Teaching Portfolio

Eric James Loucks

Rhode Island School of Design

Furniture Design MFA 2021

Table of Contents

Teaching Philosophy

Throughout my life as a student, I have, unbeknownst to me, been taking notes on the ways in which my teachers have made the greatest impacts on my education. I view myself as both an educator and lifelong learner in constant pursuit of acquiring and sharing knowledge and skill. The first opportunity I had at teaching was being an instructional aide for an introduction to woodworking class at Cerritos Community College in Southern California. I quickly realized, not only the joy in sharing what I know and love with others, but also the warm response I received when my instruction was effective in helping the students. After that class, more and more of the students in the shop would come to me, outside of class, and ask for guidance with their projects. This is when I started to realize all those notes I had been taking, of past professors, were paying off.

I began teaching because I came to the realization that everything that had been shared with me, everything that had gotten me excited and eager to know more, was a gift. All the people in my life, in and out of the academic world, played a part in the development of who I am today. I feel as though it is my duty to now share with others the same gift of knowledge that I so cherish. Education is the continuum of that belief.

One of the most important aspects of learning I have realized as a student, comes from the relationships I have with my instructors. When an instructor has removed themself from the hierarchical teacher/student relationship and has humbled themself, I have found a much greater respect for that person. That respect has not only made it easier for me to focus in class and on the subject matter, but also it has created a greater desire for me to do well and work harder. This is why I feel that making myself approachable and showing respect back to my students puts them at greater odds to succeed. Taking the extra time to get to know my students by giving them a chance to show me who they are, and in turn sharing a bit of who I am, goes a long way.

In woodworking we use all of our senses and both halves of our brain to achieve a desired outcome. This includes a great deal of critical thinking along with math, problem solving, foresight, and patience. In my class, I implement many approaches to teaching. Just as I have realized that I learn from the combination of visual, aural, reading, and hands on learning, I try to teach the information in all four ways to get an encompassing experience for

all types of learners. Learning is the understanding of a given subject through reading, writing, listening, and doing. In a successful learning situation, students are given information and are expected to retain and recapitulate that information. This can be carried out in a myriad of ways through lectures, demonstrations, student/teacher and student/student one on ones, and by trial and error. It is my hope that by including multiple styles of teaching I can make sure to reach each individual student's style that they learn best in.

My aim for teaching is to share with others what I love and am passionate about, in hopes that they too will find passion in what I have to share. The enduring understanding that I hope my students walk away with is that nothing worthwhile in life comes easy. That said, anything I have to teach is attainable through trial and error, perseverance, and trust, found through the support of the student/teacher dynamic. The student must believe in themself in order to make it through my class. I implement these ideas through clear communication, whether that is through one on ones or in a group setting, through believing in and showing support to my students, and through making myself relatable and available to my students as they need me. The methods I use to obtain these goals is making my classroom a space where participation is mandatory, students engage with other students to, both, build class morale and to strengthen their understanding of the material, and by being open to repeat myself or find new ways to convey the subject matter to those that learn differently than others.

Statement of Inclusivity

While I am half Colombian and half a European mutt, I am generally white passing. I am well aware of the privilege I benefit from on a daily basis. However, with my privilege, I recognize that historically not everyone is given the same benefits that I have been granted. This is especially true in the world of furniture design. As an educator and an empath, it is my responsibility to not only make sure that my classroom is an inclusive safe space for all people, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, or disability, but also to show and give examples of people in the field outside of my own backgrounds.

In my time teaching at a community college in Southern California, I had a very diverse group of students; ages ranging from 18-80, different ethnicities, genders, disabilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. I did my best to make my classroom a space where everyone felt welcomed and respected by giving them a space to introduce themselves, including their preferred pronouns, checking in to see if they're getting all the instruction and support that they need, and by being a role model for my students on how to treat others who are different from themselves. I continue to do this today by staying up to date with terms and educating myself on issues of discrimination and decolonization.

