Furniture: Theory and Analysis
IARC 444/544

Prerequisites:
Students must be in their 3rd year of undergraduate study in Interior Architecture, Architecture or Product Design or in their 2nd year of study in the IArch. or Arch. graduate program. Students from outside these programs who are working toward a Interior Architecture minor or students from other majors may enroll with instructor consent.

This course provides an excellent introduction to furniture design for Architecture students who are interested in taking IARC 4/586 Furniture Design Studio.

Description:
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 historical, theoretical and practical viewpoints.

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.

This class will give students 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 furniture design
- Life-cycle issues and costing
- Furniture as material culture
- The interaction between furniture and buildings

Projects:
Several small "experience" projects are coupled with two larger writing and drawing/model-making projects to allow students to critically analyze ergonomic, functional and theoretical aspects of existing furniture elements. Students enrolled in 544 will complete additional research focused on a particular typology and present it to the class. Grades are based on a combination of exams projects and attendance (as measured by i-clickers).

Exams:
Two Exams (a mid-term and a final) gauge students' understanding of readings and material presented in class.

Required Readings:
Given the topical nature of this course texts change on a yearly basis. Texts are supplemented with extensive readings drawn from contemporary writings on anthropometrics, ergonomics, cultural connections, materials use, and design intention. These are available on blackboard.