SP2026 Collaborative studio introduction

Course Title:

Designing Influence: *Conspiracy, Propaganda & Design Thinking for Positive Change*

Course Description

This course explores both historical and modern conspiracy theories and propaganda techniques, focusing on their psychological and sociological effects, as well as design strategies for imagining speculative futures. Students will critically examine how narrative manipulation, visual rhetoric, and design thinking have shaped public perception. Drawing on these insights, they will create their own speculative campaigns that ethically repurpose propaganda methods to promote social good—addressing issues such as environmental sustainability, equity, and global justice.

Students from **visual communication**, **interior** and **industrial design** will collaborate to design immersive environments, objects, messaging, and systems that function as propaganda artifacts. These projects will harness design thinking to create compelling narratives that inspire social change—feeding the hungry, reducing fossil fuel use, promoting diversity, and reimagining community resilience.

The course culminates in **team-based speculative propaganda campaigns**, combining environmental design, designed objects, and communication strategies into cohesive future scenarios.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze propaganda and conspiracy theory frameworks through a critical lens.

- Understand the role of spatial, material, and object design in influencing behavior.

- Apply design thinking and AI to build immersive narrative experiences.

- Collaborate across disciplines (interior design + industrial design + visual communication design) to create holistic futures.

- Produce speculative propaganda campaigns that communicate urgent social issues.

- Evaluate the ethics of persuasion and manipulation in design practice.