ACAD 377: Discerning & Making II
Units: 04
Spring 2021–MW–3:00-4:50pm

Location: IYH 210 and Online

Instructor: Matthew Manos
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Hours of Service: 8:30am - 5:00pm
Contact Info: iyhelp@usc.edu, 213-821-6917

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Course Description
Discerning and Making is a course dedicated to defining, assessing, and, ultimately, proposing solutions to complex, multidimensional, and evolving problems in cooperation with partners in both the private and social or public sectors. Discerning and Making follows the Learn, Invent, Make, Report process to creative problem solving. The second edition of this course gives students the space to engage with a Wicked Problem through design research. The course will begin with a deep dive into the context of the problem at hand through desk research, stakeholder interviews, deep analysis, and problem statement exercises. Next, students will be guided through a rapid ideation session in order to develop conceptual directions for the proposed solutions. After pitching the proposed directions to faculty and guest critics, students will engage in rapid prototyping, user testing, and concept refinement. Finally, the course will end with a final presentation of the recommendations and working deliverables.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will have gained experience working as a Design Strategist in a real-world context, and will obtain skills in creative problem solving, stakeholder relations, creative collaboration, project management, and design research. Students will work in teams to engage in a unique project designed to address specific concerns by developing and applying innovative and unconventional skillsets.

Prerequisite(s): ACAD 17, ACAD 178, ACAD 179, ACAD 180. Open only to Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation students.
Co-Requisite(s): N/A
Concurrent Enrollment: N/A
Recommended Preparation: N/A

Required Readings

1. Materials will be distributed on Blackboard.

Description and Assessment of Assignments
The following is a breakdown of the assignment expectations. Unless otherwise noted, all submissions will be in the PDF format, and will be due prior to the class session via email. Each project in Discerning & Making requires each of the following to be completed:

1. **Project Plans:** Students are expected to create a plan as a team for each of their initiatives. This plan must be incorporated into a project management software that includes a calendar, gantt chart, and task list (with sub-tasks). The content in the project management software must correspond to the syllabus. In addition to the project plan, the group must identify and clearly describe the responsibilities of each team member.

   There must be one project plan for each of the two initiatives. The project plan is worth 25 points:

   - 5 points - did it include everything we required? This includes the use of an online platform, a gantt chart (or at least start and end dates), a calendar, and a way to have tasks and sub-tasks.
   - 5 points - did you include all of the assignments from our syllabus?
   - 10 points - were the students successful at making the plan granular? Or are things too high-level and hard to use? For example, instead of "build app", we would want a few tasks such as "gather feature requirements", "do initial build", "review with customers".
   - 5 points - were the team member roles clearly defined and described?

2. **Problem Statements:** Students will be challenged to distill their research findings into a single sentence that captures each problem they are solving for each client prompt. These statements should include the key stakeholder of interest, the experience of that stakeholder (key tasks, and

related steps to fulfilling those tasks), the identified obstacle, as well as the stakeholder mindset (emotion). In addition, students must provide supporting material (up to 500 words) defending the urgency of the problem.

There must be two problem statements for each of the two initiatives. This deliverable will be graded based on the inclusion of all required elements as well as the clarity of the statement, the proof of the problem's existence, and the significance of the identified problem.

3. **Research Synthesis Documentation:** Teams will create a report that highlights the research process, and distills the key insights that lead the team to the problem statement. The synthesis should not take the form of a "data dump", but instead be a compelling narrative that frames the problem clearly. The research synthesis should include: A. The context, including background information on the client. B. The research design (process). C. The problem statement. D. The key stakeholders (direct and peripheral) and their identified needs as they relate to the problem statement. E. A review of other solutions to the identified problem. F. Initial recommendations or assumptions for approaching the problem. The research must be nicely designed, and delivered by one single team member as a PDF.

There must be one research document for each of the two initiatives. This deliverable will be graded based on the inclusion of all required materials as well as the depth of investigation and quality of the synthesis.

4. **Email-Based Presentations:** Teams will craft a persuasive email-based presentation that walks the partners or stakeholders through the proposed solution directions. Three unique solution directions are required. Each direction must include a title, 100 word description, 3 clear and concise next steps that would be taken to prototype and/or validate the direction should it be selected, and an accompanying visual aid to help communicate the direction of the work.

