

Course Overview



UGBA 190T, NeedFinding in the Wild 2 units

Teaching Team

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Description

In this class, we teach a qualitative approach to understanding customers in new ways. We believe that innovation is fundamentally a way of materializing customer needs. As such the success of any innovation (or lean start-up) relies on a deep connection with customers. To this end we will teach how to conduct good customer observations and interviews with an emphasis on developing empathy, a “beginner’s mindset” and the revealing of unspoken (or emerging) needs through customer stories.

We will use the **Design Thinking** process with a particular focus on ethnographic interviewing, framing and re-framing. It is important to recognize how qualitative research (customer information gathered through ethnography) informs the innovation process. We will thoroughly cover the details of interviewing, recruiting and field guide development in the context of a design challenge. Every question implies a frame and by asking questions that reveal unexpected answers we reframe our problem and open up an opportunity space for innovation.

Central to the practice of Design Thinking are human needs that lead to the conceptualization of products, environments, systems, and services. For this class you will conduct; fieldwork in public and private settings; readings on social ethnographic issues; and a needs-centered design challenge. Emphasis is on developing the flexible thinking skills that enable the design researcher to transition from being a problem solver (working on problems she has been given by others) to becoming a design leader who finds, re-frames and defines problems. This is the transition from *receiving* established design requirements, to *creating* them. **This class is highly interactive and is based on in-class experiential activities – being in class is essential.**