LS 301 :: Civic Innovation

Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy

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SUMMARY

Our generation faces unprecedented challenges ranging from climate change, to income inequality, to weakening democratic institutions – how can we develop innovations that will improve the lives of citizens and shape the future of our communities?

Civic Innovation is a project based course where you will work in teams to scope a product or service for a non-profit community partner, such as: a program to increase voter turnout, a campaign to increase energy efficiency, or a public event to promote equity and diversity in school. You will learn techniques in collective intelligence, human-centered service design, and agile project management and communication, for designing civic innovations.

This course will prepare you for careers in design, community development, public policy, management, and consulting.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

There are 4 sets of ideas that Civic Innovation will focus on:

- **Collective Intelligence**
  
  Social change requires learning and organizational change, which is increasingly done through a process of collective intelligence where large groups supported by technology work to solve problems and implement solutions. As a class we will use a collective intelligence process to design, test, and engage teams in developing a civic innovation project.

- **Civic innovation concepts and principles**
  
  Civic innovation often requires designing ways to better governing common pool resources (as opposed to designing consumer products for the private market). Each quarter, this course will focus on a civic topic such as money in politics, climate change,
homelessness, etc. and discuss causes and possible solutions to the issue. We also learn general principles and techniques for designing systems to govern common pool resources, communities and collective action.

- **Iterative, Human-Centered Design Process**

  One of the most difficult challenges in design is to “go from 0 to 10”, that is to scope an impactful, exciting, feasible social impact project from scratch. You’ll practice analyzing a policy situation, identifying a feasible design idea, plan the project and recruit a team. You will apply the human-centered design process to problems of learning. This design process is a general approach referred to as *design thinking* that can be applied to designing products, services and strategic planning. As such it provides a basis for organizational innovation in general that you can apply across many contexts.

- **Agile team management**

  Most complex problems require you to work in teams. To become an effective designer you need to be skilled at techniques to help your team communicate, plan and stay motivated. You will practice basic techniques for Lean/Agile project management including: daily stands, sprint planning, release demos, group critique, help-seeking from mentors, meeting agendas and design process books. These techniques will allow you to keep your team's happy and running smoothly.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

This course has several complex learning objectives – all packed into 10 short weeks. It is extremely important that you stay on top of the reading and assignments. Parts of this course will be new and challenging for many of you; for this reason, class time has been allotted to work through design exercises with instructors close at hand. The tradeoff, however, is that you are expected read all assignments and online lectures carefully.

You also need to seriously attempt the design challenges before class. It’s OK if you get confused – this class is designed to stretch you! Work with your more experienced classmates outside of class and be ready with questions when you arrive. If you don’t try to complete the challenges ahead of time, there is a good chance you will end up lost as we go through them together.

- **Deliberation**
  - Each week we will deliberate on how to improve the set of design proposals we are considering. Before each deliberation, each of us will read the proposals, vote on which proposals are strongest, and critique the top set of proposals. During the deliberation, we’ll discuss the strengths, opportunities for improvement, and open questions on one of the proposals. After the
deliberation, we’ll set concrete tasks to improve the proposals and teams to work on the proposals, then research and revise new proposals.

- **Group Project Deadlines**
  - The purpose of this class is to help you how to scope develop feasible design that can impact a real policy problem, so another primary focus of the class is the design project. Throughout the quarter, you will work on a team of 3-4 people to scope a design project. Teams will be assigned by the instructor in an effort to diversify perspectives and abilities.

- **Audience Evaluation**
  - At the end of the course, your audience will evaluate the quality of the scoped and how well it meets their needs—the focus of your work will be on creating a scoped project idea that can gain support from potential project members and community partner organization, is feasible to implement, and can impact the community.

- **Team Evaluation**
  - Throughout the course, you will have the opportunity to evaluate the contributions and effort put forth by each of your teammates. This will provide you with feedback about your effectiveness working in teams.

- **Class Meetings**
  - Class meetings will incorporate design exercises, group critiques, short lectures, large and small group discussion, studio time. These are all intended to help you successfully complete your design project with support from instructors.

**WARNING!**

Civic Innovation is very different from other courses you may have taken. It is designed to give you experience working on a real design project — that means are no tests, no essays or problem sets (huzzah!) but it also means that there are no single, clear correct answers to the challenges you will face, no simple recipes for solving them, and the instructor can’t “tell you what to do” to get an A.

While we have done a tremendous amount of work to structure the design challenges, connect you with and audience, recruit supportive mentors, provide useful learning resources and respond quickly with constructive feedback, the work you will do in Civic Innovation is far more ill-structured than in a typical University course. For some, the design challenges you will face will make Civic Innovation feel too challenging, chaotic, or disorganized relative to what you are used to. If you want a class with a clear path to getting an A, this is probably not for you. If however, you are interested in doing real world design, want an opportunity develop your abilities to create effective learning and work environments, and are passionate about learning and organizational change, then you are more likely find this a valuable experience.
REQUIRED TEXTS

- Republic Lost: Version 2.0. This year, we’ll start with Lawrence Lessig’s Republic Lost. Depending on how team’s design proposals evolve, we will assign and discussion additional readings.

