

DESIGN AND CRITICISM

IE University

Professor: **NIKE VERENA FAKINER**

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Academic year: 22-23

Degree course: SECOND

Semester: 2^o

Category: COMPULSORY

Number of credits: 6.0

Language: English

PREREQUISITES

There are no specific prerequisites for this course. Nevertheless, students are expected to have been introduced to the field of Design Theory. Also, a certain academic level of writing and argumentation is expected, developed in the IE Module Writing Skills. Design and Criticism will build upon this previous knowledge and help students expand and further develop it.

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

During the course Design and Criticism students will learn about the relevance of criticism for their work as a designer. But what is criticism? Being critical is often misunderstood as the disapproval of something. In this course, however, criticism is understood in a broader sense, as the analysis of material objects, interventions and social and cultural settings. Criticism can be seen as a core activity of the contemporary designer. He or she can no longer be regarded as someone who is only concerned with the physical manufacturing of products. Designers are expected to be aware of the ecological, social, cultural and economical problems of our times. When solving these problems, often non-physical outcomes, such as multidisciplinary research, communication or structural changes are involved. Contemporary design practice therefore demands research, advanced reading, writing and argumentative skills. In other words: a critical attitude. In this course we will train this attitude by looking at multiple aspects of design: work circumstances, production process, societal, political, cultural and emotional effects and their connection to material properties of designs. Through the readings, lectures, discussions and out-of-class learning as well as practical exercises, students will have multiple opportunities to engage with critical debates in the field as well as explore the role of designs in real-life problems.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

In this course students will develop their critical skills, with regard to the field of design. These include, amongst other things, to:

- understand the societal, cultural, political and emotional implications of design
- make a convincing argument about (own) designs and apply self criticism
- present such argumentation coherently and concisely in oral and written work, according to academic standards
- judge designs in terms of their politics and collective values

- apply critical methodologies to design theory and practice
- develop an openness to creative thinking and doing
- develop critical thinking

METHODOLOGY

In Design and Criticism several methodological strategies will be used. Below, I will elaborate on class material, in-class activities and exercises:

Class material: both canonical and contemporary texts on design are selected for this course. The canonical texts will give the students a multidisciplinary framework from which to reflect about complex issues in design. The familiarity of the texts, globally and throughout the time, helps them engage more easily with academic literature, where the sources are widely used as reference points. Besides, the selected contemporary writings and audio-visual sources should help students situate themselves in the current discourse on design.

Lectures, Discussions and Lab Sections: Our weekly seminars will begin with a reading group discussion of the mandatory readings and the audiovisual materials. Active participation in the debates is crucial and counts for the evaluation criteria of the course. Reading group discussions will be guided by focused reading questions that are intended to help students identify key concepts and begin critical analyzing the broader theoretical and practical implications of course readings. These questions will be distributed in class one week earlier. After the discussion period, the class will reconvene for a lecture and discussion of the topic of the week. The class will end with an introduction to the following week's readings and the distribution of reading questions. In addition, throughout the semester, students will participate in Lab Sections, which will provide students with the opportunity to forging closer connections between theory and praxis, and academic contents and their everyday experiences.

Practical Exercises: Design and Criticism is a communicative intensive course; researching, observing, writing and speaking are critical parts of the class. During Lab Sections, students are expected to engage in practical exercises and apply critical methodologies and theoretical concepts and ideas viewed throughout the course to a case study. The practical exercises enable students to make connections between the lectures, readings, discussion sections and their own lives. Over the course of the semester, we will also stress strategies for critical reading and argumentation skills in the humanities and social sciences.

Out-of-class experiences are a relevant cornerstone of this course, as they facilitate the emergence and refinement of growth in understanding, and professional skills and attitudes, such as critical thinking, communication, team-work, leadership, and initiative.

Attendance and participation in class are very important and count for 10% of the final grade. Since our class functions as a *learning community*, it is essential that students attend class faithfully and participate regularly.

Grading: It is very important that assignments be submitted or presented on or by their due dates; late submission or presentation of work may result in a lowered final grade. In the event of personal or medical emergency, please contact (or have a dean contact) the instructor and your section leader as soon as possible.

