

Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism
**COMM 499: Life Design Workshop – Applying Third Space Thinking to Your
Most Important Project**
Spring 2018
2 units – 15 weeks

Instructor:	Chris Swain
Email:	cswain@usc.edu
Phone:	310 403 0798
Office Hours:	By appt

Class Meeting Time and Location: Thursday, 6:30-8:10pm, ANN 305

Course Description

Background and Rationale: In this course students apply the Third Space Thinking toolkit to the universally-relevant challenge of crafting a personalized road map for their life after college. Students build self-awareness via assessments and in-class exercises. They apply problem solving tools to tune in to their own needs, and generate a dossier of documents and connections that they can utilize long term.

Why Life Design: An emerging body of research shows that today’s generation places high value on finding work with meaning. In addition, this generation has increased expectations about their vocational path in comparison to previous generations. They bring this mindset to a labor market that is more demanding of skill and more technologically fluid than ever. They enter at a time where the boundaries between personal and professional life are blurring at an accelerating rate. While life’s hard questions have always been hard for young people they are particularly complex today. As a result, today’s generation has demonstrated great thirst for guidance in figuring out these questions.

The objectives of Life Design Workshop are:

- Learn fundamentals of approaching “wicked” problems and apply them to creating potential life plans
- Participate in a hands-on, exercise-based process that helps students build self-awareness, empathic interviewing skills, and constructive feedback skills.
- Develop the concept of a coherent, successful life through group discussion and exercises.
 - This class is not about “finding your passion”. It is about understanding who you are and building skills to succeed in the world on your own terms.
 - Plan includes creation of multiple 1 year, 5 year and 10 year visions for where the student hopes to go and the skills they will need to get there. Their plan will identify skill gaps in their education that they will need to fill.
- Get personalized one-on-one guidance from mentors that may include classmates, faculty, USC Career Services personnel, and Trojan Connect connections
- Position themselves for success via the Startup of You mindset to be applied to a LinkedIn profile and Trojan Connect interviews
- Prototype experiences that will allow the student to test assumptions
- Understand how to build a life-long learning strategy

Requirements: This is a 2-unit course for letter grade. Each week students receive a combination of short lectures, self-awareness exercises, problem solving exercises, and/or group support exercises. Students create a dossier that forms a personalized, roadmap for their life after college.

Grading Criteria

The following percentage breakdown will be used in determining the grade for the course.

Critical Analysis of Readings and Assignments – including pop quizzes	15
Self-Awareness In-Class Exercises	15
Self-Awareness Assignments	15
Problem Solving In-Class Exercises	20
Problem Solving Assignments	20
Student Experience Prototype	15
Total	100

Assignments build on one another must be completed on time via email. Late assignments will be penalized. If you are unable to turn in an assignment on time you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused.

Critical Analysis of Readings and Assignments – including pop quizzes (15%)

A portion of each class session will be dedicated to discussing of the readings and your experience with the assignments. Students are expected to contribute critical thought about each during this discussion. Students should expect a number of pop quizzes designed to evaluate if you are keeping up with the readings.

Self-Awareness In-Class Exercises (15%)

Students will engage in a series of in-class exercises with their classmates designed to build self-awareness. The exercises are performative and students are expected to apply themselves to completing and discussing them.

Self-Awareness Assignments (15%)

Students will complete a series of practice-oriented step-by-step assignments. The assignments are largely journaling in nature to build self-awareness of core concepts. Students are expected to apply critical thought and effort to the assignments.

Problem Solving In-Class Exercises (20%):

Students will engage in a series of problem solving exercises in-class to train them to overcome ambiguity. The exercises are performative and students are expected to apply themselves to completing and discussing them.

Problem Solving Assignments (20%)

Students will create a series of documents and simple prototypes to help them understand life pursuits that may suit them after USC.

Student Experience Prototype (15%)

Each student will complete a Student Experience Prototype as a key deliverable of their journey through this course.

All work in this course will be evaluated on the following:

- 1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your in-class participation and written work)
- 2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms structured around a clearly stated argument
- 3) your ability to creatively explore and apply theories and methodologies from class readings, lectures, media, and discussions

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and engaging work; a grade of A+ (97-100) may be given where expectations are exceeded
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through
C and below	fulfilling the minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A+	= 97-100	C	= 76-74
A	= 96-94	C-	= 73-70
A-	= 93-90	D+	= 69-67
B+	= 89-87	D	= 66-64
B	= 86-84	D-	= 63-60
B-	= 83-80	F	= 59-0
C+	= 79-77		

Books

Hoffmann, Reid (2012) *Startup of You*

Burnett, Bill and Evans Dave (2016) *Designing Your Life*

Class Policies and Resources

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 Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. 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, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

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://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and*

Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html 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.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 (date: XX): Overview: Designing a Life that is Right for You

Lecture

Overview of Third Space Thinking problem solving and review of syllabus and expectations.

