Design encompasses almost every aspect of modern life, from the buildings we inhabit to the objects, articles of clothing, and technology we use every day to the graphics used to market and communicate information. This seminar will explore significant issues and developments in the history of design from the 19th century to the present, using key examples from the disciplines of interior, industrial, furniture, graphic, and architectural design. Focusing primarily on the modernist movements of Europe and the United States, design will be contextualized within social, cultural, and economic histories, with particular emphasis given to the impact of new materials, technology, and the shifting conditions of production and consumption in an increasingly globalized world.

The following primary source material should be read prior to the seminar:

Adolf Loos, “Ornament and Crime”

Reyner Banham, “All That Glitters is Not Stainless”

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, “A Significance for A & P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas”

*These three readings are taken from Grace Lees-Maffei and Rebecca Houze, The Design History Reader (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)


These selected texts will be made accessible to registered students prior to the seminar in a Google Drive folder entitled “Preliminary Readings.” To access, please send an email to the instructor at marinsullivan@gmail.com requesting the link.