

Design Thinking for Managers

The semiotics and politics of designing for business

Credits	1.5
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Program	PGP
Academic Year and Term	Year 1, Term 3

I Course Description

Why Design Thinking?

Design Thinking is traditionally defined as a solution-based approach to finding what would-be users really need. It is positioned as a human-centered, iterative and creative process with five key stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. Design Thinking is useful in tackling problems that are ‘wicked’ i.e. ill-defined or unknown. For business leaders and managers, design thinking was advanced as an approach that could help them with the *what*, that is, build differentiated products, services and experiences that resonate with consumers’ needs and wants.

But the business landscape (and the world at large) as we know it has undergone a fundamental transformation in 2020. ‘From drastic shifts in currency markets to dealing with climate change and online security, complexity is now the status quo in our diverse, networked, and globalized reality. We can no longer presume that “solutions” are universal or static. In this accelerated and dynamic economic context, we need to frame our designs within more expansive thinking that is always asking “why” even while responses to the question “what” are manifesting.’ (Hasbrouck 2018: 3).

Why is this course relevant for you?

Thinking with Hasbrouck, and borrowing from a post-modernist anthropological canon, the **Design Thinking for Managers (DTM) course illuminates how adopting an approach towards business problems which blends design thinking (or human-centered design) in the sense of ‘what’ and implementation or operationalisation of solutions on one hand, and ethnographic thinking on the other, in the sense of thinking about an evolving ‘why’ and the relations and flows thereof, can serve as a impactful aid for the manager, the entrepreneur, and the social/development sector leader.** The course permits student participants to practically experience such a blended process, as they work on real-life *wicked* problems during the length of the course. It encourages students to alternatively go wide and deep, as they look for the interlinkages which a networked business environment presents. Ultimately, participants are set upon a trajectory of asking *uncomfortable* questions, in line with the anthropological tenets of relativism, interpretation, deconstruction, and reflexivity. In this sense, the course seeks to step away from the *othering* which the practice of design thinking, as commoditized in contemporary discourse, perpetuates. **We will do this by learning the tried and tested frameworks and methods, but also critically reviewing them to question their relevance in the ‘new normal’.**

The Workplace was already demanding specific skills from its Leaders and Managers. Creative problem solving was the top ranked future skill as per the ‘Future of Jobs’ study published by the World Economic Forum. This course endeavours to develop a mindset of ‘...curiosity, expanded awareness, deferred judgment, and flexible adaptation’ (Hasbrouck 2018: 26) augmented by and during ethnographic thinking. We also seek to advance the benefits of ‘holistic thinking, situating insights strategically, and highly attuned storytelling that conveys complex ideas in ways that gain traction within organizations’ (Hasbrouck 2018: 26)

Why us?

As Design Thinking Facilitators and Practitioners, we realize the importance of hands-on and function-relevant learning of Design Thinking methodologies and their applications. We have leveraged our experience of having applied Design Thinking across organizations, functions, and situations to build an immersive and action-based approach to teach Design Thinking. The both of us are also Social Anthropologists, and have (and continue) to carry out Ethnographic Research on a range of topics, from alternative constructs of entrepreneurship in Bangalore, to understanding how an organization changes its ways of working in preparation for a post pandemic future, to the politics and symbolism of face-masks during the Covid19 pandemic in London, and the opportunities to identify new livelihoods in the face of post-pandemic realities in India. We bring this situated anthropological take to the course, in our aspiration to help future business managers, entrepreneurs, and social/development sector leaders understand and embrace Design Thinking principles and be at the forefront of organization, business, and social transformation.

II Student Learning Outcomes

01. Go beyond compartmentalized and partitioned approaches to problems, and see them for their inherent interlinkages.
02. Learn how to be iterative in the approach to solving problems.
03. Know that there may not be a single, perfect solution to wicked problems or problems with competing constraints. And thus, an optimal evolving direction may need to be adopted.
04. Consider different stakeholders to the problem.
05. Look at the intersection of desirability, viability, feasibility, and sustainability in problem solving.

III Required Textbooks and Reading Material

To the XIMB library, we have recommended *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* by Tim Brown (2009) as a textbook for the course. We also suggest *Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset* by Jay Hasbrouck (2018) as a second textbook. That said, for as wide-ranging a subject as design thinking, and an application focused course as this, we consider having a single or even a handful of reference books as the reference texts to be a difficult if not impossible proposition. For this reason, we will turn to a collection of articles and chapters, as a reading list.