Third Space Thinking is a problem solving methodology characterized by the attributes of:

1. Adaptability
Demonstrate mental agility and tolerance for risk in ambiguous situations; be flexible when handling change and less likely to rely on legacy solutions. Think beyond black-and-white to the gray areas, and ask expansive, unexpected questions that lead to better solutions.
2. Cultural Competence
Have a capacity to think, act and move across multiple boundaries of functions, silos and global cultures, including the sometimes insular worlds of engineering, law, and business.
3. Empathy
Formally listen to the needs of the people involved the ecosystem a product/service. Demonstrate emotional intelligence and effective listening and collaboration ability. Consider and include the views of others across a variety of disciplines, cultures and perspectives.
4. Intellectual Curiosity
Asking questions makes the invisible visible. Have a deep hunger to learn and grow. Show a desire to dig deep – to be creative and willing to risk and experiment in order to learn. Ask questions in structured format.
5. 360 Degree Thinking
Think holistically – understand the full ecosystem of a problem across time and multiple touchpoints, recognize patterns, and make imaginative leaps based on those patterns.

In this class we will build these attributes and make a dossier of personal exploration materials to help you design a life path tailored to who you are.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Social Styles Assessment and Group Exercise

Assignment

Students complete self-awareness assignments provided by instructor on Blackboard – due Week 2

- Beginner's Mind Personal Essay – students reflect on key questions about who they are and where they want to go in life.
- Skill Over Passion Assessment –students do self-analysis on the skills they have and the skills they would like to develop. Students reflect on the contrast (if any) between these skills and any passions they would consider pursuing.

Readings for Next Week

1. Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (Eds.), (2002). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
2. Schaffer, Owen (2013), *Crafting Fun User Experiences: A Method to Facilitate Flow*, Human Factors International
3. Pink, Daniel (2009). Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Week 2 (date XX): Intrinsic Motivation and Flow

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

In the field of Psychology, Intrinsic Motivation refers to behavior that a person pursues because they find it personally engaging or rewarding. This contrasts with Extrinsic Motivation, which refers to behavior that a person pursues in order to earn external rewards or avoid punishments. There are three core components in Intrinsic Motivation theory:

- Autonomy
- Competence
- Relatedness

Flow theory, also from Psychology, refers to a state of operation marked by a feeling of energized focus and involvement.

This lecture sets the stage for the broad components of a satisfying life and how to achieve them.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Empathic Interviewing – students learn how to conduct an Empathic Interview by practicing on one another. This skill will be used in multiple places in the course.

Assignment

Students complete two personal assessments:

- Life/Health/Love/Work Dashboard – students assign values to where they are in four elements of their lives – Life, Health, Love, and Work. Students reflect on steps they can take to get a more desired balance on their dashboard
- Gratitude Dashboard – students reflect on the positive things in their lives. Students are provided a mechanism to practice gratitude and are given an explanation of why this is valuable.

Due next week

Readings for Next Week

1. Newport, Cal (2012) So Good They Can't Ignore You (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 7)

Week 3 (date XX): Skill Not Passion

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture discusses the shortcomings of leading with passion when pursuing life choices. As Dr. Cal Newport described in this week's reading this challenge can be reframed. So "Do What You Love" becomes "Learn to Love What You Do". Adopting a craftsman's mindset towards quality and competence enables one to build skill that is personally rewarding.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Constructive Feedback exercise. Students learn principles of constructive feedback and practice doing it with one another. This skill will be used throughout the course in in-class feedback sessions.

Assignment

Students complete a personal exercise to write about their Work View and Life View. Afterwards they work to understand where these things are aligned and not aligned and create a personal Compass statement. Students will revisit this assignment at the end of the course.

Readings for Next Week

1. Burnett, Bill and Evans, Dave (2016) Designing Your Life (Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 8)
2. Wicked Problems - https://www.wickedproblems.com/1_wicked_problems.php

Week 4 (date XX): Wicked Problems, Anchor Problems, and Gravity Problems

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture discusses archetypal problems that tend to stymie the life design process – specifically wicked problems (ongoing challenges which are changed by attempts at solutions), anchor problems (overcommitted life choices that keep people stuck), and gravity problems (problems which are out of your control and must thus be accepted – like gravity). By understanding these problems the students can identify when they are experiencing them and thus work to accept or overcome them.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Students work in groups of 3-4 to systematically discuss how to align their Workview, Lifeview, and Compass statements.

Assignment

- Good Time Journal - Students complete a journal of daily activities using an online worksheet provided by the Instructor.
- AEIOU – Students reflect on their Good Time Journals by asking questions related to Activities, Environments, Interactions, Objects, and Users.