Teaching methodology	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	13.33 %	20 hours
Discussions	13.33 %	20 hours
Exercises	23.33 %	35 hours
Group work	16.67 %	25 hours
Other individual studying	33.33 %	50 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150 hours

PROGRAM

PART 1: DESIGN AS PROCESS

SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CRITICISM?

Lecture and Discussion

In his famous essay *What is Enlightenment* (1784) Immanuel Kant wrote that reasoning frees people from blindly following common sense opinions and practices. According to the 20th Century philosopher Michel Foucault, this stubborn attitude is still relevant for a contemporary audience. Why should a designer have a critical attitude? In this introductory session, we will relate his ideas to the practice of design and discuss the main objectives of the course. Furthermore, the evaluation system and the functioning of the course will be addressed.

Book Chapters: What is Enlightenment (The Foucault reader. London: Penguin Books) (CED)

SESSIONS 2 - 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

THE MATERIALS EMOTIONS ARE MADE OF

Lecture and Discussion

Our encounter with designs occurs at a sensorial level, through touch, vision, smell, sound and taste. In addition, we can be fascinated, disgusted or disappointed by the qualities of a material. This session provides a critical vocabulary for discussing the role emotions and sensory experiences play in our encounter with designs and the extend to which they can be a mean for designers to connect their products to culture and to communicate with their potential users. In this context, how could a responsible point of view for a emotional design look like?

Article: What We Touch, Touches Us: Materials, Affects, and Affordances (Design Issues, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 20–31) (CED)

Video: BMW Commercial (Youtube) (Optional)

Podcast: 3 ways good design makes you happy (ted.com) (Optional)

SESSIONS 4 - 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

IMPROVISATION AND PLANNING

Lecture and Discussion

This session is responsible for analyzing workflows in design practice by focusing on improvisation and planning. Improvisation is commonly understood as an experimental, spontaneous and unplanned activity, which is primarily associated with the domain of the arts. However, improvisation can also be understood in a much broader sense, as a particular kind of critical and problematizing attitude that alters existing ways of being and doing. We will experiment with this idea in class and analyse its relation to innovation.

Book Chapters: Adhocism. The case for Improvisation ("Foreword" and chapter 1 "The Spirit of Adhocism" pp. 9-28; London 1972) (CED)

Book Chapters: Notes on the Synthesis of Form (Chapter 1. 1994; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) (Optional)

Video: Beethoven vs Steibelt (Youtube) (Optional)

SESSIONS 6 - 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

COLLABORATION AND INDIVIDUAL GENIUS

Lecture and Discussion

In 2015, the collective Assemble was awarded the prestigious Turner prize. It was remarkable that this prize, traditionally given to a single artist, was awarded to a group of architects and designers. By choosing this group of young people, the jury seemed to value collective action over individual genius. How can we understand this new trend of collective activism and community projects? In addition, this session will problematize forms of research of participatory designing methods and discuss workflows that stand out for an openness and non-hierarchical structure, which enables (user) participation and collaboration with others.

Article: Exergue (Facing Value, 2017) (CED)

Video: Assemble Turner Price 2015 (TateShots) (Youtube)

SESSIONS 8 - 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

OUT-OF-CLASS EXPERIENCE: VISIT TO THE DESIGN FESTIVAL

In this session, students will interact with a space outside IE, discovering museums as valuable sources of knowledge. Not only does the museum visit introduce students to the many and varied forms of material culture, it also introduce them to social, historical, emotional encounters that are difficult to find elsewhere. By the end of the day, student will have tested ideas and concepts in practice and learnt, in an immersive way, about the objective and subjective qualities of design objects. The museum visit will be combined with an *out of the class learning activity*, in which students work in small groups and are expected to find answers to research questions in the museum during their visit.

SESSIONS 10 - 11 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

LAB SECTION 1: SHOW AND TELL CULTURAL ARTEFACTS

The Lab Section "Show and Tell Cultural Artefacts" is conceived as an asynchronous session, providing students with the opportunity to forging closer connections between theory and praxis, and academic contents and their everyday experiences.

