JS-350

# User Experience Design:
# Community-led design

*We meet Tuesday and Thursday 12-1:35 PM in McCarthy 134*

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines experience design and the design thinking process, addressing ways of creating meaning and change through interaction. It is an exploration of what we, as creative problem solvers, can do to make a difference through design, right here on campus.

We will practice design thinking in a semester-long, practical project that you (students!) define and work on in teams. We will explore an idea through research *and* creation, building on knowledge and skills accumulated over our academic careers and lived experiences. We will embrace moments of experimentation, exhilaration, frustration, failure, and discovery as natural parts of the creative process.

Each of the projects will go through the stages of the design thinking process:

1. **Discovery** – Observe, Empathize, and Humanize – understand the users and their needs
2. **Research** and **Define** – state the user's needs and problems
3. **Ideate** – brainstorm, come up with ideas for solutions
4. **Prototype** – start creating solutions
5. **Test** and **Iterate** - user testing and modifying design accordingly
6. **Reflect**

Supporting lectures, readings, in-class workshops, and field trips/site visits will introduce processes and strategies. But YOU will be the thinkers, planners, doers, and leaders. This course and project require significant engagement outside of class, and it leans heavily on students to take responsibility for planning and executing work.

The goals of this User Experience Design course are to:

- Learn techniques to understand users' motivations and to gather and synthesize insights
- Participate in, and at times lead, innovation in a collaborative setting
- Learn how to effectively communicate with and work on a team
- Learn how to follow through on an extended project
- Become competent in creative thinking and problem-solving
- Become familiar with and use the Design Thinking process
- Take risks by using prototypes to test theories and document the outcomes
- Acquire patience, curiosity, and perseverance when doing new and unfamiliar things

## JUNIOR SEMINAR LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Complete a piece of independent research and/or analysis.
- Present independent work to peers and facilitate discussion of that work.
- Complete a piece of work that engages in the examination of one's own educational progress and the broader values of a liberal arts education.
- Demonstrate familiarity with campus, community, and web resources that can help think about and prepare for future careers, and/or demonstrate skills necessary for senior year and life after college.
- Demonstrate an ability, through writing, to assess, examine, and analyze diverse and perhaps opposing perspectives on issues that impact human and/or planetary well-being, including connections, contrasts, and comparisons between and among disciplines.
- Demonstrate an ability to engage in civil discussion about issues that impact human and/or planetary well-being, by practicing openness, attentiveness, commitment, respect, and mutual support in a community of peers.

## ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

**You're engagement with the class and your project team will affect the quality of your work and your grade.** You are expected to actively and passionately take part in our class:

- Care about yourself and your work, your classmates and their work, your team and its work, this class, and design as a discipline
- Actively participate in discussions and critique/feedback sessions both in-person and online
- Be curious about designing things and the things your classmates design
- Do the classwork, homework, and teamwork, and be prepared to show and discuss it all
- Create with thought, intention, and intensity
- Meet deadlines for handing in work and process steps, to the instructor and your team
- Attend class meetings and team project meetings, both in-person and online, and arrive prepared

## COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

**Be present in both mind and body:** Show up! Don't answer calls or texts during class/meetings. If you must, use your cell phone for research only. Don't use computers for online chatting, social networking, leisure browsing, or completion of assignments for other courses while in our class or meetings with your team.

**Respect yourself and each other:** *Step up* and use your voice; *step back* to make space for others. Acknowledge your lived experiences and how they differ from others'. Actively listen to suggestions, concerns, stories, and perspectives and take the time to process them. Invest in yourself and others. Ask for and offer help.

**Give thoughtful, honest, and supportive critiques:** Critiques of plans, designs, research, and work will be a regular part of the class and your team work. Thoughtful, supportive criticism is the highest form of respect to show one another. These critiques are not just for the person receiving but also for the person giving and for everyone present. Say meaningful things not just polite things; be helpful, not aggressive or "right". Silence, in this case, can be disrespectful. The goal of these is progress, not pride. You will be asked to identify what works in an approach, what might be

improved, and how you might tackle those changes. Help connect dots: What is the person trying to do; What have they done so far; How can you help them cross the space between? Acknowledge that we are all taking risks and being vulnerable. And keep these conversations confidential.

**Come prepared to do work:** Arrive to class and team meetings with all materials, files, notebooks, etc. necessary to work on all aspects of project- or class- work. Make sure you save digital files in multiple locations to prevent the accidental loss of your work. Accidental erasure is not grounds for a deadline extension.

**Check communication channels regularly:** Check Canvas daily for any updates, announcements, or changes to course and work expectations. Check the communication methods your team agreed to regularly and respond accordingly.

***Additional, collaborative agreements will be created together in class and your teams.***

## SCHEDULE

The daily agenda and weekly goals for the course will be announced in class. The daily agenda and weekly goals for each project will be different according to the team and project needs**.**

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|---|---|
| Week 1-2 | Introductions<br>• to each other,<br>• to user experience, and<br>• to the design thinking process |
| Weeks 3-5 | • Observe, Empathize, Humanize<br>• Define needs and problems<br>• Project Pitches<br>• Break into teams & create workplan |
| Week 5-13 | Purposeful Learning, Career Education Center Collaboration<br><br>Team Project Work<br>• Ideate<br>• Prototype<br>• Test<br>• Analyze<br>• Iterate<br>• Reflect |
| Weeks 14-15 | Team project presentations |
| FINAL Time | Individual, Written Case Study delivered |

The class schedule is fluid and will adjust according to our class needs. Changes will be announced in class and/or on Canvas. Requested work is due in its entirety at the beginning of class to be considered “on time”.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR COURSE GRADE

**Initial Research and Project Pitches** *[individual]* **5%**

Each student will observe, research, and brainstorm possible design projects and pitch one to the class in a verbal presentation.

