Furniture: Theory and Analysis
IARC 444/544

Instructor:
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Meeting time and place:
10:00 – 11:20 pm T-TH
206 Lawrence

Format:
lecture/discussion

Credit hours and grading:
3 credit hours graded or P/NP

Prerequisites:
Priority is given to IArch, PD, and Arch. students in the third year or above (undergraduate programs) and second year or above (graduate programs)

Course Content/Objectives:
Furniture Theory is designed to foster interdisciplinary learning and discussion between future architects, interior designers and product designers, all of whom design and specify furniture as a critical part of their practice. In the course students utilize contemporary readings and lectures along with active design and analysis exercises to examine a wide variety of built-in and freestanding furnishings, from an historical, theoretical and practical viewpoint.

Moving from small to large-scale issues, this course begins by examining how chairs and other furnishings interact with human bodies and the role of designers in creating healthy products and environments. We study the intentions and logic of furniture elements and systems, including how theories of behavior, organizational management and cultural context have shaped the development of furniture and visa-versa. We look at furnishings as a part of the larger composition of the room and the building, as a built assembly, a physical expression of materials and as a consumer product.

A series of short writing and drawing/model-making projects will allow students to critically analyze existing furnishings and to detail built-in components. The focus of this course on detailed design provides excellent opportunities for architecture students to explore design issues in depth.

Upon finishing this class students will have a working knowledge of:

- Human anthropometrics and ergonomics and their influence on furniture design and placement
- How furniture design influences and is influenced by theories of organizational management
- Flexibility Modularity and the logic of systems design
- Furniture types and typology: Historic and contemporary
- Materials and fabrication and how they effect design
- Life-cycle issues and costing
- Furniture as material culture
- How furniture and buildings interact

Required Readings:
Extensive readings for the course are available on blackboard in addition students read from several texts that change on a yearly basis.