ACAD-360: Design Consulting: Problem Solving for Organizations

Units: 4
Day-Time: Tu/Th 10-11:50am
Location: SKS 404
Instructor: Steve Barth

Office: Stonier Hall 331
Office Hours: Tu/Th 12–2 and by appointment
Contact Info: sbarth@usc.edu, 213.821.9844
Website: http://iovine-young.usc.edu/

IT Help: http://iovine-young.usc.edu/ait/index.html
Hours: M–F, 8:30am–5:30pm
Contact Info: iyhelp@usc.edu, 213.821.9844

Catalogue Description
This course takes a professional, collaborative and multidisciplinary consulting approach to diagnosing problems and applying design-based solutions on behalf of organizations.

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This course takes a professional, collaborative and multidisciplinary consulting approach to diagnosing problems and applying design-based solutions on behalf of organizations. The course draws on student knowledge and skills garnered from previous Academy coursework in design, technology and business, and references additional perspectives from psychology, anthropology, sociology, public policy, complexity science, and other areas. For this experience, Academy methods and frameworks are synthesized toward preparing students to analyze multiple facets of an organization (for-profit and not-for-profit), and designing solutions for maximum positive impact.

Learning Objectives
Students will demonstrate, through a series of assignments and projects, requisite knowledge to:

▪ Establish and maintain productive working relationships with real-world clients, partners or other stakeholders
▪ Write proposals, agreements and statements of work for any kind of engagement and deliverables
▪ Lead or collaborate in high-performance teams and organizations
▪ Use primary and secondary research and analysis methods in UX, marketing, etc.
▪ Bring multiple diagnostic and creative problem-solving tools to bear in ambiguous situations
▪ Develop comprehensive business and implementation plans to execute the chosen strategy or solution.
▪ Articulate insights, conclusions and recommendations with compelling rational and emotional arguments.

In addition, you will exercise the following skills:

▪ Critical thinking: Develop the awareness to identify problems and opportunities, create hypotheses, gather data through primary and secondary research sources, and draw conclusions in environments of high uncertainty
▪ Collaboration: Share ideas and form group work products in impromptu and organized team environments without formal structure
▪ Effective Communication: Create and deliver concise, compelling oral, written and visual presentations; convey the essence of the critical thinking process and defend conclusions rationally
▪ Quantitative business analysis: Leverage metrics and models to understand markets, choose among potential outcomes and make better decisions.

Prerequisite(s)
ACAD 181 and 182 or permission from instructor. Please notify Amber Bradley (aebradle@usc.edu) if you are interested in enrolling in the course.

Course Notes
Almost any problem worth solving (whether a problem or opportunity) involved multiple perspectives and stakeholders. Such problems are often so complex they are referred to as “wicked.” This is not a course about working for a consulting firm, but the approach works because these problems involve more stakeholders that anyone has direct authority over. In the words of Peter Block, “a consultant [has] influence over an individual, a group, or an organization, but no direct power to make changes or implement programs.”

Every aspect of this course is designed to teach students to bring their talents, education and experience to bear in the service of others. As such, the primarily focus of ACAD-360 is on hands-on collaboration within cross-functional teams and in professional interactions with clients and stakeholders.

In our exercises and projects, this course uses books, cases, articles and online material, plus videos and other media content to develop broadly defined consulting skills and problem-solving methodologies. We will often use current new journalistic, academic or professional publications as they appear. I will occasionally assign you to research your own sources of information. Our reading material is subject to change as class discussions evolve. Please suggest additional resources for discussion whenever you find something valuable. Since using the work of others with attribution is encouraged, there is no justification for using the work of others without credit. Plagiarism will have serious consequences (see below). Be discriminating, too, about which sources are credible for the ideas or information you use.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
NA

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
All students will read the following books (purchase digitally or in paperback)

Short readings as assigned (see reading list) will be available on Blackboard, through the USC library system or purchased through an online course pack.

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Most assignments in class are delivered (or uploaded to BB) in workplace formats (slides, memos) and linked together to support each project. As such, professionalism and attribution count in my feedback and grading. The basis for most evaluations is ultimately whether a student meets, misses or exceeds the expectations set when the assignment is given. As much as possible, deliverables will be shared and discussed in class and can be revised pending feedback. Every student owes constructive feedback to her or his colleagues.

Grading Breakdown
Earning an A or A- in this class means that you went well beyond the minimum requirements for assignments, participation, etc. To exceed my expectations is, by definition, to surprise me. That’s what successful innovators and entrepreneurs do when they delight customers and disrupt market. There is no hard curve for this course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness Essay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project 3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project 4 (final)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Essay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluations (4)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale (Example)**
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale
A 95-100
A- 90-94
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F 59 or below

**Assignment Rubrics**
Assignment rubrics will prioritize the quality of your research and analysis, the uniqueness of your solutions, the credibility of your recommendations, the thoroughness of your plans, and the depth of your engagement with teammates and clients.

**Assignment Submission Policy**
Details about how/when assignments are to be submitted are specific to each assignment.

**Grading Timeline**
Feedback and grades will be given in a timely manner depending on type of assignment or exam.

**Additional Policies**
This course builds value through conversation, collaboration and iterative projects. However, the secret of team efforts is that they require more individual responsibility—not less. Both the university and your colleagues will expect you to dedicate considerable time outside of class on individual assignments and shared deliverables. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester.
The science is clear that connected devices diminish personal learning and distract others in the learning environment. Leave laptops, tablets or phones alone unless we are actively accessing information as part of class activities.