In a field predominantly dominated by white men, it is paramount that I give voice and context to others who do not fit this paradigm. For it is not due to others inability to enter this field, but it is because they have yet to be given a chance. As an educator it is my goal to show any and all types of people the joy that is designing and making furniture and to show them the support they need to believe in themselves to receive accolades that were once given to such a narrow demographic.

Course Descriptions

Big Box Vernacular

Instructor: Eric Loucks (eloucks@risd.edu)

Dept. of Furniture Design

Winter 2021

Time: TBD

Location: Zoom

3 Credits

Studio

Elective; Open to all levels

Est cost of materials: $250

What is vernacular furniture in an era of mass production, global distribution and consumer culture? *Big Box Vernacular* explores furniture design and construction through the lens of the materials and tools available in big box hardware stores. Embrace the limitations, or rather, the opportunities, afforded by the virtual learning nature of winter session. Without access to RISD facilities, the beginning of the course will aid students in developing a workspace within their homes centered around the content and projects of the remainder of the course. The aim of the course is to have students design *fine furniture with unfine means.* Students will use resources available at the Home Depot, or other home improvement stores to design and build contemporary vernacular furniture and housewares in the form of a table, chair, tabletop object, and final piece of their choosing. Demonstrations will include but not be limited to joinery techniques and explorations centered around these resources. Course work and demonstrations will be supplemented by lectures covering the work of innovative designers and contemporary artists working with similar ideas, as well as the work created by the instructors while under strict stay-at-home orders during the Covid 19 pandemic in Spring of 2020.

Meeting the Limits of Material

Instructor: Eric Loucks (eloucks@risd.edu)

Dept. of Furniture Design

Fall 2021

Time: TBD

Location: Metcalf

3 Credits

Studio

Elective; Open to Juniors and above

Est cost of materials: $150

When designing wooden furniture, how does one truly know what strong enough is? What are the weight limits of a chair, given its materiality? Is the joinery sufficient enough to hold the weight of a human? Or two? So much of wooden furniture today is overbuilt in order to circumvent this dilemma. Understanding the limits of a material will give the student the ability to design with confidence and elegance. We will explore the work of various contemporary makers to gain an understanding on how this is achieved today. Through experimentation, students will explore the limits of wood and wooden joinery, in order to understand the materials breaking points. Failure IS the goal. By pairing back the unnecessary elements, students will design two pieces of furniture that are sufficiently strong without the extra bulk. These pieces will be supplemented by their joinery experiments as well as mockups and prototypes. Through group discussions and individual meetings, we will push each other to trim the fat. This understanding of wood as a material will give the students a new found perspective in making key decisions when designing furniture in the future.

The Design Process: From Idea to Ideal

Instructor: Eric Loucks (eloucks@risd.edu)

Dept. of Furniture Design

Fall 2021

Time: TBD

Location: Metcalf

3 Credits

Studio

Elective; Open to Juniors and above

Open to others with instructors permission

Est cost of materials: $200

Rarely is our first go at something our desired outcome. When creating objects, it is important to recognize the aspects of design that supports a piece and differentiates it from aspects that hinder it. Through a series of sketching, hand drawing, cad modeling, model making, and refinement, initiated by research, students will engage in an iterative design process to arrive at their ideal idea. We will foster a solid studio community through critical dialogue and collaborative problem-solving activities. Students will walk away from this course with the skill set to work through most future design challenges they may encounter. Class time will largely consist of demonstrations and group discussions, supplemented by readings, presentations, and one on one meetings.

Course Syllabus

The Design Process: From Idea to Ideal

Fall 2021 | RISD | Furniture Design
TIME and DAYS TBD

Faculty
Eric Loucks - eloucks@risd.edu

Course Description

Rarely is our first go at something our desired outcome. When creating objects, it is important to recognize the aspects of design that supports a piece and differentiates it from aspects that hinder it. Through a series of sketching, hand drawing, cad modeling, model making, and refinement, initiated by research, students will engage in an iterative design process to arrive at their ideal idea. We will foster a solid studio community through critical dialogue and collaborative problem-solving activities. Students will walk away from this course with the skill set to work through most future design challenges they may encounter. Class time will largely consist of demonstrations and group discussions, supplemented by readings, presentations, and one on one meetings.

