

## SYLLABUS

course description

Course title	Seminar 2: Transformative Work as a Livelihood Area: Seminar
Course code	<b>96117</b>
Scientific sector	
Degree	<b>Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12)</b>
Semester	<b>I</b>
Year	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Credits	2
Modular	No
Lecturer	Gemma Copeland, gemmacopeland@pm.me
Scientific sector of the lecturer	-
Teaching language	<b>English</b>
Teaching assistant (if any)	-
Office hours	6
Teaching language	<b>English</b>
Total lecturing hours	18
Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities	
Attendance	<b>mandatory</b>
Prerequisites	-
Course page	

## Course description

How do you practice as a socially, ecologically and politically committed designer after graduation? This kind of design practice both enables and requires new ways of working, but what does that look like concretely? How can we avoid the conventional choice between financial stability and the production of meaningful work? How can we question and challenge mainstream economic practices, build support structures to protect each other from precarity, and create the conditions where transformative design practices are possible for many? How can we move on from the myth of the individual hero and instead weave a carrier bag of practices based in solidarity and cooperation? And what feminist values and organisational strategies can we adopt to make our socially-engaged practices viable in the long-term?

In the context of this three day seminar, we will immerse ourselves into these seemingly overwhelming questions to identify desirable pathways and prepare collaborative support structures. Rather than accepting individual success and employability within the dominant system as our goal, we will explore and develop new models for working (together) based on solidarity, care, mutual aid and commoning.

In order to dismantle notions of neoliberal work, we will share and collect stories beyond dominant narratives of both design and work. We will explore the multitudes of alternative social and economic strategies that already exist in the here and now, from transformational work within already existing structures to self-organised cooperative organisations to radical examples outside of usual work imaginaries.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn which mix of approaches and roles best fits their desires, needs and abilities. We'll help each other frame the critical challenges that we're facing in making our practices sustainable and start to generate new possibilities, identifying areas of transformation, economic strategies, and potential roles that we could take on, asking open-ended questions to generate as many possibilities as we can.

Together we will develop a collective toolbox of strategies for making transformative work economically sustainable through networks of mutual support. We'll look to social movements to learn about existing strategies and frameworks for democratic, non-hierarchical organising and mutual aid. We'll discuss common challenges like making decisions collectively, navigating power and privilege, resolving conflicts, using failure as an opportunity for growth, surviving times of scarcity, and distributing surplus in times of abundance.

Throughout the seminar participants develop a better sense of self-understanding, assess engaged design practices and collaborations from a critical feminist perspective and look at transformative design (wage-)work as a practice of radical interdependence.

The goal of the seminar is to create through many small exercises and inputs a better understanding of participant's possible and desirable future ecologies of engagement by looking for empowering utopian moments in our present. We'll explore critical, complex problems, ask open questions that encourage curiosity and reflection, and identify elegant next steps that can be taken to transform ideas into action.

## Educational objectives

### Students will be able to:

- Critically examine (transformative) work, workplaces, and structures from an intersectional feminist perspective deconstructing and discussing the term “work”
- Outline challenges, contradictions and personal perspectives related to transformative design work
- Recognise diverse possible (new) roles for eco-social designers within both established and radical contexts
- Identify ways of practising design that differ from the currently prevailing individualistic and market-driven structures
- Describe eco-socially engaged practices in an understandable and accessible fashion to diverse publics
- Identify and ideate feminist solidarity practices in collaboration, and mutual support structures for current and future livelihood engagements
- Express how to work and relate to others and where to take their own practice
- Explore strategies of organising collectively against precarious working conditions
- Develop strategies and tactics helpful in the transition from university to wage labour and transformative practices in general
- Develop an individual way of thinking, leading to critical judgements and self-assessments
- Practise the open sharing of information, offering mutual support and looking at transformative design work as a practice of interdependence
- Collectively build and maintain a useful toolkit of strategies, definitions, frameworks, references and processes

### Knowledge will be acquired in the following fields:

- Diverse Economies / Community Economies
- Feminist understandings of work and collaboration
- Self-organisation practices
- Feminist transformative thinking
- Undisciplined forms of knowing, thinking, and acting
- Anti-capitalist future making
- Creative writing
- Design Justice
- Social permaculture

### List of topics covered

- Critical feminist understanding of work and diverse work economies
- Co-organising politically engaged transformative practices
- Cooperation and support structures
- Examples of transformational work in different interdisciplinary fields
- Self-understanding and description
- Alternative models of livelihood creation
- Mixed work economies and livelihood ecologies
- Power structures and low-hierarchy approaches
- Mapping needs, ambitions, desires, and values
- Feminist questions and practices in collaboration