In the first part of the section, students will work in small groups and engage in a practical exercise for a ***critical analysis of a design object from the Madrid Design Festival***. The exercise will result in a group-deliverable in the form of a "Video Recording Oral Presentation". The students must upload it to campus on the day of the Asynchronous Session. The Video Presentation must follow all the structure and stylistic guidelines learned throughout the course and explained in class. The second part of the Lab Section will propose a discussion board where students will share the results of their practical exercise inside a discussion board to later debate about it and provide P2P feedback.

A brief of the group-deliverable will be provided at the beginning of the course

SESSION 12 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

QUIZ AND REVIEW

This seminar will give us space to both test your understanding and review the main ideas studied in the first part of the course. This first test will consist in a short multiple choice quiz about the mandatory readings and audiovisual materials viewed throughout the first thematic section of the course: "Design as Process". The Quiz will count for 10% of the final grade. After que Quiz, we will have space to review the main topics and theoretical concepts viewed so far, establishing further connections between readings and case studies and solving doubts and questions.

Readings: All mandatory readings and audiovisual materials related to the section "Design as Process".

PART 2: THE POLITICS OF DESIGN

SESSIONS 13 - 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

DO MATERIALS HAVE POLITICS?

Lecture and Discussion

Usually, when we go shopping we see the end products we can buy. Invisible are the transformation process of raw materials, the technical arrangements and the working circumstances that lead to those products. Fairtrade coffee, biological cotton or vegan sneakers can be seen as signs of a society that has more eye for the chain behind the product. Are we heading to the right direction? In this session we will inquire how people judge and value materials and how the design of a device can provide a convenient means of establishing patterns of power and authority.

Article: Do Artifacts Have Politics? (Dedalus, Vol. 109, No. 1, Modern Technology: Problem or Opportunity? (Winter, 1980), pp. 121-136 (16 pages), Published By: The MIT Press) (CED)

Video: The 2 Euro T-Shirt - A Social Experiment (Youtube)

SESSIONS 15 - 16 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

DESIGN AND INTERCULTURALITY

Lecture and Discussion

Designs play a critical role in our everyday lives as we make sense of our cultural identities and the world around us. This session will be responsible for addressing how people make and use designs as means of making up national identities and marking social differentiations within and among groups. Also, we will inquire what happens when designs change its cultural context of production and use and travel to other cultures. Are there commercial spaces for multiculturalism? In this context, the designer's critical mindset is crucial. How can designers redefine (and reimagine) the entanglement of commerce and culture in the production of their products? How can he or she engage today with a notion of 'multiculturalism' through their work?

Book Chapters: Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference (The Post-colonial Studies Reader, pp. 206-9. London: Routledge) (See Bibliography)

Article: Dream Utopias, Nightmare Realities: Imaging Race and Culture Within the World of Benetton Advertising (Third Text 7 (22): 65-80. 1993) (Optional)

SESSIONS 17 - 18 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

DESIGN AND GENDER POLITICS

Lecture and Discussion

In this class we will continue to reflect on the collective values of designs, by focusing on its gender politics. We will critically assess how visual media establish social boundaries and hierarchies to build identities and gender. Can people get categorized as "male" and "female" through designs in their possession and control? If designs have the power of "making" identity and gender, what should be a self-reflective attitude of designers today?

Book Chapters: Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig, Foucault (The Judith Butler Reader, 1989) (CED)

Podcast: We Should All be Feminists (TEDxEuston)

Article: We need to rethink the category of woman (The Guardian) (CED)

Article: When I Stopped Shopping by Gender, I Fell in Love With Fashion Again (August 13, 2021) (VOGUE)

SESSIONS 19 - 20 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

LAB SECTION 2: SHOW AND TELL CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

The Lab Section "Show and Tell Cultural Artefacts" is conceived as an asynchronous session, providing students with the opportunity to forging closer connections between theory and praxis, and academic contents and their everyday experiences.

