) and students were asked to volunteer to read what they thought were good responses. Those read in class were transcribed by the faculty onto an "ELMO" so that the text could be digitally projected and read by all. They were used to direct 15 or so minutes of additional commentary by the faculty. Periodically a challenge topic or question was posed to the class and the students were asked to form small groups to generate questions or responses. These too were exchanged and the same process of reading, recording and explanative commentary as with the individual writing took place. Between these two activities, at least one in-class active learning event took place each week.

We also assigned four teamwork field projects. We used the campus as a site for several analyses. The first was to go into the landscape of the campus and locate to memorials, at least one in each of 4 sectors of the campus. Our interest was in having students engage the campus through direct experience and record the memorials, and through both come to understand that landscapes

are cultural productions and that history and memory are embedded in them. Next, we asked them to locate places on campus with distinct atmospheres that affected them personally. These two exercises included written reflections, e.g., what made the memorial a memorial, what design qualities in the landscape created the atmosphere, etc. We also had them analyze the campus with a mapping and recording exercise based upon Kevin Lynch's work.

Lastly, there were three exams, 50% of each being essay based. We feel that identification, short answer or machine scored exams are insufficient means of reviewing student mastery of material. Much of what we do involves not so much memorization as engaging material and making sense of it. The exams were "open book" – students could use their class notes and downloaded lectures to develop their answers. The essays were structured so that students had to sift course materials, develop a thesis, support it with course content and arrive at a conclusion. Not only did the quality of writing improve throughout the semester, so did the quality of reflection and sophistication of essay content.

### WHAT STUDENTS PRODUCED

Assessing what students master and take away from a course that is enduring is often a dicey business. Sometimes it doesn't jell until later in their studies. For sure, they 'got it' well enough to pass during the progress of the semester. That is what we have: student work from their time with us. Most typically in architecture, what we trace is studio work. It is much less often, other than the occasional graduate seminar that a compendium of papers emerges. The opening citations to this paper are the first student production of the semester. Here we will be looking at several in-class writing exercise results, the field exercises and sample exam essays. They form a general set of practices of observation, direct experience, reflection and recounting. Each work is that of different students.

**In-Class Writing Exercises.** One theme that emerged in the early essays beyond identification of content was a sense of surprise or revelation: "I had not thought of that before; this is the first time I thought of ...." The first unit was the consideration of the West and the rodeo synopsized pre-

viously. Here are a few excerpts from responses to question “3” (2) that had grown from one-liners on the first day to full paragraphs. The first and last examples are typical of the full responses:

- I learned the purposes for why the cowboys wore the clothes they did. I never really thought about the fact that bandanas would keep dust from the face and that the saddles had to be designed for low back support and comfort. This is important to me because it made me realize that design is not just a look and how attractive something appears. It must be practical and convenient which I think is a good realization.
- I never had really thought of a saddle as an element of design. ...
- I have never made the correlation between the desolate plains when riding horses and space in artwork.
- The fact that design has been embedded with the cowboy clear back to the 1300's when they were caballeros! I guess I never thought about the fact that ... 500 or more years ...
- I never tied the cowboys of the West to the Knights of the Middle Ages before. ...
- The evolution of the clothing and gear seem to be most interesting. I never really thought about how the outfits and tools would have to change as the environment/jobs of cowboys changed. Then to see it altered into a costume for a show created a design aspect never before considered on the plains. I had my eyes opened through this unit.

We do not believe that this particular freshman class is more naïve, insular, uninterested or unaware than most others. Rather, *design* is not connected to everyday life in prior education, or daily endeavors. The former concentrates on the areas noted earlier. The latter, on using or consuming, not originating. An essential expectation of the course is breaking the ice on this front.

