

## ABSTRACT

### **Interdisciplinary Design**

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Design is an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise, vividly illustrating the contemporary movement toward “interdisciplinarity” in theory and practice. This chapter will begin with a brief explanation of the nature and practice of design as a cultural art (250 words). After this introduction, the chapter will be divided into three parts. *Part one* will outline the development of design from its informal beginnings in the late Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution to its formal standing at the beginning of the twenty-first century (1000 words). The focus of this account will be on the expanding scope of the art—that is, the broadening application and unfolding subject matters of design—and on the corresponding expansion of methods of design thinking and practice. Then, *part two* will explain how design operates as an interdisciplinary practice, cutting across the subject matter departmentalization of the modern liberal arts that characterizes the contemporary university and offering new ways to integrate theory and practice for productive impact on how we live our lives as individuals and groups. The central thesis of this part is that the development of design demonstrates one way to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge and the separation of theory and practice that have plagued modern culture (1000 words). Following this discussion, *part three* will review efforts to conceptualize this interdisciplinary practice, developing theories of design. The central thesis of this part is that the exploration of design has led to a rediscovery of integrative disciplines that are based on strategies of inquiry and action rather than on discrete

subject matters. The strategies of inquiry seek to merge the arts of words and the mathematical arts of things—the old *trivium* and *quadrivium*—in a new encyclopedia of practical learning and a new general education (1000 words). The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of how the model of design may offer insight into the ongoing search for new integrative disciplines that has led to a blurring of distinctions among the subject matter departments of learning (500 words).