In the first part of the section, students will work in small groups and engage in a practical exercise for a **critical analysis of one of their own design objects from current or past courses**. The exercise will result in a group-deliverable in the form of a "Video Recording Oral Presentation". The students must present and upload the video to campus on the day of the Asynchronous Session. The Video Presentation must follow all the structure and stylistic guidelines learned throughout the course and explained in class. The second part of the Lab Section will propose a discussion board where students will share the results of their practical exercise inside a discussion board to later debate about it and provide P2P feedback.

A brief of this assignment will be provided at the beginning of the course.

SESSION 21 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

QUIZ AND REVIEW

This seminar will give us space to both test your understanding and review the main ideas studied in the first part of the course. This second test will consist in a short multiple choice quiz about the mandatory readings and audiovisual materials viewed throughout the second thematic section of the course: "The Politics of Design". The Quiz will count for 10% of the final grade. After que Quiz, we will have space to review the main topics and theoretical concepts viewed so far, establishing further connections between readings and case studies and solving doubts and questions.

Readings: All mandatory readings and audiovisual materials related to the section "The Politics of Design".

PART 3: MATERIALITY, VISUALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY

SESSIONS 22 - 23 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

MEDIA OF VISUAL DISPLAY

Lecture and Discussion

Visual technologies and images are central to how we communicate and express ourselves. In this increasingly visual world, how can we best decipher and understand the many ways that our everyday experiences are organized around looking practices and visual media we encounter each day? How do visual media shape the way we perceive the world? With the help of two classical authors, McLuhan and Susan Sonntag, students will be provided with a critical vocabulary on the meaning of media of visual display for society.

Book Chapters: On Photography & Plato's Cave (exert) (CED)

Book Chapters: The Medium is the Message (Understanding Media; 1964. Routledge) (CED)

SESSIONS 24 - 25 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ARCHITECTURE

Lecture and Discussion

Since the growth of social media, human communication has become much more visual changing our every day lives in fundamental ways. With this new focus, also a new space for design and architecture has opened up. This session will give us space to analyze how the use of social media photographic images in design and architecture transforms our experience of physical space and reimagines a different notion of privacy and identity. How can designers and architects create better private spaces?

Book Chapters: What Is Social Media? (How the World Changed Social Media, 1st ed., 1:1–8. UCL Press, 2016) (CED)

Book Chapters: Interior (Privacy and publicity: modern architecture as mass media; p. 50311. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) (CED)

Article: Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, How different are your online and offline personalities? (The Guardian) (Optional)

SESSIONS 26 - 27 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

UTOPIAN AND DYSTOPIAN VISIONS

Lecture and Discussion

Whether in the form of personal computers, smart phones, or the Metaverse - in recent years, technologies have transformed our everyday experiences in fundamental ways. Design has a crucial role to play in this process, for it is designers who shape the encounter between humans, bodies and technologies. The discourse about the meaning of technologies for society has oscillated between the hope of a better, technologically advanced world and the fear of disempowerment, disasters and loss of control. Do technologies make our world any better?

Article: Augmented Reality: A class of displays on the reality-virtuality continuum (SPIE Vol. 2351, Telemanipulator and Telepresence Technologies; 1994) (CED)

Article: What's All the Hype About the Metaverse? (New York Times, Jan. 18, 2022) (Optional)

Video: eXistenz (1999 science fiction film, directed by D. Cronenberg) (s-c) (Optional)

SESSION 28 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

REVIEW

In this session, a summary of the course will be presented. Students are expected to have revised all the mandatory readings and audiovisual materials viewed throughout the course and bring specific doubts and questions to class.

SESSIONS 29 - 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM

The final exam is a closed book and in-class exam. The professor will provide multiple choice questions, as well as a critical thinking question in relation to what has been studied during the course. The multiple choice questions will focus on the general comprehension of the mandatory readings and key concepts viewed in class. The critical thinking questions are questions that require students to explain, develop and apply ideas, creating interrelations of texts and case studies discussed in class.

In preparation for the final exam, students must download the program "Respondus" to their computers to get access. Previously, the professor will create a Mock Exam that will help to check if all the students are able to download Respondus and detect any issue they may have before the real exam.