REQUIRED MEDIA

- Loft — The Loft describes the different techniques you will use in your project. You will also use the Loft to manage your projects, discuss and critique with your studio and keep track of deadlines.
- CATME - We’ll use CATME 360 evaluation software to give each feedback on our teamwork at regular intervals in the course
- Google Drive & Docs — We’ll use Google to keep track of class notes, your design documents and a place to store some of the course materials.
- Trello – We’ll use Trello to keep track of information seeking work between deliberations
- Slack – We’ll use slack messaging and quick help requests
- Canvas—We’ll use this website for keeping track of grades and attendance, although most of your work will happen on Loft.

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Laptop Computer
  - All students in this class need access to a laptop computer. On most days, you will be required to bring your computer to class so we can work through design exercises and critiques together.
- Omnigraffle
  - for those groups that will create impact maps, service blueprints, or paper prototypes, you will need a diagramming tool. Omnigraffle is a great diagramming program if you have a Mac and the $59 educational license is definitely worth it.
- The class will also require software such as PowerPoint and Word available at University Library.

Your grade will be based on your class commitment, individual assignments, group assignments, and your peer evaluation results. ~1000 points = 100%. Note that assignments may change depending on how projects unfold.

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Proposal quality / Partner satisfaction</td>
<td>400 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>300 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Internal project deadlines</td>
<td>200 pts</td>
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1. Project proposal quality / Audience evaluation

At several points in the quarter, your teach staff or outside partners will determine whether you have scoped a impactful, feasible exciting project. Their judgement of the project quality with your design will partially determine how well you have succeeded in the design challenge. Initial evaluation(s) will be formative, that is it will give you a “trial run” of the final evaluation that won’t affect your grade.

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<tr>
<th>Evaluation Type</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Formative Evaluation</td>
<td>0 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Evaluation</td>
<td>400 pts</td>
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2. Teamwork, planning & communication

One of the goals of the class is to learn to use basic project management techniques to plan, work effectively as a team, and work effectively with coaches. At several points in the quarter, your peers will assess your effectiveness as a teammates. Their satisfaction with your contribution will partially determine how well you have succeeded in the design challenge. Depending on when your project team forms, you may have a greater or fewer number of evaluations.

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<tr>
<th>Team Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Team evaluation 1</td>
<td>75 pts</td>
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<td>Team evaluation 2</td>
<td>75 pts</td>
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<td>Team evaluation 3</td>
<td>75 pts</td>
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3. Internal project deadlines

Group assignments will vary depending on your particular project. For example, one projects may involve scoping a media campaign while another might involve planning a policy analysis. Therefore, we cannot say exactly what you will need to complete. The important thing is to regularly deliver useful products to your learners and client that are empirically tested.

In design work, you typically produce products that are reviewed and re-designed. In this course you will be able to submit and review work in the same way. As long as you submit deliverables on schedule, you will get a chance to revise (if initially delivered on time).

Depending on when your team forms, you may have a greater or fewer number of sprints.

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<tr>
<th>Sprint</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sprint 1</td>
<td>40 pts</td>
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<tr>
<th>Class Commitment (online/in-class participation, engagement, attendance)</th>
<th>100 pts</th>
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4. Class Commitment: Attendance, Engagement, Online/Class Participation

Class commitment includes attending class, being engaged in class, and participating. Completing your teammates’ peer evaluations also factors into your class commitment.

- **Attendance**: You are expected to attend all class sessions. If you miss class for any reason other than illness, accident, or a death in the family, you will impair your participation grade. Missing class not only reduces your opportunity to learn new things, it inhibits your teammates’ ability to get their work done and may also impair your grade.
- **Engagement**: Engaging in class means that you (a) consistently arrive on time; (b) remain focused on matters at hand while in class (which means staying off Facebook, cell phones, etc.); (c) stay the entire class session, and (d) consistently show respect for classmates.
- **Participation**: You maximize your learning in this class when you actively engage (online and in-class). Active engagement means that you listen carefully to the comments and presentations of other students and seek opportunities to share your own constructive comments and feedback.

**POLICIES**

**Late work**

Clients & mentors hate late work. Delivering your project overdue will result in poorer evaluation and less feedback (see above).

**Absences**

Absences will result in a lowered evaluation (see above).

**Northwestern policy on Academic Integrity**

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html).
Northwestern policy on SSD

Any student with a disability requesting accommodations must register with Services for Students with Disabilities (ssd@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and request an SSD accommodation notification for his/her professor, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Northwestern policy on Sexual Misconduct

Northwestern is committed to fostering an environment in which all members of our community are safe, secure, and free from sexual misconduct of any form, including, but not limited to, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, and dating and domestic violence. This policy applies to students, faculty, staff, University vendors, contractors, visitors, guests, and third parties. Information on available counseling, medical, and advocacy services for all Northwestern community members is also contained in this policy. Read the full Policy on Sexual Misconduct.

Northwestern policy on Civility and Mutual Respect

As members of the Northwestern community, staff, faculty, and students are expected to interact with each other with respect and consideration. When a community member’s conduct varies from this expectation, it is the responsibility of the manager, director, department chair, or dean who supervises the person engaging in the inappropriate conduct to address it. Inappropriate conduct covers a broad range of behavior from rude, obnoxious, bullying behavior to threats of violence. The level of danger in the behavior determines the action that the supervisor should take. For guidance on identifying potential threatening or violent behavior and for the best ways to deal with these incidents, contact the Office of Human Resources. or review the Guidance on Civility and Violence document.