There must be one email for each of the two initiatives. This deliverable will be graded based on the inclusion of all required materials as well as the clarity and quality of the ideas provided.

5. **Project Update 01:** This will serve as an opportunity for students to report-out on their progress on each initiative thus far. The presentation must use the Academy's T.O.A.S.T. format (Transparency, Opportunity, Analysis, Strategy, Transformation), and a maximum of 10 slides. The TOAST format is as follows:

   a. Transparency: What is the problem? Whose problem is it? How do you know that? Why is your team the right people to take this on?
   b. Opportunity: What is your concept? How does it connect to the problem, and what does it "look" like?
   c. Analysis: What else is out there, also tackling this problem (internal or external). How does this idea differentiate?
   d. Strategy: What are your next steps, should this move forward? What questions are unanswered?
   e. Transformation: What is your vision for the impact or success of this project? What will the world (or "a world") look like because of this?

   In addition, the following is the rubric we will be using to grade you (50 points/project for a total of 100 points):

   ● 15 points - Are the concepts provided clear and tangible enough? We want to see visual representations of your ideas.

- 15 points - Are you presenting in a compelling manner (using storytelling to draw us in, staying succinct, coming across as well rehearsed, motivating and inspiring your audience, fielding questions and feedback in a professional manner)?
- 15 points - Is the problem well articulated, and is there proof that the problem actually exists?
- 5 points - Have you met the 10 slide and TOAST requirement?

6. **Project Update 02:** This will serve as an opportunity for students to report-out on their progress thus far. Students are expected to demonstrate significant progress since the first update. Otherwise, project Update 02 utilizes the same rubric as Project Update 01.

7. **Final Project Presentation:** It's showtime! You will complete one final presentation for each project. For each presentation, we are expecting that each team member has a role in presenting. Each presentation will use the Academy's TOAST format. Each presentation may not be more than 15 slides. The extra slides are intended to allow you more room for visual supplements. We are expecting the final to encapsulate your process throughout the semester as well as the tangible conclusion you have come to. We are expecting you to MAKE something - make it very tangible. Wow the audience. Really bring it! Make this something you are very proud of.

   The presentations will each be graded in the following manner (75 points/project for a total of 150 points):

   a. 25 points - Success of the presentation style, design, and narrative to draw us in
   b. 25 points - Sophistication of the prototype/visual aid
   c. 25 points - Clarity of the problem, your research, and your process.

   In addition, we do not want the presentation to be any longer than 7 minutes. Please act as a facilitator, by keeping careful track of your time. For each 30 seconds that you go over, you will be docked 1% of the grade.

8. **Final Project Deliverable:** The final project deliverable is two seperate "leave-behind" decks that summarize your final solutions. As a leave-behind deck, each document should be able to survive as a stand-alone piece, without your presence. This assignment also serves as a chance for you to react to the comments and feedback received during the Final Project Presentation, in order to improve upon the end deliverable and research narrative. As a result, feedback from the presentations must be addressed in each deck. This should be shared in a single PDF file. If you must include other media (such as audio or video files), please ensure they are linked in the primary PDF for ease of access.

   The deliverable is worth 75 points/project, for a total of 150 points. Each project's deliverable will be graded based on the following criteria:

   a. 25 points - Feedback is addressed, the deck is nicely designed and easy to follow
   b. 25 points - Sophistication of the prototype/visual aid
   c. 25 points - Clarity of the problem, your research, and your process.

Asynchronous Material: In addition to the class work and assignments, you will be assessed on your ability to complete the assigned asynchronous material and related assessments.