Readings: All mandatory readings and audiovisual materials are included in the final exam.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compulsory

- Alexandra Lange. (2012). *Writing about Architecture: Mastering the Language of Buildings*. PRINCETON ARCHI. ISBN 9781616890537 (Digital)

- Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. (2018). *Practices of looking: an introduction to visual culture*. 3. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190265717 (Digital)

Recommended

- Tanizaki, Junichiro, Thomas J Harper, and Edward G Seidensticker. (2001). *In Praise of Shadows*. Vintage Books. ISBN 9780099283577 (Digital)

- Hiesinger, Kathryn B, and George H. Marcus.. *Landmarks of Twentieth-Century Design*. Abbeville. ISBN 1035690835 (Digital)

- Colomina, Beatriz. (1998). *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture As Mass Media*. 17. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. ISBN 9780262531399 (Digital)

- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. (2006). *The post-colonial studies reader*. Routledge. ISBN 0415345650 (Digital)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Students will be evaluated continuously over the course, taking into account attendance, commitment and participation in class, especially during discussions and debate, as well as the completion of assignments and tasks as assigned per the syllabus.

At the conclusion of the semester, the final grade will be determined by the students' capacity to understand (comprehension) and integrate the information read and discussed (knowledge and synthesis) in relation to the core issues of the course in the construction of critical thought towards design (application and argumentation). The result of this process of learning will be evaluated through the quizzes, the group and individual practical exercises, and the final exam.

A. Class attendance & Participation

Not the frequency, but the quality of the questions or comments shared in the online classroom and the forums will be evaluated. A high quality comment reveals engagement of the weekly mandatory readings, depth of insight, rigorous use of case evidence, consistency of argument, and realism. Also, students are expected to always use their camera and microphone during the videoconferences.

B. Quizzes

By the end of the semester, students will have completed 2 multiple choice quizzes about the mandatory readings and audiovisual materials. Each Quiz will count for 10% of the final grade.

C. Group Exercises

By the end of the semester, students will have completed 2 group exercises. In an assigned group, students will conduct a critical analysis on a design object. Each exercise will result in a group-deliverable, which represents 20% of the final grade. The professor will provide further guidelines at the beginning of the course.

D. Final Exam

The final exam is a closed book and online exam. The professor will provide multiple choice questions, as well as a critical thinking question in relation to what has been studied during the course. The multiple choice questions will focus on the general comprehension of the mandatory readings and key concepts viewed in class. The critical thinking questions are questions that require students to explain, develop and apply ideas, creating interrelations of texts and examples discussed in class.

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
Class Participation & Attendance	10 %	
2 Quizzes	20 %	
Group Presentation 1	20 %	
Group Presentation 2	20 %	
Final Exam	30 %	

FINAL GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Each student has 4 chances to pass any given course distributed in two consecutive academic years (Ordinary Period and Extraordinary Period). Students who fail to obtain a satisfactory result in the 1st Period (Ordinary) or 2nd Period (Extraordinary) will be required to take the course again.

- Excellent: 9.0-10.0 (A to A+)

Consistently produces work of the highest quality and craft; exhibits notable progress and development over the course of the semester; meets all course objectives at highest level; attendance is near-perfect, and contributions to course discussions are extremely valuable. Among those students with grades over 9 the student with the highest grade and who has systematically enriched the course with his ideas and comments will be awarded with an "Excellent with Honours" mention.

- Very Good: 7.0-8.9 (B to B+)

Completes all assignments with work of above-average quality and craft; exhibits significant progress and development; meets most course objectives; attendance and participation are very good.

- Satisfactory: 6.0-7.0 (C to C+)

Completes all assignments with work of acceptable quality and craft; exhibits some progress and development; meets a majority of course objectives. Attendance and participation are acceptable.

- Satisfactory: 5.0-6.0 (D)

Assignments are delivered but are incomplete and/or of low quality and craft; the student exhibits little progress and development; meets few course objectives. Attendance and participation are poor, but absences do not total more than 30%.