Having had their “eyes opened”, most of the rest of the semester student essays zeroed in on content and reflection. The second major unit covered three design groups: Martha Stewart Omnimedia Inc., IKEA – the home product store founded by Ingvar Kampgrad in Sweden, and IDEO – the Stanford based design group. Here is what a few students observed in their responses to ques-

tion “4” (2):

- One common thread or main thing was teamwork. Each one had groups of teams that would work together to come up with an idea. Martha Stewart CD listed many team members who helped put it together; in the IDEO movie the main focus was on teams.
- We see a common process – when inventing a new design or refining one. A very important aspect in this process is teamwork in collecting ideas from various sources to combine these ideas into the best one. In this process, another common thread is not only the design but the manufacturing and production process. All three design not only “cool” things but also efficiently. They stress the value and good quality at reasonable prices and also stress the importance that the products are user friendly.
- The common thread was to design something that was affordable, useful, or innovative. Often designs came from need or idea to [*make a*] better a product or to make a process easier. Decorative, practical and useful are ideas that stick out in my mind.
- Studying them makes you realize how different they are, especially the product they sell. MS is selling information, IKEA products, and IDEO ideas. The common thread is each of these companies has devoted all of their time in trying to better our lives in practical ways. Each company researches the common everyday person's life and the ways it could be improved. Then they put so much effort into making realistic things to help the common person. They don't just look at how “cool” it looks; they also make sure it is easy to use, practical and reasonably affordable.
- Each organization has developed a way of identifying their market, the needs of their consumers, and problems that may arise both during and after production. By doing this, they are able to focus their energy toward refining ideas that could help solve these problems. This total design makes their product innovative and desirable. It also makes for very rapid advancement/improvement.
- All the corporations involve design. MS involves a design to be more organized and prepare things so that they are pleasing to the eye. IKEA has designed modern furniture at rea-



sonable prices. And IDEO re-designs things already designed so that they are safer and more efficient. ....

- They are all helping our lives to be better by design + innovation.

Teamwork, clients needs, research, improving the quality of life, efficiency, material production, visual appeal, innovative thinking – the hallmarks of designing and design. Not too bad for 5 minutes of reflection! Student responses to the other short question topics regarding design and CNN and MTV, ideology and propaganda and the relevance of design to both, planning processes and landscape architecture as a career continued on this path of increasing reflection, improving grammar, more complete analysis and more complete assessments of the topic. We are hopeful that the lessons of these design cases, so well reflected upon and written about, will remain with the students as they pursue their individual disciplinary studies.

#### **Field Exercises in Observation and Mapping.**

Part 2 of the course utilizes the history, culture, physical and electronic environment of ISU as a case study. ISU is explored as a sustained design event: a spectrum from political imagination, to physical place, to fashion & ritual, to virtual place. In a chronological order we began with the legislative founding of the university in 1858, and its chartering as a Land Grant University under the Morrill Act in 1867. How and why we are located where we are, the shape and modification of the land, the development of housing for women (ISU was the first public university to admit women) and early site development are presented as social, political, planning and design processes. The landscape of the campus itself, formal site planning and the emergence of university classicism as the dominant architectural image at the turn of the 20th-C began several lectures that also looked at campus architecture, campus interiors and campus artwork. We then shifted to the rituals of the ISU community, sports and band uniforms, alumni association memorabilia, university publications and diverse university websites to round out a picture of culture and design inextricably intertwined.

During this segment, the principal student work is Lynchian (3) based site observation and recording. The objective is to introduce methods of direct experience, recording and assessment of the designed landscape. The Lynchian model is acces-

sible and transferable for such engagement by beginning design students.

The first assignment 'Campus Memorials' had students directly engage the landscape of the campus while reading the selective bits of culture and history that designed memorials reveal—and presumably cause students to independently discover things that would inform later work. Working in pairs, the students were to locate 10 memorials on campus. Seeking memorials not only enabled students to become familiar with parts of the campus that were new to them, but also to learn that memorials in the landscape act as 'windows' through which we can glimpse views of history. The resultant work was a map of the memorial locations, their path to discover them, photographs and a summary of what they memorialized and why that was important.