Course Goals

- To conduct research that recognizes an area of design that needs intervention
- To engage in an iterative modeling process
- To illustrate the refinement of an idea clearly through a series of models
- To utilize 3D CAD software to enhance the communication of your idea
- To combine research and iterative modeling to arrive at a synthesized object

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	% of final grade
● Research-ability. Students will obtain a deep understanding of the questions they are trying to answer in order to uncover areas of improvement and innovation.	10%

- The basic principles of iterative design thinking and how to employ them.   10%

- A deeper understanding of Rhino 3D through modeling your sketches and 2D drawings.   10%

- The opportunities of both hands on model making and 3D printing and implement them into your practice.   20%

- Implementation of the process of research, iteration, ideation and model making into a sysicnt final project.   50%

Course Structure

Class time will be occupied by a balance of demonstrations, lectures, critiques, discussion, exercises, and work on projects. Significant time in class will be dedicated to working on projects, with the instructor consulting with students to aid progress. During the semester students will work on several projects, with the majority of the work on these projects assigned as homework. Projects will span multiple weeks, occasionally with work for multiple projects overlapping. Amalgamating in one succinct final project.

Hardware/Software

Students in this class are expected to have their own laptop computer, as well as a three button mouse (right and left buttons + scroll wheel/button). A licensed installation of Rhinoceros 3D modeling software. The Furniture Department Computer Lab has a license for all software required for this class available for student use.

Assignments

1. Conduction Design Research   10%
2. Working Out Your Ideas on Paper   10%
3. Implementing The Use of Design Software   10%
4. Tangible Models   20%
5. Utilizing Your Designer's Toolbox   50%

Evaluation & Grading

Course Policy

This course will follow the Department of Furniture Design attendance and critique policy, which has been distributed separately and is available in the Department Office.

The webpage linked below provides detailed information on RISD's Academic Policies, including those addressing attendance, grading, conduct, intellectual property, and non-discrimination:
http://policies.risd.edu/

The link below provides information regarding Disability Support Services, which can assist in coordinating accommodations for students with cognitive, psychological and physical disabilities.
http://info.risd.edu/disability-support-services-dss/

Weekly Plan

- Emerging Learning Outcomes
    - Lecture/Discussion/Demonstration: Understanding research
        - Illustrate its value
        - How to conduct research
        - What are we trying to uncover
        - Observation
        - Catalog
        - Analyze
        - Synthesis
    - Project 1: Conducting Design Research
    - Required Reading: TBD
    - Lecture/Discussion/Demonstration: Sketching Vs. Drawing
        - Iteration
        - Utilize research
        - Thumbnails
        - Refinement
        - Understanding when to move on
    - Project 2: Working Out Your Ideas on Paper
    - Required Reading: TBD
- Developing Learning Outcomes
    - Lecture/Discussion/Demonstration: CAD Modeling
        - Utilize your sketches/drawings that best communicate your idea
        - Iteration in Rhino3D

- - ■ Don't lose sight of your initial goals
      - ● Understand when those goals can change
    - ■ Rendering a model for a presentation
  - ○ Project 3: Implementing The Use of Design Software
  - ○ Required Reading: TBD
  - ○ Lecture/Discussion/Demonstration: Physical Model Making
    - ■ What is the model helping to convey?
    - ■ Scale/Proportion
    - ■ Material
      - ● Paper/Wood/Mixed Media/3D Print
      - ● Understanding strengths and weaknesses
    - ■ What's possible Vs. What's reasonable
    - ■ 3D Printing
    - ■ Iterate/Refine
    - ■ Project 4: Tangible Models
- ● Advancing Learning Outcomes
  - ○ Lecture/Discussion/Demonstration: Synthesis
    - ■ How the implementation of all 3 assignments coalesce
    - ■ Why each step has value
  - ○ Project 5: Utilizing your Designer's Toolbox

