Furniture: Theory and Analysis
IARC 444/544

12:00 - 1:20 pm
Tuesday - Thursday
206 Lawrence Hall
Linda Zimmer (lzimmer@uoregon.edu)

Prerequisites:
Students must be in their 3rd year of undergraduate study in Interior Architecture or Architecture or Product Design or in their 2nd year of study in the Arch. or larch. graduate programs. 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 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.

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 design
- Life-cycle issues and costing
- Furniture as material culture
- Built-in furniture and its role as architectural and systems element

Projects:
Past projects include analysis of individual sitting patterns through a sitting timesheet, making a model and analyzing a contemporary chair and working to design “typical workstations using an existing modular system.” These change a bit from year to year but always include active learning activities. Students enrolled in 544 will complete additional research and present it to the class.

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.

Grading:
Grades are based on a combination of exams projects (50% each). In the event of high enrollment (+50 students) this course will have a Graduate Teaching Fellow. The GTF will work under the direct supervision of the instructor, who will set clear grading criteria, monitor all grading for fairness and accuracy and have ultimate responsibility for all grades. graduate students will have the option of having their work evaluated by the faculty member teaching the course.