The second was a 'Place Recording Exercise' that involved going about the campus, exterior and interior, locating places that possessed a strong atmosphere, e.g., good places to relax, to study alone, to socialize, places that are unpleasant to walk or that have an attractive view. The intent of this exercise was to have students consider the experiential qualities of the campus landscape from a distinctively personal point of view, to be reflective about the reasons for the qualitative assessments they made, and to articulate those reasons in a concise narrative form. The result of this was a table with written descriptions of their perceptions and design attributes of the selected places.

Another assignment was 'A Lynchian analysis of the Iowa State Campus.' The intent of this exercise was to have students apply the Kevin Lynch urban-element typology to a place with which they were becoming familiar, so that Lynch's valuable conceptual ideas could transcend abstraction and become more real, memorable and useful. Like the previous exercise this was an interpretive effort on a personal level, but there was an additional responsibility to see and understand the environment through another (Lynch's) framework'— establishing a model for exploring other frameworks. The results of this exercise were maps identifying districts, nodes, edges, landmarks and paths.

**Final Examination Essays.** The final exam included an open book comprehensive essay question:

**Art** (painting, sculpture, frescoes, film, photography, etc.) has been an integral aspect of many sections of the course. Describe and analyze: a) several artworks, b) the use of art, and c) its purpose and cultural importance **for at least one aspect of each of the following topics** presented in the course. Support your general premises with detailed comments. The three topics are:

- 1) The Cowboy, American West, and Rodeo group of lectures (Part I of the Course)
- 2) The Ideology and Propaganda group of lectures (Part I of the Course)
- 3) The ISU Campus and Artwork lectures (Part II of the Course) [Emphasis in original.]

"Art" is used in lieu of 'design' in this question. Partly that is due to the fact that the short in-class writings, and the essays of the two prior exams focused on design and how it is related to the lecture topics. Partly it forces coming to terms with the range of uses of art. In the end, there is a significant shared perspective: "art" and "design" are not seen as autonomous, ideal, somehow neutral property based disciplines (e.g., proportion, composition, visual beauty, color, etc.), but socially contextual. Cultural, political and ideological positions are ever-present. Students were asked to cite sources if other than their personal notes. Italicized text in "[—]" is faculty notes. The following are two examples from among those written:

#### RESPONSE #1:

*Outline:*

Rodeo—4000 BCE Early depiction of horse riders  
 — 2000 BCE early depictions of saddles  
 — 1880 painters and writers go to the west to record  
 — 1903 1st movie

Ideology— Guerrilla Girls poster  
 — Modernism in Art  
 — sculpture, classical details, building inscriptions  
 Washington DC

ISU Campus—'A' in SAUCE  
 —'A' in 10 versions same scene  
 — As art in itself

The rodeo and overall cultural history of the cow-

boy is intermingled with art constantly. We see as early as 4000 BCE that in Mesopotamia there are early depictions of horse riders (Rodeo timeline, pg. 1) In around 2000 BCE there is an early depiction of saddles brought to our attention. The consistency upon which art is part of the cowboy is carried up into the 1870's when painters and writers begin to go to the West and record all of the Spanish vaquero's cultural influence. [*Art of the West was well underway in the 1870's; also, by the 1870's the Spanish influence was being 'erased.'*] This initiates the genre known commonly as Western Art and produces the portrayal of the mythic cowboy. The next few decades of cattle drives and Wild West Shows inspire the first art of film in 1903 (timeline, pg. 2) with "The Great Train Robbery" that will always be a part of our art history.

The use of art here is not solely for our personal pleasure, it is the description of a constantly evolving part of our lives, a description of the times that could not be captured with a still picture on film. Painting and sculpture beginning with George Caitlin (lecture notes, pg. 2) in the 1830's to Charles Russell today, artworks purpose is to provide us with images of the West. Even in objects like boots, shirts & belt buckles art is involved. It is important to not only recognize graphics as art but to dig deeper and find the true historical values of art throughout cowboy culture.