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1		Lectures: What is The Design Process?/Research and How We Conduct It Assign: Project 1 - Conducting Design Research Demonstration: How to Research for a Design Problem	Begin: Conducting Design Research
2		Discussion: Ways you find research most effective One on One Meetings: How's your project coming along	
3		Student Presentation: Presenting your Design Research - Project 1	Due: Conducting Design Research

		Discussion: How your research leads to object design Lecture: 2D Ideation - Sketching and drawing Assign: Project 2 - Working Out Your Ideas on Paper	Begin: Working Out Your Ideas on Paper
4		Discussion: Insights made through 2D Ideation One on One Meeting: How's your project coming along	
5		Student Presentation: Presenting 2D Ideation - Project 2 Lecture: 3D Ideation - Taking 2D drawings and developing them through CAD software Demonstration: Rhino3D Recap Assign: Project 3 - Implementing the Use of Design Software	Due: Working Out Your Ideas on Paper Begin: Implementing the Use of Design Software
6		Work in Class	
7		Student Presentation: Implementing the Use of Design Software - Project 3 Lecture: The importance and use of a tangible model Demonstration: Making Models Assign: Project 4 - Tangible Models	Due: Implementing the Use of Design Software Begin: Tangible Models
8		Lecture: 3D printing for model iteration Demonstration: 3D Printing	
9		Work in Class	
10		Lecture: Model Vs. Prototype Work in Class	
11		Student Presentation: Tangible Models - Project 4 Discussion: How has this design process affected our problem solving decisions?	Due: Tangible Models Begin: Utilizing

		Assign: Project 5 - Utilizing Your Designer's Toolbox	Your Designer's Toolbox
12		Student Presentation: Present ideas for project 5 Work in Class	
13		One on One Meeting: How's your project coming along? Work in Class	
14		One on One Meeting: How's your project coming along? Work in Class	
15		Final Critique: Utilizing Your Designer's Toolbox - Project 5	Due: Utilizing Your Designer's Toolbox

Class Project

The Design Process: From Idea to Ideal
Project 4: Tangible Models

Now that our research is complete, we've worked through ideation via sketching and 2D drawings, and we've made some refined 3D drawings on the computer. It is now time to begin the model making portion of the design process. This portion of the project is meant to uncover aspects of our design that could not have been realized on paper or at the computer. Seeing and feeling our object in 3 dimensional space will bring valuable insight as to how you choose to move forward with your final object. In this project we will make multiple models in different mediums that improve upon our design through each iteration.

Based on the lectures and demonstrations in class you will construct 1 hand made model out of wood, paper, or foam. There are valuable insights to be gained by physically constructing a model of your object. Given those insights, you will then refine your object and subsequently 3D print it. Given the timeframe of 3D printing, you will then continue to make adjustments to your object based on the previous iteration and 3D print a second model of your design.

Your final iteration will be a full size, meaning 1 to 1 scale, prototype of your object. Given everything you have learned from the design process thus far, your prototype should be well thought out in terms of function, use, proportion, and aesthetic. It does not have to be entirely structurally sound, nor does it need to have any sort of finish on it.

Project Goals
- To understand how a tangible object is more representational of our desired outcome than a rendered one
- To gain insight through hands on making
- To utilize 3D printing to iterate more quickly in a shorter timeline
- To construct multiple models through different mediums improving upon them as you go
- To understand the importance of scale and proportions in real space

Project Learning Outcomes

- Construction at least 1 handmade model at ¼ scale - medium of   25% your choosing

- Construction at least 2 3D printed models at ¼ scale   25%

- Construction of 1 full size prototype   50%

Assessment

Basic Competency:
- Student has completed all phases of project
- Some level of iteration is evident through each subsequent model
- Obvious improvements are still to be made before the actual object is constructed

Advanced Competency:
- Student has completed all phases of project with a high level of thought and accuracy based off of 3D drawings
- Iteration between each subsequent model is very evident and shows clearly the problem solving decisions made
- Little to no improvements are to be made from prototype and the actual object is ready to be constructed

Critique Statement

Critique is a valuable way for you to engage your work through another person's perspective. Through critique you will practice active listening, consider new perspectives, and of course offer constructive criticism. It is vitally important that you engage both as the audience and as the presenter for there is just as much to learn about from your work as there is from someone else's.