On this, **we expect students to have read the readings specified for a session *before* the session itself.** We will encourage students to utilize the session to participate in the activities planned, and also table questions, clarifications, and (most importantly) opinions. The course operates on the principle of **proportionality**: what the student participant gains as an outcome will be proportional to both reading and participation.

IV Tentative Session Plan and Reading List

Session	Topics/Activities	Readings
1	<p>Introductions, expectations, a brief outline of the course, and general housekeeping.</p> <p>The design thinking process, and the wicked problem.</p>	<p>MCKINSEY QUARTERLY 2018. <i>The Business Value of Design</i>.</p> <p>BROWN, T. 2009. Introduction: The Power of Design Thinking. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins.</p> <p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 1: Getting under your skin, or how design thinking is about more than style. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins.</p>
2	<p>Critically evaluating the design thinking process, and considering what it means to think ethnographically: the trajectories of the disciplines, and the disciplinary gaze.</p> <p>Ethnographic explorations of community woodwork centers and Indian variety stores in Central London.</p>	<p>CHANG, Y., J. KIM, & J. JOO 2013. An exploratory study on the evolution of design thinking: Comparison of Apple and Samsung. <i>Design Management Journal</i> 8:1, 22-34.</p> <p>PINK, S. & J. MORGAN 2013. Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing. <i>Symbolic Interaction</i> 36:3, 351-361. DOI: 10.1002/SYMB.66</p> <p>HASBROUCK, J. 2018. A Starting Place: Design Thinking and Ethnographic Thinking. In <i>Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset</i>, 1-6. New York and London: Routledge.</p>
3	<p>Empathise as the first design thinking step</p> <p>Research methods: popular, online</p> <p>The methodological application of empathise for imagining a post-pandemic organization in Jordan.</p>	<p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 2: Converting need into demand, or putting people first. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins.</p> <p>ODI 2020. Toolkit: Tips for collecting primary data in a Covid-19 era. (available online: https://www.odi.org/publications/16977-primary-data-collection-covid-19-era, accessed 1 February 2021).</p> <p>(Note: In particular, reference the crowdsourced document edited/curated by Deborah Lupton (2020), titled <i>Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic</i>.)</p> <p>DESIGNKIT 2020. Methods: Inspiration. (available online: https://www.designkit.org/methods#filter, accessed 30 January 2021).</p>

		(Note: Specifically, look for methods under the <i>Inspiration</i> tab, for now. The other methods pertain to downstream steps in the design thinking process, which the course will get to subsequently.)
4	<p>The user, and the persona</p> <p>Empathy maps</p> <p>The idea of the Other</p> <p>Introducing the case for the design sprint</p>	<p>HASBROUCK, J. 2018. Immersing Fully. In <i>Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset</i>, 43-55. New York and London: Routledge.</p> <p>MIASKIEWICZ, T. & K. A. KOZAR 2011. Personas and user-centered design: How can personas benefit product design processes? <i>Design Studies</i> 32:5, 417-430.</p> <p>SYSTEM THINKING FOR DESIGNERS 2021. Medium (available on-line: https://medium.com/design-voices/system-thinking-for-designers-e9f025698a32, accessed 6 February 2021).</p>
5	<p>Empathise/Research presentations, and feedback</p> <p>Define, as the second step of the design thinking process</p> <p>The How-Might-We Point-of-View statements</p>	<p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 3: A mental matrix, or “these people have no process!”. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins. <u>Specifically read the sections titled: Convergent and Divergent Thinking, and Analysis and Synthesis.</u></p> <p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 8: the new social contract, or we’re all in this together. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins. <u>Specifically read the section titled: Systems at scale and why we should act more like honeybees</u></p> <p><u>Read the following two articles in conjunction:</u></p> <p>MINT 2018. Inside Odisha’s drone-mapped slum titling plan. (available online: https://www.livemint.com/Politics/JMLywpZ5WEsmotZDOjkChP/Iinside-Odishas-dronemapped-slum-titling-plan.html, accessed 5 February 2021)</p> <p>&</p> <p>DASH, S. 2020. Slum to Liveable Habitat: A transformational journey. (available online: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/slum-liveable-habitat-transformational-journey-shishir-ranjan-dash?trk=public_profile_article_view, accessed 5 February 2021)</p> <p>DESIGNKIT 2020. How Might We (available online: https://www.designkit.org/methods/how-might-we, accessed 5 February 2021).</p>

