

Sam Fox Commons Course Proposal

Course title: Materials and Mechanisms

Level: 200 and up (200, 300, 400)

Term: Fall semester

Credit hours: 3

Instructor: Arny Nadler, Associate Professor of Art
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Arny Nadler, Associate Professor of Art

Course Description: Materials and Mechanisms

In this course students are guided to explore the nature of materials and simple mechanisms (manually driven kinetics) in the making of art and or utilitarian objects. This course investigates the qualities of materials and how they might be used thoughtfully to develop a conceptual and physical experience for an audience or user. Specific materials will at times be assigned, yet students will have an opportunity to self select materials based on project needs.

Throughout the semester, students will balance designing with finding- the process of playfully exploring materials and methods without preconception of a final resolution. Looking for possibilities can lead to unexpected discoveries.

Course Narrative

Whether a student pursues art, design or architecture, the making of “stuff” requires an understanding of how materials behave, look and feel. Rather than simply studying *how* to manipulate a material (This is how you weld...), this course investigates *why* a material should be used (Why steel?). This course will help develop the ability to observe and scrutinize what materials do- critical thinking and making go hand in hand. The inclusion of simple mechanisms will broaden the applicability of this information to all the Sam Fox constituents, as well as students interested in industrial or product design. The range of investigations in both art and design in this course will lead to vibrant discussions about what we make, why we make it and how it plays a role in the broader culture.

Arny Nadler, Associate Professor of Art

Course Schedule: Materials and Mechanisms

This course schedule is a draft and is to be used for course proposal purposes only. It includes brief descriptions of potential assignments.

Week 1: Course introduction, lecture on thoughtful construction in the fields of art, design and architecture.

Warm up project: Ten forms made from the same two materials.

Week 2: Assignment: Burlap and plaster- material research and investigation.

Weeks 3-6: Students develop a project that capitalizes on the nature of burlap and plaster- casting, weaving, structural possibilities, etc.

Week 7: Assignment: Prosthetic for appreciation of an environment.

Students study ergonomics and the combined use of rigid and flexible materials and structures.

Proposed tour of St. Louis Rehabilitation Institute

Weeks 8-11: Students develop a system of prosthetics for their own bodies to heighten awareness, appreciation, receptivity or sensitivity to an environment. Environment may be thought of as real or fantastic.

Week 12: Students propose final assignment to the class via presentation. Discuss research methods and materials, approaches desired outcome.

Week 13-16: Students work on final self generated assignment.

I intend to conclude the semester with an exhibition of the final projects that will include displays of research materials as well.