- Solidarity strategies and unconventional alliances
- Making transformative work tangible to a broader public

### Teaching format

Balanced mix of:

- input lectures (providing concepts, concrete tools, examples and recommendations)
- group discussions and brainstorming (active listening, collective critical reflections)
- individual reflective exercises
- mutual mentoring and coaching sessions
- group work and small presentations by students
- group care exercises
- collective archiving

### Learning outcomes

#### *Knowledge and understanding*

- Ability to recognise diverse fields of action for transformative work and possible ways how to get there
- Acquisition of a set of methods and tactics that can be mobilised and adapted, both alone and together, to guide the direction of possible practices after graduation with more agency
- Ability to understand, reflect and communicate one's own position as an eco-social designer
- Capability to identify values, structures and stances that should underpin transformative practices from an intersectional feminist perspective

#### *Applying knowledge and understanding*

- Possibility to practise the open sharing of information, offering mutual support and generating a fertile ground for the transition into transformative action already during studies
- Ability to apply more actively, find self-organised structures and transformative workplaces in diverse contexts more easily
- Capability to train one's imagination to discover present and future forms of livelihood creation
- Enablement to empower and support each other

#### *Making judgments*

- Actively consider one's needs, desires, and skills to figure out which mix of transformative activities might create a good diverse livelihood economy
- Ability to critically consider and question future workplaces from a feminist perspective and to apply feminist practices in collaboration

#### *Communication skills*

- Ability to formulate and communicate concrete self-descriptions, as well as to concretise different possible forms of work
- Ability to communicate standpoint, goals and values to diverse publics
- Ability to apply for jobs or create (new) positions/structures creatively and courageously

#### *Learning skills*

- Collective management
- Critical self-thinking
- Creativity, motivation, and ability to motivate others through transformative actions

- Cooperation and mutual support
- Interdependence thinking
- Heterotopic present-making

### Assessment

Students are required to give a short oral/audiovisual presentation on their vision for their practice. This is a creative writing and visioning exercise to reflect on their (future) individual/collective practice and identify what they need to cultivate in the here and now to make it a reality. The goal is to concretise the why, what and how of their own purpose, intentions and values. This final exercise is intended to help students sharpen their self-understanding as transformational practitioners and get a clearer idea of what steps to take to get closer to preferred areas of transformative action.

**Assessment language:** English

### Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks

For the presentation and the written statement developed by each student, the following criteria apply:

- Degree of self-reflection, self-positioning, self-understanding, and engagement with the specific sector of possible transformative action
- Creativity, imaginative power, and originality of the developed work
- Critical reflection on outcome and topics discussed during the class
- Comprehensibility, transmission, and language of the written and presented work

### Required readings

A selection of short texts will be provided and read collectively during the seminar.

### Supplementary readings

**Bradley, Will; Hannula, Mika and Ricupero, Cristina.** [Self-Organisation, Counter-Economic Strategies](#). Sternberg Press, 2006.

**brown, adrienne maree.** [Emergent Strategy](#). AK Press, 2017.

**Costanza-Chock, S.** [Design Justice](#). MIT Press, 2020.

**Chatzidakis, Andreas; Hakim, Jamie; Littler, Jo; Rottenberg, Catherine; Segal, Lynne.** [The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence](#). Verso Books, 2020.

**Fezer, Jesko; Studio Experimentelles Design; Banz, Claudia.** [How Do We \(Want to\) Work \(Together\) As \(Socially Engaged\) Designers \(Students and Neighbours\) \(in Neoliberal Times\)?](#): Public Design Support / Öffentliche Gestaltungsberatung 2016-2021. Sternberg Press, 2022.

**Jones, Graham.** [The Shock Doctrine of the Left](#). Polity, 2018.

**Lorusso, S.** [Entrepreariat](#). Onomatopee, 2019.

**Mareis, Claudia; Paim, Nina.** [Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, And Perspectives](#). Valiz, 2021.

**Matos, A.** [Who can afford to be critical? Set Margins](#), 2022.

**Miller, Ethan.** Reimagining Livelihoods — Life beyond Economy, Society, and Environment. Minnesota, 2019.

**Pater, R.** Caps Lock: How capitalism took hold of graphic design, and how to escape from it. Valiz, 2021.