Course Title: Building Innovative Teams
Course Code: DSN 300 W – Fall Quarter 2020
Instructors: Tamara Carleton; Reinhold Steinbeck

Required Texts

There are no required texts for this course; however, we will regularly post links to recent news articles and other supplementary materials that relate to certain topics. At times, we may also point you to optional supplementary material if you are interested in learning more about anything beyond what this course requires.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR): No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC): Students must complete at least 80% of class assignments and exercises to receive course credit (Recommended).

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose the Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

Tentative Zoom Schedule*:

A live class meeting will be held each week. Days and times are to be determined and will likely vary from week to week. The live video sessions are recorded, and participation is optional.

Invited guest speakers for Fall Quarter 2020 include:

- Chris Flink, Executive Director, The Exploratorium, a public learning laboratory in San Francisco, and former senior partner at IDEO, the global innovation company based in the Bay Area
- Jessica Kessin, Design Thinking Instructor with the Executive Education Program at Stanford’s Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (a.k.a. dschool)

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Tentative Weekly Outline:

This is an online course. While necessarily structured differently from an on-campus classroom course, the course maintains a similar level of instructor engagement through videos, interactive exercises, and discussion with fellow students, as well as optional videoconferencing (also called Zoom) sessions.

Throughout the course, we will mix multiple types of content, specifically:

- **Lectures:** You will notice that the 'lectures' for this course are relatively short. Instead of focusing on design research or business theory, we think you will gain more value by seeing the ideas we introduce each week applied to real life. As part of mixing up content and integrating perspectives from within and outside our community, we will occasionally share videos (max. five minutes) and resources from other experts to complement and extend our own stories. We also think this makes the learning experience livelier as well.

- **Discussions:** As part of the assignments and ongoing team interaction, we will encourage active discussion to dig into and discuss the topics addressed on different weeks.

  There is also a "Class Comments and Questions" discussion that is open throughout the course. This is a great place to post thoughts or questions related to the course topics, that don't seem to fit in any of the other discussions. Or, questions about the structure of the course, assignment expectations, class grading requirements, and so on.

- **Assignments:** We provide assignments as a way to practice and apply the material because we feel that the best way to learn is by doing. All assignments are noted in the course schedule section, and we will explain due dates and the submission process each week. Generally, all assignments listed should be turned in by midnight of the following Sunday, which gives you approximately seven days to complete each week's set of assignments.

**Weekly Routine**

Each week, you should work through a module—review the lecture, complete the readings and assignments, participate in the discussions, watch the live class meeting recording (if you were unable to attend), and so on. The expectation is that you will keep up with each week's materials, including meeting any deadlines for discussion participation and assignments so you are prepared to take on the following week's lesson. This is especially important if you are enrolled for credit.
Here are some key days of the week:

- **Monday**: Each week begins on Monday.
- **Friday**: The module for the upcoming week will be available by the afternoon.
- **Weekends**: Weekends are a great time to catch up with the current week's work. It is also a chance to get a head start on the upcoming week's work.
- **Sunday**: Each week ends on Sunday.

**Week 1: Lesson – Creating a Learning Culture**

We will dive into the course by exploring the concepts of team and learning cultures, and how in a learning culture, teams continuously seek, share, and apply new knowledge and skills to improve their individual and group performance.

This course draws on the history and lessons from the seminal ME310 class, as taught and experienced at Stanford University. In a short video, Professor Larry Leifer, who has taught this class during the past 20 years, talks about the types of problems faced by teams in the ME310 class. We will reference key lessons and research insights in team collaboration from ME310 throughout this course.

**Student Outcomes**

*Students will be able to:*
- Define the concepts of team and culture
- Understand the premise of the Stanford ME310 course as course / research input
- Practice observing team dynamics in terms of culture and learning

**Week 2: Lesson – Building T-Teams**

In our second week together, the theme is building T-Teams. We introduce several related concepts:

- A **“T-shaped person”** who looks like the letter T by combining depth of expertise (such as engineering) with the breadth of experience (such as business)
- A **T-Team** that applies the T-shaped person concept to a group
- **Team of Teams** that describes how many of us work today in distributed and overlapping groups

Two readings and two assignments explore these concepts in more depth. One reading also describes a special type of person called a “catalyst” who elevates an entire team performance.
Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

• Explain the concept of a T-shaped person versus a T-Team
• Introduce the related concept of “team of teams”
• Identify and analyze an example of a T-Team and “catalyst” leader in your life

Week 3: Lesson – Collaborating Versus Coordinating

Week Three focuses on collaborating versus coordinating, which has been a key lesson from decades of student team projects in the Stanford ME310 class.

In our readings, we explore the concept of group norms and the importance of psychological safety – especially in light of a recent study by Google about what makes the best team. We also introduce a simple technique of “yes, and…” that has a long tradition at Stanford.

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

• Understand the concept of group norms
• Describe the concept of psychological safety and its importance to teamwork
• Distinguish between collaborating versus coordinating
• Practice “yes, and…” as a technique for fostering collaboration

Week 4: Lesson – Why Build to Think

This week’s theme is about building.

We describe a core belief in Stanford’s design community about “building to think”, meaning that another way to learn is by getting tangible through prototyping.

We also discuss the challenge of rebuilding teams, and some of your readings delve into specific tactics, such as using curiosity to understand team issues and dynamics.

We bring these concepts into an assignment mashup that asks you to prototype a team rebuild. A second assignment explores an aspect of one reading through a curiosity conversation.

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

• Explore the notion of rebuilding teams
• Understand the meaning of "build to think"
• Practice using Paper Mockups as a prototyping technique
• Practice being curious about a team member

Week 5: Lesson – Five Horses

Last week we discussed the importance of building teams and building prototypes concurrently.

This week we focus on a set of prototypes we have nicknamed as the “five horses”: dark, white, blue, green, and red. Each prototype explores a different angle to a problem and is best explored with a team.

We encourage you to adopt this maker mindset at work. This means that we literally want you to get tangible and physical with exploring alternate representations of a solution or path forward. You have one reading and one assignment this week in the spirit of the five horses.

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:
• Describe five prototype variations
• Experiment using one of the prototype variations in a team setting

Week 6: Lesson – All Design Is Redesign

You have made it to the last week of this short course… congratulations!

This week, we focus on an axiom from Stanford’s design community that “all design is redesign” and a related corollary that “all learning is un-learning”.

In terms of building innovative teams, we discuss post-mortems and their cousin pre-mortems as (un)learning tools. You have two short readings and an assignment that invites you to conduct a hypothetical pre-mortem or post-mortem of your choice.

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:
• Understand the notion that all design is redesign
• Define what is a team post-mortem and pre-mortem
• Reflect on facilitating a pre-mortem or post-mortem about team effectiveness

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