



Design Thinking for Managers

The semiotics and politics of designing for business and enterprise

EMBA-BM 2021-22, Term I

Course Outline

Duration	30 Hours
Faculty Name	Ms. Gitika Saksena and Mr. Abhishek Mohanty

I Introduction, Objectives, and Content/Pedagogy

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 EMBA-BM students?

Thinking with Hasbrouck, and borrowing from a post-modernist anthropological canon, the **Design Thinking for Managers 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 operationalization 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 as well as the entrepreneur.** 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. The course will encourage 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 and applying 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 and entrepreneurs 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.
06. Develop an applicative and industry relevant approach to Design Thinking.

III Required Readings and Workload

We recommend *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 (outlined in the next section). The XIM Bhubaneswar library should be in a position to provide you access to the textbooks, while most of the articles on the reading are publicly available on academic or journalistic commons. For some, we have provided links to the articles in the reading list itself. In other places, the

chapters/articles have been cited in the JRAI format for easy reference. Finally, for those readings which are not publicly available, we will provide applicable and relevant resources.

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

The course will be structured around three modules as suggested in the table outlined subsequently. These three modules will be distinct in terms of their timing as well as the intended learning outcomes. While the course will be 30 hours' long (with 20 sessions of 90 each), the three modules are structured to reflect a logical progression.

The first module will aim to establish a conceptual understanding of the Design Thinking process and methods, so as to ensure that the students appreciate the relevance and applicability of the framework across diverse industries, functions, and use cases. They will also develop an awareness of the limitations of Design Thinking, and how an interdisciplinary approach can address these. The second module will incorporate a hands-on approach by taking the students through the five Design Thinking stages, where they get to work on a series of caselets and experience the application of select methods. Finally, the third module will be rooted in a Design Sprint or an Org Innovation Challenge, where the students will work in groups on a real-life use-case, leveraging the Design Thinking process to arrive at sustainable, desirable, feasible, and viable solutions. The Sprint provides students with a platform to demonstrate their learnings and skills.

Module 1: Introduction to Design Thinking

Date ¹	Session#	Focus	Readings
13 July Tuesday	1	Course expectations and housekeeping. The design thinking process.	MCKINSEY QUARTERLY 2018. The Business Value of Design. <i>(Definitely read before the Session)</i> BROWN, T. 2009. Introduction: The Power of Design Thinking. In Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins. BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 1: Getting under your skin, or how design thinking is about more than style. In Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins.
15 July Thursday	2	A critical evaluation. Ethnographic thinking as both an alternative and supplementary approach.	CHANG, Y., J. KIM, & J. JOO 2013. An exploratory study on the evolution of design thinking: Comparison of Apple and Samsung. Design Management Journal 8:1, 22-34. PINK, S. & J. MORGAN 2013. Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing. Symbolic Interaction 36:3, 351-361. DOI: 10.1002/SYMB.66

		Reflections and lessons from the field. Understanding the landscape/ macro view using ground theory and secondary research.	HASBROUCK, J. 2018. A Starting Place: Design Thinking and Ethnographic Thinking. In Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset, 1-6. New York and London: Routledge.
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¹Proposed, subject to change

Module 2: Experiencing the Design Thinking stages, and the application thereof

Date ¹	Session#	Focus	Readings
22 July Thursday	3	Empathize/Analysis. Empathize as the first design thinking step. Research methods: popular, online. The methodological application of Empathize for imagining a post-pandemic organization in Jordan.	BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 2: Converting need into demand, or putting people first. In Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins. ODI 2020. Toolkit: Tips for collecting primary data in a Covid-19 era. (available online: here) <i>(Note: In particular, reference the crowdsourced document edited/curated by Deborah Lupton (2020), titled Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic.)</i> DESIGNKIT 2020. Methods: Inspiration. (available online: here) <i>(Note: Specifically, look for methods under the Inspiration tab, for now. The other methods pertain to downstream steps in the design thinking process, which the course will get to subsequently.)</i>
23 July Friday	4	The user, and the persona. Empathy maps. The idea of the Other. Introducing the caselet for Empathize.	HASBROUCK, J. 2018. Immersing Fully. In Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset, 43-55. New York and London: Routledge. MIASKIEWICZ, T. & K. A. KOZAR 2011. Personas and user-centered design: How can personas benefit product design processes? Design Studies 32:5, 417-430. SYSTEM THINKING FOR DESIGNERS 2021. Medium. (available online: here)
27 July Tuesday	5	Empathize presentations, and feedback.	Not applicable
3 August Tuesday	6	Define/Synthesis of Insights. Define, as the second step of the design thinking process.	BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 3: A mental matrix, or “these people have no process!”. In Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins. BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 8: the new social contract, or we’re all in this together. In Change by Design: How