- Fail: 0-4.9 (F)

Work is incomplete, missing, or does not meet course objectives. Attendance and participation are poor.

- Automatic Failure/Fail: 0 (F)

Please note that a student who misses 30% or more of the scheduled sessions receives an automatic 0.0, and loses his or her right to the retake exam (Extraordinary Period).

Criteria for written exercises:

Written assignments will be marked according to Structure (25%), Style (25%) and Content (50%) which also includes the appropriate and correct use of sources. In each of this criteria, the following points have to be observed:

1. Structure:

- the general plan of the argument
- the connection between ideas exposed

- the inclusion of a conclusion
 - the existence of paragraphs corresponding to ideas or concepts.
2. Style:
- the absence of grammatical mistakes
 - the proper use of academic English corresponding to academic level
 - the adequate use of sources and quotations
3. Content:
- the level of originality
 - the argumentative level
 - the relevance of the information contained in it, without being a mere summary
 - the adequacy of the content to the question proposed
 - the logical connections between presentation of ideas and final conclusions
 - the relevance of such conclusions without being a mere tautology.

PROFESSOR BIO

Professor: **NIKE VERENA FAKINER**

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Nike Fakiner is an expert in art, history, the philosophy of emotions, and outreach projects. During her career, she has developed interdisciplinary research incorporating historical, anthropological, and philosophical studies on museums, human emotions, and cultural artifacts.

Since 2010, Fakiner has been a member of HISTEX, an international academic network dedicated to the study of human emotions in history. She has conducted research at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge University, the Centre for History of the Emotions at Queen Mary University of London, and the Max Planck Institute. Fakiner studied Fine Arts and earned her PhD in Art History and Philosophy at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. From 2009 to 2013, she was a Predoctoral Fellow at the Spanish National Research Council's Center for Humanities and Social Sciences (CCHS- CSIC).

In addition, Fakiner is an experienced cultural manager with extensive experience working in the cultural sector. She has collaborated with the Spanish museums Círculo de Bellas Artes, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, and Thyssen-Bornemisza, and with London's Wellcome Collection, where her curatorial project "Skin" was named "Critics Choice" by Time Out and attracted more than 100,000 visitors in 2011.

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Office hours will be scheduled on a weekly basis and announced during the course.

OTHER INFORMATION

PREPARING FOR LIQUID LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

Covid-19 has brought us a world that we thought only lived in fiction. The passage from a pleasurable consumed fiction to a lived reality has left us with an open window to imagine, and build, a new world. In the School of Architecture and Design we understand this window as an opportunity to imagine a new pedagogy that moves with fluidity between physical and online environments and one that explores new paths in education that go beyond any contingency.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Good Internet connection is a must.
 - Cable Internet OR high speed WIFI
 - Test WIFI speed here: <https://www.speedtest.net/>
2. Preparing the computer to take an online synchronous sessions remotely is primarily student's responsibility.
 - The students should always connect in a computer. Please bare in mind that attending a session on your phone or tablet is not acceptable as it may not allow you to fulfil all the tasks required during the session.
 - Close all background tasks. They consume PC memory.
 - Close all unnecessary web browser tabs. They consume bandwidth.
 - Ensure that the computer is plugged into electricity.
 - Software guidelines can be found in the following links: <https://ieuniversity.zoom.us/>
 - Only after reviewing the links, when not successful, please contact: <https://it.ie.edu/>
3. Video and Audio Quality.
 - It is essential to have quality headphones and microphone to participate in the sessions. This increases focus drastically and reduces fatigue of both students and professor. All members in the session should have these.
 - The best option by far is to use headphones (external) with a periscopic microphone.
 - Video quality is assumed by default on modern laptops. If not, please ensure quality video with a webcam.

ROOM SETTINGS

1. Adequate noise level.
 - Select a silent room. Ensure that silence in the room is maintained during the session.
 - Avoid Interruptions. When possible choose a room with a door, and keep it closed.
2. Tidy, in-focus environment.
 - We must understand the virtual classroom as a public space even when we are physically in a private space such as our room. The student should dress accordingly and should sit in front of a plain or tidy background.