

HUMAN ECOLOGY: DESIGN STUDIES, PHD

This is a named option within the Human Ecology PhD. (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/human-ecology-school-wide/human-ecology-phd/>)

Within the Design Studies Graduate Program, faculty and students investigate a wide range of subject matter and apply a variety of methods, with the common goal of understanding how design (broadly conceived) relates to, responds to, and affects our lives. The program's graduate faculty is comprised of interdisciplinary scholars, designers, scientists, and artists who mentor and assist graduate students as they build individual programs of study. The Design Studies department offers a doctoral program with the aim of preparing students for professional design careers, specialized research, college teaching, museum or archival work, community engagement, and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Students enrolled in one of the Human Ecology PhD program named options have the opportunity to earn the Human Ecology MS: Human Ecology Research (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/human-ecology-school-wide/human-ecology-ms/human-ecology-human-ecology-research-ms/>) degree along the way to the PhD upon successful completion of coursework and research.

The graduate program in Design Studies is housed within the School of Human Ecology. The PhD program capitalizes on the many rich resources offered at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. As a public research university, UW–Madison is known for its high quality of research activity (ranked third in the nation) and comprehensive academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The university environment provides fertile ground for interdisciplinary research necessary for twenty-first-century students to prepare for work in a fast-evolving discipline with shifting boundaries and growing global connections. UW–Madison's world-class faculty and staff offer innovative approaches to curriculum and research. The UW–Madison campus is home to 40 libraries, nearly 100 research centers, a state-of-the-art virtual reality facility, and the Chazen Museum of Art (one of the nation's leading university art museums).

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Design Studies is the highest degree in the field of design research and scholarship. The program is grounded in the production of original and rigorous research. Students are encouraged to shape their own approaches as they develop mastery of the research and communication skills necessary to complete their research agendas. Through a combination of core courses, concentrations, major specializations, and minor specializations, students acquire content knowledge, theoretical foundations, and methodological approaches needed for their work. The PhD culminates in the production of a doctoral dissertation that contributes to the knowledge base in the discipline of design. Graduates of the program have demonstrated their leadership in the field of design practice and education in the U.S. and internationally.

The PhD program currently offers three areas of concentration. Within each area, students are expected to build a self-directed but highly coherent curriculum in close consultation with a major faculty advisor. The tracks are:

Design History (DH Track)¹

Design History seeks to understand design in its historical context, as both a process and a product. Our program defines design broadly to include

architecture, interior design, industrial design, decorative arts, and other areas of material culture. The Design Studies department offers many opportunities for interdisciplinary study on the UW–Madison campus and has strong ties to other disciplines including art history and landscape architecture. Design History PhD students also have access to coursework and faculty members from allied programs, including the Material Culture Studies Certificate and the Buildings–Landscapes–Cultures Program (a collaborative research degree offered through UW–Madison and UW–Milwaukee).

¹ These tracks are internal to the program and represent different pathways a student can follow to earn this degree. Track names do not appear in the Graduate School admissions application, and they will not appear on the transcript.

Environmental Design Research (EDR Track)¹

Environmental Design Research addresses the interaction between people and their built, natural, and/or virtual environments with a clear goal to create environments that are sustainable and responsive to human needs. The faculty and graduates of the program have pioneered studies in environment–behavior, evidence-based design, building evaluation, sustainability, aging and environment, children's environment, environments for special population, and emerging technologies and applications of virtual reality.

While drawing from campus-wide resources, the faculty and students in EDR closely work with its allies within the School of Human Ecology, which include community psychologists, developmental psychologists, and scholars from consumer science. EDR students also have the opportunity to work with the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, and with the UW–Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning.

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Textile Science (TS)¹

Textile Science investigates the interaction of dyes and finishes with fibers, yarns, and fabrics. Faculty and students in this program focus on sustainability and work to develop chemicals and processes that are safer for the end-user, textile workers, and the environment. Students achieve this by developing and using chemicals, dyes, and finishes, and by reducing the amount of chemicals, water, and energy used in these processes. The DS Textile Lab offers equipment for textile quality control, dyeing, finishing, and plasma. The Materials Science Lab offers analytical equipment such as ESCA, an Atomic Force Microscope, an Electron Microscope, and FTIR. Depending on their research interests, students will have the opportunity to work with other UW–Madison departments including Chemistry, Material Science, Forestry, or Electrical and Computer Engineering.

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