			<p>Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins. <i>Specifically read the section titled: Systems at scale and why we should act more like honeybees</i></p> <p><i>Read the following two articles in conjunction:</i> MINT 2018. Inside Odisha’s drone-mapped slum titling plan. (available online here) & DASH, S. 2020. Slum to Liveable Habitat: A transformational journey. (available online here)</p>
4 August Wednesday	7	<p>Translating research to How Might We statements and supporting evidence.</p> <p>Introducing the caselet for Define.</p>	DESIGNKIT 2020. How Might We (available online: here)
12 August Thursday	8	<p>Define presentations, and feedback.</p>	<p>DELOITTE 2020. Remote Collaboration: Facing the challenges of COVID-19. (available online: here)</p> <p>POWERS, M. 2020. In China, managing relationships, teams, and more meetings from home. (available online: here)</p>
13 August Friday	9	<p>Ideate, as the third step of the design thinking process.</p> <p>Collaborative Ideation and subsequent Prioritization with Competing Constraints.</p>	<p>DESIGNKIT 2020. Methods: Ideation. (available online: here) (Note: Specifically, look for methods under the Ideation tab, for now.)</p> <p>THOMAS, C. 2020. How I ran a remote ideation session with my client team. (available online: here)</p>
17 August Tuesday	10	<p>Ideating and prioritizing ideas on a caselet. Presentations and feedback.</p>	Not applicable
24 August Tuesday	11	<p>Mid-Term (20%)²</p> <p>Prototyping, and Testing as the final linear stages of the design thinking process. (Part 1)</p>	<p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 4: Building to think, or The power of prototyping. In Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins.</p> <p>TURKLE, S. 2011. Introduction: The Things that Matter. In Evocative objects. Things We Think With (ed) S. Turkle, 3-10. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. (available online: here).</p> <p>GERBER, E. & M. CARROLL 2012. The psychological experience of prototyping. Design Studies 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 Handbook of Human-Computer Interaction (eds) M. Helander, T.K. Landauer & P. Prabhu. Elsevier: North Holland. (available online: here, accessed 5 February 2021).</p> <p>SUTTON, R. 2007. The Power of the Prototyping Mindset. (available online: here)</p>
2 September Thursday	12	<p>Prototyping, and Testing as the final linear stages of the design thinking process. (Part 2)</p> <p>Creating low fidelity prototypes.</p>	<p>DESIGNKIT 2020. Methods: Implementation. (available online: here) (Note: Specifically, look for methods under the Implementation tab, for now.)</p> <p>ATLASSIAN 2021. Iterative Prototyping with the End-to-End Demo Method. (available online: here)</p>
3 September Friday	13	<p>Applying Prototyping and Testing methods on a caselet. Presentations and feedback.</p>	Not Applicable.
9 September Thursday	14	<p>Incorporating feedback to create next iteration of the prototype.</p> <p>The Business Model Canvas: storytelling for Stakeholders.</p>	<p>HASBROUCK, J. 2018. Conclusion. In Ethnographic Thinking: From Method to Mindset, 94-109. New York and London: Routledge.</p> <p>BROWN, T. 2009. Chapter 5: Returning to the surface, or the design of experiences. In Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation. New York: Harper-Collins.</p>
10 September Friday	15	<p>Module-ending reflections. Introducing the Design Sprint.</p>	Not Applicable.

¹Proposed, subject to change

²To be finalized and details to be announced closer to the day/date

Module 3: Design Sprint entailing an organizational innovation challenge

Date ¹	Session#	Focus	Readings
16 September Thursday	16	Presentations ³ on Empathize and Define	Reference: readings for Sessions 3-8
17 September Friday	17	Facilitated Ideation and Prioritization	Reference: readings for Session 9
21 September Tuesday	18	Facilitated Prototyping	Reference: readings for Sessions 11-14
22 September Wednesday	19	Presentations ⁴ on Idea, Prototype, and the Business Model Canvas	Not Applicable
28 September Tuesday	20	Wrap-Up, Guidance on Group submissions and End-Terms	Not Applicable

¹Proposed, subject to change

³20 minutes in total for each team: 10 minutes presentation-time, 5 minutes feedback, 5 minutes counter-Q&A

⁴20 minutes in total for each team: 10 minutes presentation-time, 5 minutes feedback, 5 minutes counter-Q&A

V Principles

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.

Participation and proportionality are principal tenets of the course. At an individual level, this translates into 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). At a Design Sprint level, this translates into how students work together and build on each other's perspectives and ideas. A focus on team performance is anchored on the innovation mindset of radical collaboration and a bias towards action.

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 pay attention to the discussions in the session and not be distracted by other screens or devices. We promise to be similarly focused.

Finally, academic integrity will be strictly adhered to as per the rules and guidelines of the students' manuals of policy of Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar, as well as the EMBA guidelines. 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.

VI Evaluation Criteria

There are three different grading components. Scoring for each student will see 50% as derived from an end-term essay, 30% will be a group score based on how their team tackled the Design Sprint, and 20% will be attributed to a mid-term quiz. Particular rules (such as word count, what we are looking for, and so on) will be specified with a sufficient heads-up. Students will be evaluated on clarity of thought. If there is a submission deadline, then delays will attract penalties. Should there be mitigating circumstances which students would like to apply for in keeping with the guidelines specified by the institution, then they are encouraged and urged to apply well in advance. All grades will be awarded in keeping with the grading system adopted at Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar.

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