



AN AESTHETICS COURSE TO SERVE STUDENTS ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

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General description and benefits of the course offering

The focus of this course is on aesthetics of "everyday" objects and environments including clothing, food, housing, music, architecture, and landscape. This approach unifies Family and Consumer Sciences subject matter (i.e., food, shelter, or clothing; elements that are essential for human existence and the family) along with subject matter central to other majors such as music and landscape architecture. The result is a multidisciplinary approach to the topic of aesthetics, where similarities across majors are recognized while unique expertise is applied to the critical analysis of an aesthetics problem.

An aesthetics problem requiring a multi-disciplinary approach

After (1) the formal, expressive, and symbolic aspects of aesthetics are explained, (2) the influence of individual differences and socio-cultural differences on aesthetic preferences are discussed, and (3) these topics are applied to the study of "everyday" objects and environments such as clothing or music. Then students engage in a group project where they design a restaurant experience, focusing on the unification of aesthetic aspects of wait-staff uniforms, menu items, interior design, architecture, landscaping, and music. A multisensory presentation is given by the group to help class members "experience" the proposed restaurant. The group must identify a target market and location for their restaurant to take individual differences and socio-cultural differences into account. Critical analysis is expressed in a written paper where the group justifies their selection of aesthetic aspects.

Success and future plans

This course has grown in popularity; since 1992 the 60-student maximum per semester has been met and a waiting list of students is common. The group project will continue because student evaluations show that they generally enjoy the project and they recognize that the project helps them integrate information from the course and their major.

Fiore, A. M., & Kimle, P. A. (1997). Aesthetics for the merchandising and design professional. New York: Fairchild.