

When: 2pm-5pm Monday
Duration: 11 weeks face to face / 33 hours total contact time
Non-contact time / Learner Directed Study: 80 + hours over 12 weeks
Credit Points: 12
Course Codes: GRAP 1041 & GRAP 1043
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Mod Mania: Divergent Consumer Practices and Society

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1. ABOUT THE AREA OF STUDY

'Mod' is a term used to describe the modification of an object, system, or media. Modding is generally carried out by consumers and takes place after the manufacturing process is complete. The act of modding confuses the distinctions we make between 'consumers' and 'producers'; through modding the consumer becomes actively involved in the production of an object or system. Typical modding practices include computer case mods, car customisation, game character mods, and console mods, but modding is not restricted to these areas. There are modders and modding communities involved in modding things as diverse as mobile phones, movies, and the human body.

This unit will be a practical and theoretical investigation of modding. As a member of the class you will be asked to identify an existing modding community or practice and undertake a modding project in relation to that community/practice. You may choose any form of modding project as long as the mod links to an existing community or practice. A theoretical understanding of modding and its position within society will be developed through your engagement with the modding project, and in conjunction with class discussion and readings. An investigation of modding practices can help give a detailed and insightful account of contemporary culture and the position of the 'consumer' within our society. This tutorial will provide a practical base from which to engage critical theory on 'consumer culture' and late capitalist society. Students will be introduced to key texts and encouraged to develop a complex understanding of society.

For an insight into the types of learning you will be doing visit the Mod Mania wiki:
<http://www.openobject.org/modmania>

2. KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

This tutorial has a range of specific learning outcomes that compliment the general learning objectives of the Design Studies course stream (see the GRAP 1041, 1042, 1043 or 1044 Design Studies Course Guides or the Design Studies Stream Handbook for more information).

Through a self-directed modding project students will come to understand the diversity in consumer practices and their role in the creation of culture. The project will help develop research and documentation skills. In-class presentations and discussion will promote communication skills and critical thinking. Written assessment criteria will help students to structure their thinking and improve their writing abilities. Peer review processes will aid in building professional attitudes and group participation.

3. ASSESSMENT TASKS

A combination of participation in tutorials, three individual tasks, and a peer review process need to be engaged to an acceptable academic standard to successfully complete the course. (See Online Course Guides for assessment policy). At the start of semester you will prepare a learning contract. Here you need to outline your individual learning objectives and nominate the grade level that you want to achieve as an aspiration. All project work will be appraised through peer review during the semester.

PARTICIPATION

There is an expectation for all students to participate in a minimum of 80% of scheduled classes and associated learning activities. 80% participation in face-to-face course work is a simple responsibility of being a university student. Attending and Participating in course work is an essential learning activity as it provides surety in the

building of confidence and gives all students the opportunity to engage and learn from each other. Individual participation in coursework will be tracked by your lecturer and may be used as means of indicating whether you are either at risk of failure of the course or a re-negotiation of your aspired grading. Courses in the Industrial Design Program use a face-to-face tutorial and studio format that relies on discussion and peer to peer learning as its primary mechanism for capability development. Demonstrating your commitment to your university experience by formally communicating and enacting a minimum level of participation and attendance will benefit your learning. Where a Student DOES NOT demonstrate a satisfactory level of participation the student may be notified that they are at risk of failure of a course and will be asked to attend an academic advisement meeting with academic staff. The submission of all assessment tasks and the presentation of work at scheduled times and being involved in peer review and critique activities constitute an important aspect of your course participation. Students that cannot fully commit to such a participation scheme are encouraged to review their individual appropriateness for the course and should consider withdrawing prior to the census date so as not to incur fees.

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT TASKS FOR SUBMISSION

Task One: Consumer Communities 1

For this assessment task you are required to identify and research a community group that is formed around a consumer product. A common example of such communities are car clubs, but there are many others including social groupings around specific films, music, brands of computer, even coffee machines and vacuum cleaners. Many of these communities have an on-line presence, taking place in forums and chat rooms. Your job for this project is to observe the community and identify reoccurring themes and practices within the group. This may be common narratives/stories that the members of the group tell each other, or the way they behave towards outsiders or new members. You should try to discern the various hierarchies and power relations at work in the group and give an account of how these relations are maintained. You do not have to be a member of the group you are investigating however you may conduct this research through 'participatory observation' if you wish. Having collected the relevant material you are to write a short description of the community group giving a clear account of your research findings.

