This course explores the unique opportunities and qualities available to technology-based design when it is placed in the hands and ears of pedestrians, drivers, aviators, tourists, and other mobile agents.

From *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*’s proposition of a handheld, crowd-sourced encyclopedia/travel guide, to Paul Virilio’s early observation that the Walkman granted pedestrians the syncretic construction of their own outdoor realities “in kit form,” to the 25 billion iPhone applications that have now been downloaded... from “glass cockpit” avionics and GPS systems to handheld museum guides and even Google’s “Project Glass”... graphic designers can now radically shift the interface between people and the environments they explore, and designers commonly do use technology to augment real-world environments in complex ways.

But how should we? When can these new technologies improve or heighten our relationships with our environments, and when do they simply monetize the contexts around us and isolate us from one another? With reference to avant gardes that have contributed to and predicted today’s state of the art, this class asks students to design their own concrete applications for iPhone and other mobile devices.

The class is intended for second-year graduate students. Knowledge of basic web programming is required (Art 742b is sufficient but not specifically required). Applications will be web-based so that advanced programming is not required. Students need not own a smartphone. No prior experience developing for mobile platforms is expected.

In addition to studio critiques each week, on alternate weeks the class will include reading discussions and a programming lab. Lab topics will focus primarily on front-end programming techniques. Readings are from a wide range of thinkers and genres.
“I was a real amateur at it but I learned what his feeling for chess was.... He said it wasn't a war game, it's an aesthetic game, and you feel the shape of the board as it begins to shift its pattern and you make it become beautiful, even if you lose.”

–The gallerist Julien Levy remembering being taught to play chess by Marcel Duchamp

“This is an A train running local, local, local, local, local, local, local, local, local to Lefferts Boulevard.”

– Conductor unknown

“I was wondering about a radio [broadcaster] in the Netherlands ... he was stu-stu-stu-stuttering. And I was thinking, how is it possible that someone who can do everything, he can be a postman, he can be a scientific thinker, he can be an architect, but not someone who’s working with language... But when he was speaking it was so intense and so believable...”

– Karel Martens

“When you want to know how things really work, study them when they're coming apart.”

– William Gibson, *Zero History*
PART 1

Mobilized design

Adapt your thesis to a physical path or trajectory by creating a self-guided tour for a smartphone. Create a tour that extends through the studio, Green Hall, greater New Haven, or New York City. Users taking the tour should come to understand at least one facet of your thesis (or, at least one example of your thesis) as it relates to the world around them. Your approach may be literal or metaphorical.

Consider the roles of time, speed, and change in your tour as well as in your thesis. How can you account for your thesis – and for a design product – as a set of situations and as a vector?

Consider also your design not as an end product or object, but as an instrument, lens, or periscope whose function is primarily interpretive, that of a translator or guide. In that case what’s your voice? How can you help us see in a new way, or see like you see?

As a concrete starting point (although you’re encouraged to change these parameters), plan for at least five stops on your tour. Design five different mobile-formatted interactions, each specific to the experience you want us to have, or the way you want us to see, at that stop on the tour. Consider also how these stops will link together. What’s the spine of this experience, what is its arc, and how do we navigate that arc as a practical matter by means of the user interface you develop.

PART 2

Designing private contexts

Design an e-reader application for smartphone or tablet. It may be as simple as one or more HTML pages. You needn’t think of your e-reader as an open platform; on the contrary I encourage you to select specific texts (your own writing, or others) and typeset them using CSS. The minimum number of texts is one and there is no maximum – so you can conceive your e-reader as a “single”, a primer, a journal, or even a platform if you insist.

The twist is that your reader should be optimized for reading in a particular context. In bed. While driving. While cooking. If you’re twelve and adults are talking. On the subway. In bright light. With a friend. In a particular room. While walking a familiar route. While watching TV. Etc.