

## Course Syllabus

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### Course Information

ATEC 6331.001 Aesthetics of Interactive Arts

ATC 4.906

Thursday 4.00-6.45

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### Contact Information

Prof. Dr. Mihai Nadin

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ATEC Building

Office Hours: Wednesday 3.00-5.00 pm and by appointment

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### Course Pre-requisites

This is a required graduate class. ATEC approval is required for undergraduate students.

Students are supposed to have acquired computation skills corresponding to their pursued majors

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### Course Description

Interaction takes place as two or more entities have an effect upon one another. The understanding of the two-way effect is essential for defining interaction, as opposed to a one-way causal effect.

Aesthetic interaction is a particular form of interaction characteristic of aesthetic activity . As opposed to physical interaction, where physical forces are at work, aesthetic interaction involves aesthetic components. The making of aesthetic artefacts (from art works to fashion, entertainment acts, interfaces, products, etc.) is the outcome of interactions with matter, tools, machines, ideas, etc. with the purpose of conveying meaning through means addressing the human aesthetic condition.

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### Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

In this class, aesthetics is seen as the “mathematics” of art and design. More precisely, it provides a foundation for understanding the characteristics of interactive arts, for experimenting, for advancing innovation. This semester the focus is on interaction. Concretely, students will explore:

- a) Knowledge of aesthetics, as it shaped, and continues to shape, human activity in general, and in particular the emerging interactive forms of aesthetic expression
- b) Aesthetic skills, expressed in aesthetic value judgments and aesthetic innovation in the age of interactive media and computational design

- c) Aesthetic judgment as an expression of aesthetic knowledge-based evaluation
  - d) New forms of aesthetic interaction
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#### Required Textbooks and Materials

1. Gaut, Berys Nigel and Lopes, Dominic, *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* [electronic resource], NetLibrary, 2005. Available as eBook at the UTD's McDermott Library.
2. Mihai Nadin, Science and Beauty: Aesthetic Structuring of Knowledge, *Leonardo*, 24/1, 1991. The article will be made available to students through [www.nadin.ws](http://www.nadin.ws)
3. Mihai Nadin, Emergent Aesthetics. Aesthetic Issues in Computer Arts., *Leonardo*, Special Issue: Computer Art in Context, August 1989. The article will be made available to students.
4. Strategies of Interactivity by Dieter Daniels  
<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/source-text/65/>
5. Mihai Nadin, Foresight and Hindsight, This article is part of the Pioneers and Pathbreakers series in *Leonardo*. Available at [http://www.nadin.ws/wpcontent/uploads/2016/12/leonardo\\_mn\\_01324.pdf](http://www.nadin.ws/wpcontent/uploads/2016/12/leonardo_mn_01324.pdf)
6. Joseph A. Schumpeter "Creative Destruction"
7. From *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1975) [orig. pub. 1942], pp. 82-85:  
<http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/unlocked/schumpeter/index.html>
8. F.T. Marinetti, The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,  
<http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/manifesto.html>
9. Walther Benjamin: book-- The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1936),  
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>
10. William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (Remembering Tomorrow) (Spectra, 1993)
11. Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991)
12. Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (New York and London: Penguin, 2000)

Suggested class study library

1. Locher, Paul, Kees Overbeeke, and Stephan Wensveen. "Aesthetic Interaction: A Framework." *Design Issues* 26, no. 2 (2010): 70-79.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20749943>.
2. Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art, Katja Kwastek  
MIT Press, 2013, 384 pp and 31 figures
3. Interaction Aesthetics versus Visual Aesthetics  
<http://www.infragistics.com/community/blogs/ux/archive/2010/02/28/interaction-aesthetics-versus-visual-aesthetics.aspx>
4. Visual Aesthetics  
From the Encyclopaedia of Human Computer Interaction, published by the Design Interaction Foundation  
<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/visual-aesthetics>
5. Aesthetic Computing  
<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/aesthetic-computing>
6. New Media Arts and Human-Computer Interaction: Forming Aesthetic Interaction, Hsiu Ching Hsieh, *International Journal of the Arts in Society*;2012, Vol. 6 Issue 3, p201
7. Embodied Aesthetics  
Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Aesthetics and the Embodied Mind, 26th–28th August 2013, Edited by Alfonsina Scarinzi
8. The relation between interaction aesthetics and affordances, Ioannis Xenakis, Argyris Arnellos in *Design Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January 2013, Pages 57–73

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Academic Calendar and assignments

**Thursday January 12**

**What is aesthetic interaction**

**Assignment 1:** Define your own aesthetics. Use for this assignment the music defining your aesthetic choices, the dance(s), works of art you consider close to your aesthetic identity, literature, games you play, interactive media of your choice, type of design you appreciate...The list is open. It involves fashion, architecture, customs, it involves the way you make your choices in everyday life. Create an interactive presentation of your aesthetics (Flash, Website, PowerPoint, animation, a game—It's up to you). It should allow anyone to examine it and be able to identify your aesthetics.

