

Jessica Helfand +
Michael Bierut

T 8:30-11:30

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MGT 653

Twelve Design Ideas that Changed the World

Course Objectives + Description

This introductory survey course will set the stage for understanding design as a catalyst in business by presenting twelve seminal design problems, across a variety of fields and industries, each highlighting the central motives—and methods—that yield successful outcomes. Each week we will invite one client or designer (or client/designer team) to present a project in depth. (In some cases, we may welcome a corporate leader in conversation with a leading scholar here at Yale.) Students will work independently and in teams to research and respond, the following week, with analysis, critique, and alternate solutions. From public health to public space, retail strategy to political positioning, education to journalism to biotechnology, we want to explore how design works within complex organizations to help shape decisions, ideas, products, and more.

Enrollment Process

Non-SOM students are asked to submit, via email, a brief, 150-word explanation of why you believe you should be admitted to this class by August 15. List any relevant design experience (not required for this course, but helpful for us to know). We are capping the class at 25, with preference given to SOM students.

Course Requirements

In this course, you will consider the pivotal role design plays in a variety of industries. Over the course of the semester you will begin to familiarize yourself with the obstacles as well as the opportunities for design as a catalyst for transformative growth and change in business—and you will do this in four fundamental ways, each of which will comprise a quarter of your grade.

Why Practice Matters

Design is a practice that requires keen observation: attendance is key. Counts for 25% of your final grade.

Why Process Matters

In design, process is as valuable and critical as the final product, often more so. Counts for 25% of your final grade.

The 100 Days Project

One action daily, repeated for 100 days, and included in your dossier. Counts for 25% of your final grade.

Weekly Presentations

Design is synonymous with clarity and communication. Counts for 25% of your final grade.

01 | Observing

Each week, guest speakers will present projects in which design has played a significant role. They will share their failures as well as their successes, sharing the evidence of their efforts which is likely to be primarily visual. Your first requirement is to **pay close attention to what they show** as well as say. *Your focus here is observational.*

02 | Collecting

For the duration of the term, you will be asked to **keep a dossier** on all the speakers, their projects, and your own work in the course. This dossier can be analog or digital, as simple as a notebook and as sophisticated as a website: you will choose the format and the organizational structure for your material. *Your focus here is organizational.*

03 | Making

Musicians practice scales, athletes stretch before sports—and designers make things. You can not understand design unless you actually produce something yourself—and while it is not our plan to turn you into designers, we believe that **the recurring act of making something** is a necessary exercise. *Your focus here is operational.*

03 | Presenting

Weekly **“pecha kucha” style presentations** will allow students to respond to the previous week’s guest speaker and allow you to hone your skills as visual and verbal communicators, something critical to every aspect of design. *Your focus here is public.*

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Weekly Class Structure

8:30-9:30	Student Presentations
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-10:00	Guest Speaker Introductions
10:00-11:00	Guest Presentation
11:00-11:30	Q+A with Speakers
11:30-12:15	Podcast*
12:30-1:30	Lunch with Speakers (student signups)

We will circulate, in our first hour, between individual “pecha kucha” style presentations from students (responding to the previous week’s guest speaker) and occasional lectures from Professors Helfand and Bierut (on topics of relevance to our studies). Students will have the option to sign up for lunches with speakers, pending their availability, following our podcast recordings.

Expectations

Promptness. Kindness. Alertness. Showing up with an open mind and an even more open heart. Design is about looking, really looking, and that takes time, effort, and patience. Come prepared and engaged, and leave your preconceived notions at the door—with your post-it notes.

Books and Readings

One reading per week will be paired to the area of expertise of each speaker. (We are likely to question you about these readings so, as the length and frequency of them is not onerous, we suggest you pay attention to them.) We will occasionally call your attention to other, more timely readings in design culture and theory, and will link to these readings on Canvas.

Partial List of Confirmed Speakers

Deborah Berke, Dean, Yale School of Architecture
Steve Duenes, Graphics Editor, The New York Times
Teddy Goff, Digital Director, Obama for America
Leslie Koch, President and CEO, The Trust for Governor’s Island
Danny Meyer, Union Square Hospitality Group
Douglas Powell, Distinguished Designer, IBM
Paula Scher, Partner, Pentagram
Susan Sellers, Former Creative Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Office

Room 3560 Evans Hall
Office Hours TBA