This theory seminar is a combination of aesthetic theory, history and design philosophy. The series is based on my book, *The Sympathy of Things*, which develops a “speculative aesthetics” partially inspired by the works of John Ruskin and William Morris. For Ruskin the earth was wrapped in a “veil of intermediate being,” a surface that was both dead and alive, or mineral and organic. Many thinkers of that period did not draw a sharp line between what was alive and what dead. All things have what is called “agency”; they interact with one another as in an ecology. For Ruskin and Morris this was most clearly visible in the architecture of the Gothic where parts correspond with one another in a way that is completely different than in other architectures. These ideas have deep roots in Romanticism that have lead to contemporary thinking on ecology and networks.

Though the elective follows the structure of *The Sympathy of Things* it will offer a broader background to the aesthetic ideas offered in the book. It is structured in seven lecture-weeks (14 sessions of more than an hour each on Tuesdays and Thursdays) which are alternated by discussion weeks, where the students study selected readings of the material from the week before.

The workload of each student consists of two parts: A) during the semester, a small number of Power Point presentations of selected readings that will be the topic of the discussion; B) at the end of the semester, a written paper (2,500 words) on a chosen topic within the framework of the seminar.