**Presentation in class:** January 19th

**This presentation is also a good opportunity for building the sense of shared aesthetic values of the class.**

**Thursday January 19**

**Aesthetic identity project presentation**

**Thursday January 26**

**Aesthetic Foundations**

**Assignment 2: Science and Beauty.** Aesthetics in the age of computation Prepare a presentation (in whichever medium/media you choose) on the assigned reading. The presentation should make clear YOUR understanding. Moreover, how does the change affect your current work and your perspective. Try to define what has changed since 1989.

**Presentation due February 2nd**

**Reading:** Mihai Nadin, Emergent Aesthetics. Aesthetic Issues in Computer Arts, *Leonardo*, Special Issue: Computer Art in Context, August 1989.

Mihai Nadin, Foresight and Hindsight, This article is part of the **Pioneers and Pathbreakers** in *Leonardo*

Available at

[http://www.nadin.ws/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/leonardo\\_mn\\_01324.pdf](http://www.nadin.ws/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/leonardo_mn_01324.pdf)

Prepare a presentation of your ideas—in any format you choose.

**Thursday February 2**

**Presentation of Assignment 2**

**Thursday February 9**

**Aesthetic change**

**Thursday February 16**

The class meets at The Warehouse 14105 Inwood Rd, Farmers Branch, TX 75244

Our visit was arranged in advance—this is not an open to the public museum. Please arrive in due time and be prepared to fully respect the conditions for our visit.

The Warehouse is a project initiated by Howard Rachofsky and the late Vernon Faulconer to make their collections available to curators, scholars, critics and students, and to open new dialogues about postwar Modern and contemporary art. Here, The Warehouse presents carefully considered, original exhibitions of works from The Rachofsky Collection, complemented by art acquired jointly with the Dallas Museum of Art and works on loan from other significant institutions and private collections.

Assignment 3: choose on work from the exhibit and document the aesthetic characteristics of this choice. Be precise: what best defines, in your view, and based on the aesthetic knowledge acquired so far, the work. Document visually or in multimedia format your assessment. Consider comparing the work with other aesthetic artifacts that you are familiar with. If you make reference to opinions of others, please document those.

Assignment due: February 23

**Thursday February 23**

**Class presentations of The Warehouse assignment (Assignment 3)**

**Thursday March 2**

**Aesthetic activity in the age of the machine**

**Thursday March 9**

**Aesthetics and semiotics—interactivity revisited**

**Thursday March 16---Spring Break**

**Thursday March 23**

**Aesthetic aspects of design. HCI and the aesthetic factors**

**Assignment 4: Prepare a presentation to document the relation between Artificial Intelligence and creativity**

**Thursday March 30**

**Present Assignment 4: Artificial Intelligence and creativity**

**Thursday April 6**

**Art in the Age of its mechanical reproduction**

Assignment 5: Present your favorite example of interactive arts—and explain:

- a. The aesthetics of the example you chose
- b. The type of interactions that define it

A concrete example of interactive arts, to be chosen based on the variety of directions pursued by the students in class, will give you a chance to apply the knowledge acquired so far. You can use any medium for applying your aesthetic knowledge

**Thursday April 13**  
**Presentation of Assignment 5**

**Thursday April 20**  
**Semester Project:**  
**Interactive media—your own example.**

**Thursday April 27**  
**Aesthetics of your place of origin**  
**Your aesthetic context—assignment presentation.** What do we learn from the aesthetics of other cultures?

*Aesthetics in context. The difference between American, German, and Japanese, etc. is not only the result of cultural differences, but also the results of a context (differences in the practical experience).*

*The region you come from has its own aesthetics. Try to describe it, to document it. Share with your peers the aesthetic experience of your culture.*

**Reading (optional):** “The Sense of Design” (pp. 590-611); and “A Sense of the Future” (pp. 729-767), in *The Civilization of Illiteracy*.

*Document in the medium of your choice aspects of the influence of context in current aesthetics. Reflect upon your future role in a global economy.*

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**Grading Policy**

During the Semester, reading, independent research, acquisition of software skills and class participation – in the form of short presentations and discussions – will be evaluated. The final project, supposed to be the expression of your semester-long research and independent work – will make up 70% of your grade. The following is a breakdown of the variables considered in grading:

Attendance	<b>15%</b>
Class Participation and individual assignments	<b>35%</b>
Final semester project	<b>50%</b>

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**Course & Instructor Policies**

Class attendance and individual research at a level of a graduate seminar are **very** important. Make sure you are on time and ready to learn!

Some assignments require that you visit some Dallas locations on your own. Please take such visits seriously since they will serve as a basis for your work.

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## Off-campus Instruction and Course Activities

One class will take place at The Warehouse, 14105 Inwood Rd, Farmers Branch, TX 75244. The Warehouse is a project initiated by Howard Rachofsky and the late Vernon Faulconer to make their collections available to curators, scholars, critics and students, and to open new dialogues about postwar Modern and contemporary art. Our visit was arranged in advance—this is not an open to the public museum. Please arrive in due time and be prepared to fully respect the conditions for our visit.

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## Comet Creed

*This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

*“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”*

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## UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

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*According to UT Dallas policies, the descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the professor. Students will be informed prior to such changes.*