**Attendance and Class Participation**
You need to be in class, on time, and ready to participate every day. Because of the importance of talking about and applying the concepts, attendance and participation in each class is the only method of fully understanding these specialized topics. Attendance will be noted and count toward your final participation grade. After two unexcused absences, your final class grade may be lowered by 5% for each additional unexcused absence.
Communication and Online Materials
It is your responsibility to check our Blackboard site and your USC email account. Any emails I send to the class will use the USC email account attached to your registration. All course materials, including slides, additional reading, handouts and assignments, as well as class grades will be available in Blackboard (https://blackboard.usc.edu). Be sure to check Blackboard if you must miss a class. You are responsible for any materials presented and assignments made even if you are not in class that day.

File formats
Unless I specify otherwise, all assignments are to be submitted via Blackboard in PDF or Microsoft Office formats. It’s your responsibility to make sure assignments open as intended on my computers. I often leave style and formatting up to you (fonts, layout, etc.), but make sure you work is labeled and professional. Documents exceeding 1 page or slide in length must have footers containing page numbers and the file name on all pages. Files should be labeled as follows: Yourlastname_assignmentname (i.e. Adams_Self-assessment). Team submissions should be labeled by the team number – i.e., Team5_Assignment.

Course Schedule: Weekly Breakdown (Subject to Change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Preparation</th>
<th>Deliverable/Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 Course Unboxing: The Consulting Mindset</td>
<td>Why Management Consultants; Hypothesis-Driven Thinking; Flawless chapters 1-3</td>
<td>Complete personality instrument;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our Wicked World (Intro to Complexity/VUCA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2 Building strong teams and stakeholder relationships</td>
<td>Making Star Teams from Star Players; Speeding Up Team Learning; Flawless 4-6</td>
<td>Form Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 Project 1 Launch; Coming to terms with a client; Defining a problem and the project scope</td>
<td>Wicked Problem Solvers; Teaching Smart People How to Learn; 3-D Chess; Flawless 7-9</td>
<td>Project 1 SOW; Self-Evaluation Essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4 Brainstorming, data-gathering and analysis methods</td>
<td>Living in the Futures; Flawless 10-12</td>
<td>Project 1 Research/Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 Brainstorming, data-gathering and analysis methods</td>
<td>Deming to DevOps; Flawless 10-12</td>
<td>Project 1 Recommendations/Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6 Building from methods to methodologies Project 2 Launch;</td>
<td>Leader’s Framework for Decision-Making; Flawless 13-15</td>
<td>Project 2 SOW; Peer Eval 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 Design thinking frameworks for problem solving and business approaches to consulting</td>
<td>Flawless 20; Concepts in Complexity from a Study of Architecture; Attractive Things Work Better; Clumsy Solutions for Wicked Problems</td>
<td>Project 2 Research/Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8 Business frameworks for problem solving and business approaches to consulting</td>
<td>Deming to DevOps; McKinsey 1-3</td>
<td>Project 2 Recommendations/Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9 Project 3 Launch; Consulting Ethics</td>
<td>Ethics: A Basic Framework; McKinsey 4-5</td>
<td>Project 3 SOW; Peer Eval 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10 Working in context: organizational cultures</td>
<td>Manager as Anthropologist; Anthropology of Knowledge; McKinsey 6-8</td>
<td>Project 3 Research/Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11 Working in context: organization designs</td>
<td>Social Brain Hypothesis; How Institutions Think; Cult of Three Cultures; Dismantling the Divide;</td>
<td>Project 3 Recommendations/Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12 Project 4 Launch; Presentation and persuasion</td>
<td>Think Your Way to Clear Writing; Visualizations That Really Work; Science of Persuasion</td>
<td>Project 4 SOW; Peer Eval 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13 Complexity, VUCA and Wicked Problems</td>
<td>New Dynamics of Strategy; Strength of Weak Ties;</td>
<td>Project 4 Research/Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14 Complexity, VUCA and Wicked Problems</td>
<td>Wicked Problems and Social Complexity; Mythical Man-Month;</td>
<td>Project 4 Recommendations/Draft Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15 Course review</td>
<td>Reflection Essays; Peer Eval 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL Delivery and discussion of Project 4</td>
<td>Date: For the date/time of the final, see USC Schedule of Classes at <a href="http://www.usc.edu/soc">www.usc.edu/soc</a>.</td>
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Detailed Reading List

**Books** (numbers in weekly schedule indicate chapters)
  1. A Consultant by Any Other Name
  2. Techniques Are Not Enough
  3. Flawless Consulting
  4. Contracting Overview
  5. The Contracting Meeting
  6. The Agonies of Contracting
  7. The Internal Consultant
  8. Understanding Resistance
  9. Dealing with Resistance
  10. From Diagnosis to Discovery
  11. Whole-System Discovery
  12. Discovering Gifts, Capacities, and Possibilities
  13. Get the Picture
  14. Preparing for Feedback
  15. Managing the Meeting for Action
  16. Implementation
  17. The Elements of Engagement
  18. Teacher as Consultant
  19. The Heart of the Matter

  1. Framing the Problem
  2. Designing the Analysis
  3. Gathering the Data
  4. Interpreting the Results
  5. Presenting Your Ideas
  6. Managing Your Team
  7. Managing Your Client
  8. Managing Yourself

**Articles, Etc.** *(Required readings—shown in schedule—plus optional readings)*


Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office http://equity.usc.edu and/or to the Department of Public Safety http://dps.usc.edu. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp provides 24/7 confidential support.

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://ali.usc.edu, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://dsp.usc.edu provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.