Due Week 5, 6, and 7: Students complete both iteratively over the course of three weeks.

Readings for Next Week

1. How Reframing a Problem Unlocks Innovation - <https://www.fastcodesign.com/1672354/how-reframing-a-problem-unlocks-innovation>
2. Reframing is a Strategic Skill and a Design Thinking Skill - <http://innovationexcellence.com/blog/2010/06/16/reframing-is-a-strategic-skill-and-a-design-thinking-skill/>
3. Johansson, Frans (2006) The Medici Effect: What Elephants and Epidemics Can Teach Us About Innovation (Chapters 1 and 2)

Week 5 (date XX): The Art of Reframing

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture prepares the student for an ideation process designed to build on all the materials they have prepared to date and generate a large number of ideas. The lecture goes through the basics of intersectional versus directional innovation and demonstrates that – counterintuitively - quantity of ideas begets quality of ideas. Students learn – again building on previous material - that a key to overcoming ambiguity is a rapid testing of assumptions and reframing the problem (also known as prototyping).

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Three kinds of Mind Maps – students generate three Mind Maps – Engagement Map, Energy Map, and Flow Map. Students then work in groups of 3-4 to critique and discuss.

Assignment

Mind Maps - Students build version 2 of each of their Mind Maps and write out a list of patterns that emerge from the overall exercise. Due next week.

Readings for Next Week

1. Burnett, Bill and Evans, Dave (2016) Designing Your Life (Chapter 6)

Week 6 (date XX): Embrace Your Multiple Personalities

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture explains that each of us has many interests and there are many ways to live life. Labor statistics are cited to show patterns in careers across different generations. The lecture prepares the student to create three different “Odyssey Plans” – e.g. 5 year plans for life immediately after USC.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Odyssey Plans – students generate the skeletons of three alternate 5 year plans using a format provided by the instructor. Students then work in groups of 3-4 to critique and discuss.

Assignment

Odyssey Plans – students build version 2 of each of their Odyssey Plans and write out a list of patterns that emerge from the overall exercise. Due next week.

Question Lists – students build lists of questions in a format provided by the instruction to a) types of people they would interview to learn about / test assumptions about the career choices they have made and b) types of short experiences they would ideally have to learn about / test assumptions about potential life choices, c) types of jobs they would pursue.

Readings for Next Week

1. USC Career Services website – <https://careers.usc.edu/>
2. USC Career Network - <http://careers.usc.edu/students/find-a-mentor/career-network/>
3. Hoffmann, Reid (2012) – Startup of You (Chapters 1, 2, 3)
4. Hoffmann, Reid (2012) – Startup of You: Advanced Tips for Using LinkedIn - <http://www.thestartupofyou.com/wp-content/themes/startupofyoutheme2012/img/TheStart-UpofYou-AdvancedLinkedInTips.pdf>

Week 7 (date XX): Startup of You + USC Resources for Career Planning (guest speaker: Denise Johnson, USC Career Center)

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture exposes students to the depth of resources available via the USC Career Center – including counselors, Trojan Connect alumni network, USC LinkedIn Groups, free headshot photographs, Event series, etc. Guest speaker Denise Johnson from USC Career Services presents and provides a walkthrough of key online resources and answers student questions.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Students meet in groups of 3-4 with USC Career Counselors and discuss their materials created in-class to date.

Assignment

Career Beam – students complete the Career Beam online assessment and write a summary of the findings. Due next week.

ABZ Plan – students follow the Startup of You ABZ Planning Exercise. In the resulting document students will formulate a Plan A based on their competitive advantage, and get a framework to iterate and adapt that plan based on feedback from this course and lessons learned.

LinkedIn Profile – students draft a LinkedIn profile using tips from the lecture

Readings for Next Week

1. Hoffmann, Reid (2012) – Startup of You (Chapters 4, 5)
2. Marshmallow Challenge - <http://www.tomwujec.com/design-projects/marshmallow-challenge/>
3. Dancing with Ambiguity: Causality Behavior, Design Thinking, and Triple-Loop-Learning - https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262289320_Dancing_with_Ambiguity_Causality_Behavior_Design_Thinking_and_Triple-Loop-Learning

Week 8 (date XX): Test Assumptions Early and Often

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture illustrates the concept of “building is thinking” with case studies. An idea coupled with a bias-to-action mindset results in a lot of building and knowledge gained. Prototyping methods are discussed and the point is made that to overcome ambiguity one must typically build and test a series of “selective prototypes” – each yielding info about a different facet of the overall problem. Students are exposed to product development data demonstrating that one of the most efficient ways to derive an innovative solution is rapidly build prototypes and test assumptions of those prototypes. A common mistake made when generating products is to wait until the product is ready to release to customers before testing assumptions made about those customers. These points are made in context to the necessity of building “prototypes” of life choices so the assumptions about those choices can be tested.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Empathic Interviewing – students learn how to conduct stakeholder interviews (aka prototype Conversations) as a means of testing assumptions. Students practice the method on one another.