**Practical Design Project** *[team]* **30%**

Students will divide into 3-person teams to work on a group project once the project topics are chosen. Process and working towards progress will be key: each project will go through the design process. Students and teams are expected to develop a work plan and share it for feedback. Teams will present each stage of the design process to the class and/or instructor for feedback and open discussion.

**Project Presentation** *[team]* **15%**

The team will present the project, its concept, process, and outcomes, to the class. Presentation and communication skills will be essential. The presentation will be 20min with 5-10min of discussion after. Practice and time yourselves. Prepare possible topics for discussion with the group.

**Written Case Study** *[individual]* **20%**

Document the process you and your team used in the project. Write a case study that reflects on the process, tools used, successes, and deltas; highlight the role(s) you played and go into detail about your contributions to the shared process (this is your independent research! even though it's part of a group effort). Use citations and visual images where appropriate.

**Engagement** *[individual]* **20%**

The process of design is social. It requires participants to negotiate differences and construct meaning through direct communication. Discussions, debates, questions, and participation are critical. Engagement both in and out of class, individually and as part of a team, is vital to your success. Your level of activity in class and on your team contributes to the engagement grade.

**Readings, Reflections, Responses** *[individual]* **10%**

Participating in and completing site visits, exercises, and readings and writing reflections and reactions to them will help solidify what it means to be a designer and what user experiences can be.

## SUPPLIES, SOFTWARE, COMPUTERS, & TECHNOLOGY

We will use a mix of tools to support collaboration and work processes:

- **Canvas** will be used for communication and course management. It is your responsibility to check our Canvas course for announcements (or turn on email notifications).
- **Analog Tools:** pen, paper, Post-its, scissors, an array of colored markers/pencils
- **Digital Collaboration Tools:** Figma and/or Miro; Powerpoint (or Google Slides); Word (or Google Docs); Excel (or Google Sheets)
- **OneDrive & Cloud Documents:** You each have access to free cloud storage through SMC's Microsoft OneDrive. We'll use the collaboration tools built into Word, Excel, etc. along with the storage space to share files of all sorts. Be sure you are signed into your OneDrive and review how to use it (it's a lot like using Google Drive).

## TEXTBOOKS

**No textbook is required** but we will be doing some exercises and readings from some of the below and they are recommended to further enrich your design journey:

- Designing for Social Change by Andrew Shea. 2012. *Available at the SMC Library reserve desk.*
- Just Enough Research by Erika Hall. 2019. *Available at abookapart.com; use code SMCPAL15 for 15% off any order in the ABA store.*
- The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design by Ideo. *Available at* designkit.org

- Field Guide: Equity-Centered Community Design by Creative Reaction Lab. *Available at crxlab.org*
- Ruined By Design by Mike Montiero. 2019 . *Available at ruinedby.design and at the SMC Library reserve desk*
- Design Social Change: : take action, work toward equity, and challenge the status quo by Lesley-Ann Noel ; art by Che Lovelace. 2023 . *Available at the SMC Library reserve desk*
- Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds by adrienne maree brown. 2017. *Available at* akpress.org *and in SMC Library stacks*
- The Rules We Break: Lessons in Play, Thinking, and Design by Eric Zimmerman. 2022.
- Graphic Design Thinking: Beyond Brainstorming by Ellen Lupton. 2011. *Available in SMC's digital library*
- Design Thinking: Understanding How Designers Think and Work by Nigel Cross. 2011.

## BECCA'S OFFICE HOURS & EMAIL

**Office hours:**
Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30, in the A&D MacLab | Wednesdays, 12:30-1:30 in my office, Sloane 150
Or by appointment.

**Contact:** I can be reached via email at rgurney@smcvt.edu. Or via the message function in our course in Canvas. Please allow 12-24 hours for a response.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Your work belongs to you; what you make is the outcome of your creative decisions. However, Saint Michael's College and the Art & Design program reserve the right to show, to the public, work produced in classes. When doing so, credit will be given to you as creator and owner of the work. If you do not want your work shown in this way, tell the instructor.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**You are expected to comply with the SMC policy on academic integrity.** Any evidence of plagiarism (verbal or visual) for the completion of assignments is prohibited.

**No assignments or projects generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools will be accepted (verbal or visual)**, unless otherwise explained and allowed for in writing by the instructor.

In line with any plagiarism guidelines, If you didn't write it (or draw it), don't put your name on it and claim that you did. Do not modify a few words (shapes, colors) here and there and claim it, either.

- If any AI tools are used, they must be approved by the instructor and be cited when turning in the assignment. For example if you use AI generative backgrounds in artwork, they must be credited.
- AI tools are useful for research and ideation. When using any AI (verbal or visual) for ideation, provide the source(s) and answers found. Be sure to research those answers—AI often gets things wrong!