Propaganda itself is an art. The art of persuasion and can be seen locally as 'Vote for Goodman' poster [*student government campaign*] to national levels like Washington, DC. One great example of art as propaganda is the Guerrilla Girls poster distributed in class. This poster educates people to the unfair treatment of women in art. This poster itself is art but more importantly it propagates the role of women in art. From art departments @ national universities [*The poster lists faculty member ratios.*] to the unanswerable critique that women allowed into the Metropolitan Museum have been inanimate ones with their clothes off. (pg. 8, Beauty lecture). The Guerrilla Girls 'in your face' attitude deals with propagation very well. We also see art in the form of propagation in the movements such as Modernism or simply shown in war bonds, Nazism posters, & abortion rights posters. [For] The Modernism movement it is the design work itself and the ideas it embodies around which a system of propaganda is organized. Examples

range from the 'Salon de Refuses' in the 19th-C, to the Bauhaus of the 1920's and '30's to the LA Case Study houses of the 1950's.

More specifically let's look at sculpture, classical details and building inscriptions. Each of the following were designed to reinforce the ideology of the American democracy. We see inscriptions like 'Equal Justice for All' on the Supreme Court Building, frescoes in the capitol recalling the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Viet Nam Memorial, and even the design of our money includes major US buildings. Today we can literally carry around built symbols of democracy. (p. 2, lecture notes)

Lastly, on the topic of propaganda. Let's look at our nation's capital Washington, DC. From the selection of Greek and Roman architecture as the federal image to the constant use of painting, sculpture and graphics portraying America, Washington is a landscape of free self-governing people. In today's age of digital media, Washington is a model of physical design from past to futures (p. 3, lecture notes).

Overall, we must look at the art of persuasion, more deeply into its historical values. Propaganda has painted us a vivid picture using art of our nation's history. The cultural importance of propaganda cannot be expressed in words. To me it is something that must be experienced and interpreted for oneself.

Finally, let's take a look at art and its uses throughout the ISU campus. Picturing the campus as a landscape sets the scene for art to be involved. [*This student concludes the essay with four additional blue-book pages on art and the ISU campus; many examples and uses are provided.*] ... So now the landscape of ISU becomes media itself. ... It is important to know the history of a place that you spend lots of time in. ISU uses various degrees of art to help us along. ...

It appears that the overall theme of art throughout these topics is [art] is here to educate us. Art shows us the past ... Art is everywhere not only to educate but to enjoy!

*Response #2:*

Art in the American West, in ideology and propaganda, and the ISU campus has played an integral

role through its purpose and cultural importance.

In the American West 1800's, George Caitlin painted and wrote about Indian scenes which in turn began mythologizing the West to other parts of the nation and world. Wild Bill Cody created the Wild West Show in 1882 during the height of the cowboy period. Through his use of art he too mythologized but also idealized the cowboy and a cowboy's life. Other forms of artwork during the American Cowboy period were music, film and propaganda. Wild Bill's art was of propaganda and advertisement, poster and pamphlets. The first movie in 1903 was about the west and "The Great Train Robbery" was not the only movie ever made about cowboys and the west!

The next topic of ideology and propaganda fits well with the West and its art. Art that fits an ideology displays a system of beliefs or values and this way of presentation is very similar to propaganda which is propagation of a particular doctrine or belief. Through propaganda advertisements, poster, graphics publications, memorials and artwork, movements and ideas are propagated. A few examples of propaganda include war posters from around the world with their graphics persuading people [of?] more than the words. In the US capitol building the frescoes that dominate the ceiling fill the space with idealistic views of George Washington and a romanticized view of early American Democracy. The US capitol building also has a different kind of propaganda. In the Rotunda and Sculpture Hall's 150 sculptures, only three women and one minority are present, out of 200+ years of American history!

Both the American West and propaganda art are closely related in purpose, to paint an idealistic view about an idea with an intention to persuade. All the art tells a story of greatness and mystery. Yet, by choosing which parts of American cowboy and US history, the nation is learning only half of the story, and this has great cultural impact in the way the nation perceives itself and others.