Trojan Connect Assessment – class walks through the Trojan Connect website and USC LinkedIn features to understand how to find people relevant to the prototype Conversations they will be conducting.

Assignment

Prototype Plan - Students take their Question lists from last week and develop a list of 8+ people who may be appropriate to interview for prototype Conversations. These will likely be USC alums but can also be other people. Students must interview at least one person from their list each week for the next two weeks. In addition students develop a plan for 3+ prototype Experiences they will craft as their Final Project.

Readings for Next Week

1. Hoffmann, Reid (2012) – Startup of You (Chapter 6)
2. Burnett, Bill and Evans, Dave (2016) Designing Your Life (Chapter 7)

Week 9 (date XX): How Not to Get a Job

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

Common misconceptions about job hunting are discussed including labor data and case studies. Best practices are provided including information about strong ties and weak ties.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise

Students work in groups to critique and one another's with Conversation plan (and results) and Experience plan.

Assignment

Prototype Conversations continued – students complete their second Prototype Conversation and submit a statement about learnings from all Prototypes Conversations conducted to date.

Readings for Next Week

1. Hoffmann, Reid (2012) – Startup of You (Chapter 7)

Week 10 (date XX): Experience Prototyping Lab

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This is an extended hands-on lab sessions where students work on their Experience Prototypes. Students critique one another's work. Instructor and (possibly) USC Career Counselors assist.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise:

n/a

Assignment

Students take all materials generated to date and create a Experience Prototype plan including logistics. Due next week.

Readings for Next Week

1. Ben-Shahar, Tal (2007) Happier (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Week 11 (date XX): Guest Speaker TBD

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

Guest speaker from communication industry discusses career path and answers student questions. Ideal speaker will be someone who has worked in multiple industries and creative and/or business capacities.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise:

Students work in groups of 3-4 to further extend their Experience prototypes. Instructor and guest speaker provide critique.

Assignment

Students re-write their Workview/Lifeview/Compass with further learning about where they are aligned and not aligned.

Students continue work on their prototype Experiences and any additional prototype Conversations (optional).

Readings for Next Week

1. Ben-Shahar, Tal (2007) Happier (Chapters 6, 7, 8)

Week 12 (date XX): Happiness is a Choice

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture reviews literature on happiness and life satisfaction. Students are exposed to mindset and best practices associated with both topics. The hope is that engaged students will see these topics with fresh eyes given all of the life design exercises they have completed during the semester.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise:

n/a

Assignment

Students continue work on their Experience Prototypes. Each student is assigned a time slot to present about their learnings from conducting their Experience Prototypes. Each student will present Week 13, 14, or 15.

Readings for Next Week

n/a

Week 13 (date XX): Building Your Team – Leveraging USC and LA

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

This lecture exposes students to best practices for building a personal support team of mentors and peers and developing a mindset of designing one's life in collaboration with others.

Skill Building

In Class Exercise:

Events, Meetups, Groups Assessment – students review a list of online resources provided by instructor and generate a list of ideas for groups they may like to engage with after the semester is complete.

Student Presentations

Student Experience Prototype – Group 1

Assignment

n/a

Readings for Next Week

1. 4 Tools to Help You Identify the Skills You Need to Grow - <https://hbr.org/2016/08/4-tools-to-help-you-identify-the-skills-you-need-to-grow>
2. Burnett, Bill and Evans, Dave (2016) Designing Your Life (Chapter 10)

Week 14 (date XX) Reframing Failure + Identifying Your Skill Gaps

Lecture and Critical Analysis of Readings

Students are exposed mindset to derive value from all experiences – even ones who turn out different than planned and ones that turn out badly. Each experience is contextualized as another Experience Prototype uncovering facets of a life design plan. Key is to consciously learn from the experiences and learn how to avoid the same mistakes repeatedly.

Student Presentations

Student Experience Prototype – Group 2

Assignment

Students complete a Reframing Failure Dashboard and a Skill Gap Dashboard provided by instructor. Due next week.

Readings for Next Week

n/a

Week 15 (date XX) How to Use Your Life Design Dossier + Life Long Learning

Lecture and Discussions of Readings

Students are provided a road map for how to use the materials they have created this semester – e.g. their Life Design Dossier and evolve it over time with the models provided. Data about changing society and need for professionals to be life long learners is provided.

Student Presentations

Student Experience Prototype – Group 3

Course Wrap Up