Participation: As the course is an agency-like environment, students are expected to be active participants in the classroom, for their own teams and projects, but also as advisors to the teams and projects of other classmates. Throughout the term, students will be asked to take note of each student/group they have helped, and each student that has helped them/their group. 50% of the participation grade will be informed by the submission of a report documenting this. Failure to submit the report will result in a 50% deduction

in the participation grade. 50% of the participation grade will be informed by active participation in class, and observation of activities in small groups.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Project Plan	50 (25/Project)	5%
Problem Statements	50 (25/Project)	5%
Research Synthesis Documentation	100 (50/Project)	10%
Email-Based Presentations	100 (50/Project)	10%
Project Update 01	100 (50/Project)	10%
Project Update 02	100 (50/Project)	10%
Final Project Presentation	150 (75/Project)	15%
Final Project Deliverable	150 (75/Project)	15%
Asynchronous Material	100	10%
Participation	100	10%
Total	**1,000**	**100%**

Grading Scale
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 and below

Assignment Submission Policy
Unless otherwise noted, all assignments must be submitted as a PDF presentation. For assignments delivered in class (such as presentations), the work must be completed before the commencement of the class session in which the assignment is due. For assignments that are designated for virtual submission, one team member is expected to submit the assignment to manosm@usc.edu and dwolter@usc.edu (unless otherwise specified) by COB (6:00pm) the day the assignment is indicated as due.

Grading Timeline
Grades and feedback for all assignments will be returned to students within one week of submission.

Academy Attendance Policy
The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students and on-time attendance at all class meetings is expected. Each student will be allowed two excused absences over the course of the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished to not waste excused absences on non-critical issues, and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. Except in the case of prolonged illness or other serious issue (see below), no additional absences will be excused. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by ⅓ of a grade (e.g., an A will be

lowered to A-, and A- will be lowered to a B+, etc.). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Automatically excused absences normally many not be used for quiz, exam or presentation days. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the discretion of the instructor.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange for accommodation. Accommodation may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. All accommodations remain at the discretion of the instructor, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Additional Policies
Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties. Do not ask for extensions; the below are the extensions.

● Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline 10% deduction
● Submission between 24 and 48 hours after the deadline 20% deduction
● Submission between 48 hours and 3 days after the deadline 50% deduction
● Submission more than 3 days after the deadline 100% deduction

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Session 01 (Monday)	Session 02 (Wednesday)
01	**1/18:** Holiday: No Class	**1/20:** What we know: Course overview; Partner and challenge prompt introductions.; What we don't know: Project planning; Working group formation; Desk research.
02	**1/25:** Project Plans Due for Review In-Class; How to write a problem statement	**1/27:** Introduction to Exponential Listening; Preparation for Stakeholder Interviews
03	**2/1:** Stakeholder Interviews and/or site visits with project partner (TBD)	**2/3:** Stakeholder Interviews and/or site visits with project partner (TBD)
04	**2/8:** Synthesizing stakeholder interviews; Making sense of observational studies; In-Class Work Time	**2/10:** 1:1 Team Meetings (Synthesis and Problem Statements)
05	**2/15:** Holiday: No Class	**2/17:** Problem Statements Due for Review In-Class; Research Synthesis Documentation Due COB; Work In-Class
06	**2/22:** How to write an email; Ideation sessions; Work In-Class	**2/24:** Email-Based Presentation: Proposed Solution Directions Due before end-of-class
07	**3/1:** How to distill feedback from a client; Discussion: Modules 02-05	**3/3:** Work In-Class/1:1 Meetings
08	**3/8:** Project Update 01 Due In-Class (Day 01)	**3/10:** Project Update 01 Due In-Class (Day 01)
09	**3/15:** Work In-Class/1:1 Meetings	**3/17:** Work In-Class/1:1 Meetings
10	**3/22:** Project Update 02 Due In-Class (Day 01)	**3/24:** Project Update 02 Due In-Class (Day 01)
11	**3/29:** Work In-Class/1:1 Meetings	**3/31:** Work In-Class/1:1 Meetings
12	**4/5:** Discussion: Modules 06-09	**4/7:** Work In-Class/1:1 Meetings
13	**4/12:** Final Presentations (Day 01)	**4/14:** Final Presentations (Day 02)
Study Days		
Final Exam Slot (Date TBD): Final Deliverable/Leave-Behind Due COB		

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" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)
213-740-9355 (WELL
https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services provides immediate therapy services for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking). (wording from the site)

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

USC Policy Reporting to Title IX (213) 740-5086
https://policy.usc.edu/reporting-to-title-ix-student-misconduct/
The university encourages individuals to report prohibited conduct to the *Title IX Office*. Individuals can report to the university *Title IX Coordinator* in the *Office of Equity and Diversity.*

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421
studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.
Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.