Finally, art here on the ISU campus is everywhere. ISU is a designed place, but the meanings are not absolute meanings. "Key to understanding art comes from the context it's in." (Professor Tartakov) Art on campus includes the Grant Wood frescoes in the library and the architectural frieze around the old part of the library, the one legged angel outside the li-

brary, the photography of campus in the Alumni Calendar & the many paintings around campus. Each does one thing well, it is a ideal and it emphasizes who and how you express who you are.

The frescoes express a lifestyle & the 'ideal' Iowa farm experience. The frieze explains who and what about the campus, who can study here and what you can study. [*The frieze contains the names of great scholars and the names of the colleges of the university.*] Next the one-legged angel, like so many sculptures on campus are stories of perseverance and express who the artist is and what he/she is about. The photography is also about self expression, but it propagates the best idealism and nostalgic qualities of ISU. Each have a similar purpose, not only beautification, but [*also*] propagation of ideals, and their cultural importance is best observed through first hand experience. Once again these works of art were chosen to represent ISU, and they are culturally significant because they were chosen by the ISU culture.

Art in the American West, in propaganda, & on the ISU campus plays an integral role through its use, purpose and cultural importance. These essays are by no means 'perfect'. There are a few technical factual errors; a number of grammatical ones; they presume the reader is familiar with the cited artworks (a luxury students have during an exam—they can count on their professors to know the referent!). Written under the pressure of an examination period, both are solid examples of the interplay between art, design and social context.

## ONWARD

The objectives of this course are many. A brief way of summing up is that the faculty of the college believe that design does not happen without informed thought, the ability to research and apply self-aware *thinking in design*, and the capacity to communicate design ideas to others in more modes than designed things in themselves. The rational and the poetic, reflection and action arguably come together best in the studio, but the recognition of them requires nurturing by multiple means. The structure of the DsnS 183x, the contents of the lectures, the required student exercises and examinations are designed to awaken and engender informed thought, critical perspective, and the recognition that design is not an abstract field of forms intuition and personal will, but a deeply cultural endeavor.

## NOTES:

1. Gregory Palermo, architecture; Michael Martin, landscape architecture; Susan Bradbury, community and regional planning; and Gary Tartakov and John Cunnally, art historians in the department of art and design.
2. The nine in-class questions posed during the first offering of the course are:
  - 1) Define: design; define: culture. 8/26 [*Asked prior to any lectures beginning.*]
  - 2) Group 1: what do the rodeo and politics have to do with each other?  
Group 2: what does design have to do with the rodeo?  
Group 3: identify something you think is positive about the rodeo and discuss why.  
Group 4: identify something you think is negative about rodeos and discuss why. 9/2 [*Asked in the middle of the first lecture on the west and rodeos.*]
  - 3) Identify one new thing about cowboys and rodeos that is related to design that you learned in these lectures, and discuss why it is important to you. 9/9 [*Asked at the completion of the lectures regarding the topic.*]
  - 4) What is a common thread among the three companies: Martha Stewart Inc., IKEA and IDEO? 9/18 [*Asked after the completion of the lectures on the topic.*]
  - 5) Group 1: What does design have to do with CNN? Discuss.  
Group 2: What does design have to do with MTV? Discuss. 9/25 [*Asked during the progress of the lectures on the topic.*]
  - 6) What new issue, process, or product from a design perspective did you learn about in these lectures on MTV and CNN? 9/30 [*Asked as a brief review at the conclusion of the topic lectures.*]
  - 7) What do you think ideology and propaganda are? What does design have to do with propaganda? 10/7 [*Asked at the beginning of the lectures on the topic.*]
  - 8) Have you been involved in planning and designing an event or project? What steps did you take in your planning/design process? 10/28 [*Asked after a lecture on planning process.*]
  - 9) Discuss one thing that you learned about landscape architecture that was new to you today. 11/20 [*Asked after a lecture regarding landscape architecture.*]
3. Kevin Lynch. *The Image of the City* (MIT; 1968) and related works pertaining to place and its analysis.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Concepts 1. (10 June 2002) Team working paper.  
Proposal 1. (7 May 2002) Team grant proposal for summer 2002 stipend.