Critique of your work is important for you because it sheds light on aspects of your project that you may not be communicating clearly. By getting feedback from your instructors, peers,or guest critics, you will gain an understanding based on what is clear, or not, to them. It is important that you take all feedback constructively, that is, not personally, so you can get the most out of the experience.

All students will be expected to interact with one another and participate during critique. It is important that we keep the conversation about the work in a positive, respectful and constructive manner. Actual critical feedback is encouraged as long as it follows the aforementioned guidelines.

Midterm Feedback Form

The Design Process: From Idea to Ideal
Midterm Feedback Form

Course Goals:
- To conduct research that recognizes an area of design that needs intervention
- To engage in an iterative modeling process
- To illustrate the refinement of an idea clearly through a series of models
- To utilize 3D CAD software to enhance the communication of your idea
- To combine research and iterative modeling to arrive at a synthesized object

Please Consider the goals of this course while responding to the following statements/questions:

The outcome of this course and what is expected of me is clearly communicated.

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Agree   Strongly Disagree

This course has strengthened my ability to design objects through a clear series of steps and evaluations.

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Agree   Strongly Disagree

My understanding and implementation of the design process has pushed me to consider more deeply the objects that I design.

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Strongly Agree   Strongly Disagree

What has been the most valuable aspect of this course for you? What has been the least?

How has the pacing of the course been for you this semester?

If you were to evaluate yourself at this point in the semester, what grade do you think you have earned?

Assessment Rubric

The Design Process: From Idea to Ideal

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Competent (B-C)	Needs Work (D)
Participation (10%)	-Always shows up to class on time -Actively participates in group discussion -Asks pertinent questions during lecture -Gives feedback to peers during critique -Completes assignments on time	-Mostly shows up to class on time -Participates in some group discussions -Is somewhat inquisitive during lectures -Engages in some peers critique but not all -Mostly turns in assignments on time	-Has multiple unexcused absences -Does not participate in discussions -Doe not ask questions during lecture -Does not engage during critique -Many late or unfinished assignments
Presentation (20%)	-Speaks clearly and engagingly about topic -Clearly communicates the connection between concept and object -Leaves little to still be considered -Is Interested and excited about topic -Shows thorough research and is able to answer all questions from audience	-Mostly speaks clearly and engagingly about topic -Communicates the connection between concept and object -Is mostly considered -Shows some Interest and is somewhat excited about topic -Shows satisfactory research and is able to answer most questions from audience	-Difficult to understand -Does not communicates the connection between concept and object -Leaves much to be considered -Shows little Interest and is not very excited about topic -Shows unsatisfactory research and is not able to answer most questions from audience
Conceptual (35%)	-Demonstrates a clear thought process from research through ideation -Shows a deliberate decision making process through iterative design -Research evidently references historical context in art and design -Ideas meaningfully reference research and are continuously pushed throughout the entire design process	-Thought process from research through ideation leaves some to be considered -Decision making process is not totally clear through iterative design -Research partially references historical context in art and design -Ideas moderately reference research and are somewhat considered throughout the entire design process	-Demonstrates little to no thought process from research through ideation -Decision making process is not at all clear -No reference of research or historical context
Technical (35%)	-Utilizes design software to push the capabilities of the project -Establishes a clear practice of drawing and model making -Employs all techniques demonstrated in lectures -Works safely and deliberately -Models undoubtedly indicate an iterative design process	-Design software used to satisfactorily meet project requirements -Drawings and models communicate idea but are not fully considered -Employs most techniques demonstrated in lectures -Works safely yet hastily -Models moderately indicate an iterative design process	-Design software no properly implemented -Drawings and models do not communicate idea -Shows little to no understanding of techniques demonstrated in lectures -Works hastily and without safety -Models do not indicate an iterative design process