You will be required to upload your report to the class wiki and be prepared to discuss your findings in class.

1000 words plus images (if applicable) in a format suitable for the class wiki

DUE: 4th April (in class for Peer Review)

25 % of overall grading

Task Two: Consumer Communities 2 – Reconfigured

This assessment task builds on task one's writing project.

You are required to select one or more of the 'Consumer Communities' texts submitted by your classmates. Using this/these texts as a starting point you are to extend the research, discuss themes within the research text/s, or critically compare the text/s to streams of thought from within cultural or social studies.

1000 additional words plus images (if applicable) in a format suitable for the class wiki

DUE: 9th May (in class for Peer Review)

25 % of overall grading

Task Three: Mod Project

For this assessment task students will engage in a modding project of their choosing and construct a "how to" or similar document of the project. This document will form the assessable component of the project. The document is not restricted to a written account and may be image based, including video, audio, class/public presentations, site visits (please discuss with staff) or any other medium relevant to the modding project being undertaken. You may choose to complete a number of small projects or one large project. Emphasis should be placed on documenting the process rather than on completing the project – it is possible to successfully complete this task without actually finishing your mod

10 minute class presentation or in-class display plus documentation on the wiki

DUE: 16th May (in class for Peer Review)

40 % of overall grading

PEER REVIEW

All students will be required to do peer appraisals of the various assessment tasks. Here you will have to read and make recommendations to peers regarding the demonstration of their learning. Peer review is an important part of your professional development and is highly valued within the RMIT Design School.

Submitted on forms provided.

**DUE: During in-class assessment or the following week (as negotiated with staff)
 10 % of overall grading**

4. RESOURCES

Design Studies has an online resource for students where tutorial guides, weekly course notes, study resources, news items, and associated materials for assisting your studies will be available.

You can access course resources online through the Design Studies Blackboard.

In addition to this resource the Mod Mania tutorial has its own wiki site at: <http://www.openobject.org/modmania/>

This site will give you up-to-date information on the class schedule, links to on-line resources, and examples of previous student projects. You will be expected to contribute to this site through the course of the semester.

Please add / bookmark these URLs to your favourites on your computer

Specific Reading

A number of handouts and references will be given during the semester. A comprehensive list of references can be found at <http://www.openobject.org/modmania/Links> and on the Industrial Design Library Subject Guide at <http://rmit.libguides.com/Industrial-Design>. Students are encouraged to source additional texts as their individual projects require. The following is a selection of relevant texts and links.

Goldman, R. and R.P. Gabriel, **Innovation happens elsewhere : open source as business strategy**. 2005, Amsterdam ; Boston: Morgan Kaufmann.

- available on line at <http://dreamsongs.com/IHE/>

Lessig, L., **Free culture : how big media uses technology and the law to lock down culture and control creativity**. 2004, New York: Penguin Press.

- available on line at <http://www.free-culture.cc/>

Schor, J. and D.B. Holt, **The consumer society reader**. 2000, New York, NY: New Press.

Equipment Required

There is no specific equipment requirement for this subject however students will be required to supply the material necessary to complete their individual modding projects.

5. CLASS SCHEDULE

week	Date (Monday)	focus
1	28 Feb	Introduction to Modding
2	7 Mar	Consumer Modification and Producer Action
3	14 Mar	Labour Day Public Holiday No Class / Learning Contract Lodged What is Culture and Where is it made?
4	21 Mar	Consumer Society – The Persuaders
5	28 Mar	The Outsider
6	4 Apr	Assessment Task One Due peer review Culture and Narrative
7	11 Apr	Everyday Life and The Interwebs
8	18 Apr	Strategies of Control and Consumer Tactics
	25 Apr	Mid Semester Vacation
9	2 May	Open Source Everything
10	9 May	Assessment Task Two Due peer review Open Source Design
11	16 May	Assessment Task Three Due presentations and peer review
12	23 May	Last class Continue task three presentations and peer review Wrap up / loose ends
13	30 May-2 Jun	SWOT VAC.
14	6 Jun	Re-submission due (as required)