Design Thinking: A Creative Approach to Problem Solving and Creating Impact

Instructors
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Course Description
The word “design” has traditionally been used to describe the visual aesthetics of objects such as books, websites, products, interiors, architecture, and fashion. But increasingly, the definition of design has expanded to include not just artifacts but strategies, services, and systems. As the challenges and opportunities facing businesses, organizations, and society grow more complex, and as stakeholders grow more diverse, an approach known as “design thinking” is playing a greater role in finding meaningful paths forward.

Design thinking is an iterative problem-solving process of discovery, ideation, and experimentation that employs various design-based techniques to gain insight and yield innovative solutions for virtually any type of organizational or business challenge, especially those within public service. At the heart of this approach is a deep sensitivity to the needs of people, whether they are consumers, clients, or everyday citizens.

In “Design Thinking: A Creative Approach to Problem Solving and Creating Impact,” we will unpack each step of the design thinking process and become familiar with the design thinker’s toolkit. Students will develop skills as ethnographers, visual thinkers, strategists, service designers, and storytellers through a hybrid of seminar discussions and collaborative projects. Over the course of seven weeks, students will directly apply what they have learned to a public service issue that they are passionate about, by untangling the complexities of related policy and exploring innovative ways to create real impact.

Pre-Requisite
None

Dates + Time + Location
Mondays and Wednesdays, May 29 – July 15, 2013
6:45 – 8:25 pm
25 West 4th Street (final location to be confirmed)
Course Project
A course-long team project will form the backbone of the course experience. The class will be broken up into teams of 4–5, and each group will select a design challenge which they will work on for the duration of the course. More specific details around the design challenges will be discussed in the first class.

Final Presentation
A final presentation will be the key deliverable for this course. In each session, students will learn different tools and ways of thinking that advance project work on their design challenge and build toward the final presentation. Although each group’s presentation content and form will be different from one another, the design thinking approach for each project will need to be clearly articulated. Highlights of the presentation include:

- Statement of the design challenge
- Actionable insights based on the design research conducted
- Key themes and opportunity areas identified from the insights
- Visualized concepts that address the opportunity areas
- A compelling, human-centered narrative that ties all the points above together

Reading Assignments
There will be a combination of required and optional readings each week. Students will be expected to contribute to discussions via comments a course blog as well as in class. Videos will also be suggested as needed. (Final reading list to be confirmed)

- Change by Design by Tim Brown
- The Back of the Napkin by Dan Roam
- This is Service Design Thinking by Marc Stickdorn and Jakob Schneider
- “Wicked Problems in Design Thinking” by Richard Buchanan
- “Prototyping is the Shorthand of Design” by Tom Kelley
- ABC Nightline - IDEO Shopping Cart video

Grades
Students will be graded on their interim and final presentations as well as their participation in class and completion of assignments. Grading is based on NYU’s universal criteria:


The grading breakdown is as follows:

20% Class Participation and Attendance
20% Homework Assignments
20% Interim Presentation
40% Final Presentation
**Weekly Course Breakdown** *(subject to change)*

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<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 29</td>
<td>Introduction to Design Thinking</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Monday, June 3</td>
<td>Team Problem Solving Basics</td>
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<td>Wednesday, June 5</td>
<td>Defining the Challenge / Visual Thinking 101</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Monday, June 10</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Conducting Design Research / Service Design 101</td>
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<td>Wednesday, June 12</td>
<td>Group Work &amp; Feedback Session</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Monday, June 17</td>
<td>Making Sense of Research</td>
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<td>Wednesday, June 19</td>
<td>INTERIM REVIEW</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Monday, June 24</td>
<td>Brainstorming &amp; Prototyping</td>
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<td>Wednesday, June 26</td>
<td>Group Work &amp; Feedback Session</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Monday, July 1</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
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<td>Wednesday, July 3</td>
<td>Group Work &amp; Feedback Session</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Monday, July 8</td>
<td>Pre-final Presentations</td>
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<td>Wednesday, July 10</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
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