6	<p>Define presentations, and feedback</p> <p>Ideation as the third step of the design thinking process</p>	<p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 3: A mental matrix, or “these people have no process!”. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins.</p> <p>DELOITTE 2020. Remote Collaboration: Facing the challenges of COVID-19. (available online: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/de/Documents/human-capital/Remote-Collaboration-COVID-19.pdf, accessed 6 February 2021).</p> <p>POWERS, M. 2020. In China, managing relationships, teams, and more meetings from home. (available online: https://insights.office.com/workplace-analytics/in-china-managing-teams-and-meetings-remotely/, accessed 6 February 2021).</p>
7	<p>Design sprint: Ideation, prioritising and feedback</p>	<p>DESIGNKIT 2020. Methods: Ideation. (available online: https://www.designkit.org/methods#filter, accessed 30 January 2021). (Note: Specifically, look for methods under the <i>Ideation</i> tab, for now.)</p> <p>THOMAS, C. 2020. How I ran a remote ideation session with my client team. (available online: https://uxdesign.cc/how-i-ran-a-remote-ideation-session-with-my-client-team-d4be8e3a0fac, accessed 6 February 2021).</p>
8	<p>Prototyping and Testing as the final linear stages of the design thinking process</p> <p>Design sprint: Prototyping</p>	<p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 4: Building to think, or The power of prototyping. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins.</p> <p>TURKLE, S. 2011. Introduction: The Things that Matter. In <i>Evocative objects. Things We Think With</i> (ed) S. Turkle, 3-10. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. (available online: https://llk.media.mit.edu/courses/readings/Turkle-EO-intro.pdf, accessed 5 February 2021).</p> <p>GERBER, E. & M. CARROLL 2012. The psychological experience of prototyping. <i>Design Studies</i> 33:1, 64-84. ISSN 0142-694X, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2011.06.005.</p> <p>HOUDE, S. & C. HILL 1997. Chapter 16: What do Prototypes Prototype? In <i>Handbook of Human-Computer Interaction</i> (eds) M. Helander, T.K. Landauer & P. Prabhu. Elsevier: North Holland. (available online: http://www.itu.dk/people/malmborg/Interaktionsdesign/Kompendie/Houde-Hill-1997.pdf, accessed 5 February 2021).</p>

		<p>SUTTON, R. 2007. The Power of the Prototyping Mindset. (available online: https://hbr.org/2007/05/the-power-of-the-prototyping-m-1, accessed 6 February 2021).</p> <p>DESIGNKIT 2020. Methods: Implementation. (available online: https://www.designkit.org/methods#filter, accessed 30 January 2021). (Note: Specifically, look for methods under the <i>Implementation</i> tab, for now.)</p> <p>ATLASSIAN 2021. Iterative Prototyping with the End-to-End Demo Method. (available on-line: https://www.atlassian.com/team-playbook/plays/end-to-end-demo, accessed 6 February 2021).</p>
9	Presentations and feedback	-
10	<p>Reflections and lessons from the field</p> <p>Topic for the take-home essay</p>	<p>HASBROUCK, J. 2018. Conclusion. In <i>Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset</i>, 94-109. New York and London: Routledge.</p> <p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 5: Returning to the surface, or the design of experiences. In <i>Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation</i>. New York: Harper-Collins.</p>

V Evaluation

As is evident from the session plan and reading list, the course leans towards *doing*, in the sense of *experiencing* the design thinking process. Student participants will be expected to work in groups on the design sprint, and different students will be called upon at different times to outline the group's work. All students in each group will thus be covered.

To belabour the obvious, *participation* is a principal tenet of the course. At an individual level, this translates to how the student prepares for a session by engaging with its readings, evidenced through the perspectives which they bring (examples, opinions, and questions - in that order).

We live in disrupted times, and unfortunately cannot be in the same classroom with the students. We have to make do with virtual tools, at this point. Yet design thinking is an inherently embodied experience. And for this, we will expect each participant to keep their video on during a session and not be distracted by other screens or devices. We promise to be similarly focused.

Finally, what is a business school course without a quiz? In this course, students will not have a quiz in the strictest sense of the term, but a take-home essay. Students will be evaluated on clarity of thought. The topic will be shared in the last session, and each student will be expected to turn it in within 7 days. The submission

deadline will be clarified at the time. Delays will attract penalties. In summary then, the course will be evaluated as under:

- (a) 45% on the design sprint, as a group,
- (b) 45% on the individual essay/quiz, and
- (c) 10% on individual participation.

All grades will be in keeping with the grading system adopted at Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar.

VI Academic integrity

The academic integrity will be strictly adhered to as per the rules and guidelines of the students' manuals of policy of Xavier University Bhubaneswar and Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar. Deviations therefrom will merit action in keeping with academic norms. Specifically, we will look for original contributions. And thus, plagiarism is an absolute no-no. At best, instances of plagiarism will qualify to be directly graded as F.