NYU | ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

PADM-GP 2145

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

Spring 2023

Instructor Information

- Carolyn Hou
- Email: carolyn.hou@nyu.edu
- Office Hours: Please schedule an appointment via Calendly

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 6:45PM - 8:25PM
- Class Location: TBD

Course Prerequisites

- None

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 strategic 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. At the heart of this approach is a gaining a deep and empathetic understanding of the needs of people and building solutions that are specifically targeted at addressing those needs.

In this course, we will unpack each step of the design thinking process and become familiar with the design thinker's toolkit. Students will develop skills as researchers, service designers, strategists, and storytellers through a hybrid of lectures, discussions, and group projects. This course will demystify design thinking beyond the media and business buzzwords and provide students with the theory and frameworks to integrate design thinking into their own praxis.

Course and Learning Objectives

- Understand the historical and current application of design thinking;
- Understand and embody the mindset necessary for effective design thinking, e.g., non-linear thinking, divergent and convergent thinking, empathetic thinking, ethnographic research, problem definition and framing, ideation, and verbal and visual communication;
- Be able to execute the end-to-end design thinking process to various social, organizational, and business challenges;
- Be able to explain and advocate for design thinking in a team or organizational context

Course Readings

Please note that readings for this course are front-loaded in the first half of the semester. The second half of the semester will be focused on group projects.

There are two core required readings which we will discuss in class on March 21st, 2023. Additional readings and references for each week are assigned accordingly below.

Required Readings:
- Change by Design, Tim Brown
- How Design Makes the World, Scott Berkun

Recommended Readings:
- The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking is the Next Competitive Advantage, Roger L. Martin
- Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset, Jay Hasbrouck
- Wired to Care: How Companies Prosper When They Create Widespread Empathy, Dev Patnaik
- Exposing the Magic of Design: A Practitioner's Guide to the Methods and Theory of Synthesis, Jon Kolko

Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

Individual Assessment: 30%
- Class Participation and Discussion: 20%

- Individual Reflection Paper #1: 5% (Due Tues, March 21st 5PM)
    - One-page reflection on the design thinking mindset and method

- Individual Reflection Paper #2: 5% (Due Tues, May 9th 5PM)
    - One-page reflection on the group design challenge and output

Group Assessment: 70%
- Group Assignment #1: Research Plan:10% (Due Tues, April 4th 5PM)
    - Each team will outline its research approach and plan to the design challenge they're given.

- Group Assignment #2: Research Learnings: 20% (Due Tues, April 18th 5PM)
    - Each team will conduct interviews and synthesize their learnings, as well as write up the key insights and problem statements to address.

- Group Assignment #3: Recommendations: 20% (Due Tues, April 25th 5PM)
    - Each team will come up with 2-3 service concepts/prototypes for how to address the problem space, including its limitations and constraints.

- Group Assignment #4: Final Report: 20% (Due Tues, May 9th 5PM)
    - Each team will put together a final presentation and report outlining the research approach, key learnings, problem space, and opportunity for moving forward.

Late Submission Policy for Assignments
Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally hectic schedules. Late submissions without extensions will be penalized 20% per 24-hour period.

Overview of the Semester

- **Week 1 – January 24th**
  - Topic: Introduction to Design Thinking: History & Fundamentals
  - Readings:
    - Design Thinking Origin Story, Jo Szczepanska
    - Design Thinking, Tim Brown

- **Week 2 – January 31st**
  - Topic: Introduction to Design Thinking: Design Thinking in Practice
  - Readings:
    - Design Thinking for Social Innovation, Tim Brown and Jocelyn Wyatt
    - Design Thinking Comes of Age, Jon Kolko
  - Watch:
    - Transforming Healthcare for Children and Their Families, Doug Dietz

- **Week 3 – February 7th**
  - Topic: Design Research: Empathy & Ethnography
  - Readings:
    - Empathy on the Edge: Scaling and Sustaining a Human-Centered Approach in the Evolving Practice of Design, Katja Battarbee, Jane Fulton Suri, and Suzanna Gibbs Howard
    - Design Thinking: Getting Started with Empathy, Rikke Dam & Teo Siang

- **Week 4 – February 7th**
  - Topic: Design Research: Interview Practice & Techniques
  - Readings:
    - Generative Research: Definition, Methods, and Examples, Maze Group

- **Week 5 – February 21st**
  - Topic: Getting to Insights: Analysis & Synthesis
  - Readings:
    - The Most Neglected Part of the Design Practice, Daniel Klein

- - Abductive Thinking and Sensemaking: The Drivers of Design Synthesis, Jon Kolko

- **Week 6 – February 28th**
  - Topic: Idea Generation: Prototyping & Concept Testing
  - Readings:
    - What do Prototypes Prototype?, Stephanie Houde and Charles Hill
    - Prototyping is the Shorthand of Design, Tom Kelley
    - Prototyping Policy: Integrating Design Thinking into Policy Making, Chantale Bielak

- **Week 7 – March 7th**
  - Topic: Idea Generation: Prototyping in Practice
  - No readings
  - Guest Lecturer (TBD)

- **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS – MARCH 14TH**

- **Week 8 – March 21st**
  - Topic: Class Debate & Design Challenge
  - Class will be used to discuss and debate our two core readings: Change by Design and How Design Makes the World
  - Students will be given a social impact challenge and in groups asked to create a project brief and research plan for how to address it using design thinking.
  - Individual Reflection Paper #1 due at 5PM EST

- **Week 9 – March 28th**
  - Topic: Group Project – Research Plan
  - Each team will work to outlines its research approach to the design problem they are given.

- **Week 10 – April 4th**
  - Topic: Group Project – Research Learnings
  - Over the next two weeks, groups will conduct research and identify key learnings and problem statements.
  - Guest Lecturer (TBD)
  - Research Plan due at 5PM EST

- Week 11 – April 11th
  - Topic: Group Project – Research Learnings Continued

- Week 12 – April 18th
  - Topic: Group Project – Research Learnings Share-out
  - Each group will present their key research learnings to the class.
  - Research Learnings due at 5PM EST

- Week 13 – April 25th
  - Topic: Group Project – Concepts & Prototype Recommendations
  - Each team will share 2-3 concepts/prototypes for how to address the problem area and present to the class for feedback.
  - Recommendations due at 5PM EST

- Week 14 – May 2nd – Last In-Person Class
  - Topic: Group Project – Class Presentations
  - Each group will present their design thinking project, outlining their process, learnings, and recommendations in front of an expert panel.

- Week 15 – May 9th – Final Reports & Paper Due
  - No class
  - Final Report due 5PM
  - Individual Reflection Paper #2 due 5PM

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points
A	4.0 points
A-	3.7 points

Letter Grade	Points
B+	3.3 points
B	3.0 points
B-	2.7 points
C+	2.3 points
C	2.0 points
C-	1.7 points
F	0.0 points

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- (A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- (A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.
- (B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
- (B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.
- (B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in "good standing."
- (C/-/+) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues.

Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.
- (F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.

Brightspace

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the Brightspace site. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by Wagner's Academic Code. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website and click the "Get Started" button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

NYU's Wellness Exchange

NYU's Wellness Exchange has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.

Class Policies

The best way to learn design thinking is through doing designing thinking and thus attendance and participation are extremely important. We understand that everyone has a busy schedule and some of you may work full-time so absences may be unavoidable but please keep your instructor and peers in the loop.