

ID 3320 Design Methods Syllabus

Course Information

Course Prefix and Number: ID 3320-1
Summer 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Leila Aflatoony
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Course Description

This course offers an in-depth exploration of human-centered design methods, focusing on how to identify, understand, and prioritize the needs of diverse communities, such as local, organizational, and user groups, to inform effective design solutions. Through applied projects and hands-on exercises, students will engage a range of research and design methods, integrating theoretical perspectives from the behavioral and social sciences with design practice. The course prepares students to address real-world design challenges while maintaining a strong focus on the people and communities impacted by their work.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following areas:

- Apply user-centered research methods—such as field observation, interviews, market research, and participatory design—to identify both explicit and implicit user needs in real-world contexts.
- Utilize design ethnography techniques to engage with communities and co-create insights through interviews, collaborative activities, and immersion.
- Develop and refine user personas, journey maps, and storyboards to synthesize research findings and frame design opportunities.
- Communicate research findings and design concepts effectively using professional tools such as logbooks, annotated sketches, diagrams, storyboards, videos, and prototypes across multiple formats (visual, verbal, written, and experiential).
- Employ empathy, creativity, and contextual awareness to build persuasive, research-based arguments that advocate for user needs and guide the design of meaningful solutions.

Course Format:

The course is delivered asynchronously, with all lectures, readings, and course materials accessible on Canvas. Students will work independently with the course content and participate in a weekly synchronous check-in session to discuss progress, clarify questions, and support collaborative learning. Assignments include both individual and group projects designed to apply user-centered design methods to specific design challenges.

Deliverables:

Group Assignments:	80%
Assignment 1 – Design Ethnography (15%)	
Assignment 2 – Persona Development (15%)	
Assignment 3 – Participatory Design (15%)	
Assignment 4 – Concepts, Storyboards, and Journey Frameworks (15%)	
Assignment 5 – Final Concept: Video Scenario (20%)	
Individual Assignment:	10%
Assignment 6 – Logbooks	
Participation:	10%
Includes discussions of readings, contributions to individual and group work, and attendance.	
Total	100%

Logbooks:

Logbooks are essential tools for documenting fieldwork and tracking the design thinking process. All work, observations, and reflections should be recorded in the logbook. Logbooks will be submitted digitally via Canvas twice during the semester for evaluation.

Required Course Materials

No textbook is required. All course materials will be provided in PDF format.

Grading Policy

Grading will be based on the Georgia Institute of Technology system. No plus or minuses will be applied to the final grade. However, plus and minuses will be used for all the submissions during the semester. Students will have one week after each project grade submissions to discuss any grading matters to the instructor. The grade ranges are defined as follows:

90-100% = A 80-89% = B 70-79% = C 60-69% = D 0-59% = F

Attendance Policy

Students will work independently with the course content and participate in a synchronous check-in session once per week.

Attendance policy and expectations

1. There are no formal institutional requirements regarding class attendance at Georgia Tech. The resources of the Institute are provided for the intellectual growth and development of the students who attend. A schedule of courses is provided for the students and faculty to facilitate an orderly arrangement of the program of instruction. The fact that classes are scheduled is evidence that attendance is important; students should, therefore, maintain regular attendance if they are to attain maximum success in the pursuit of their studies.
2. All students are responsible for obtaining an understanding of each instructor's policy regarding absences; all students are expected to attend announced quizzes, laboratory periods, and final examinations. Although it is recognized that occasionally it may be necessary for students to be absent from scheduled classes or laboratories for personal reasons, students are responsible for all material covered in their absences, and they are responsible for the academic consequences of their absences. Students should discuss planned absences with their instructors as soon as possible after the beginning of an academic term. Work missed may be made up at the discretion of the instructors.
3. In the event of a medical emergency or an illness that is severe enough to require medical attention, students are responsible for contacting the Office of the Dean of Students as soon as possible to report the medical issue or emergency, providing dated documentation from a medical professional and requesting assistance in notifying their instructors. The medical documentation will be handled confidentially within the Office of the Dean of Students and will inform a decision as to whether communication with instructional faculty is appropriate. It is the expectation of the Institute that instructional faculty will honor a request from the Office of the Dean of Students to excuse a medical emergency or illness and allow make-up of the work missed, including homeworks, quizzes, presentations, examinations, or other class assignments.
4. Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar. Course instructors are responsible for establishing reasonable deadlines and/or make-up materials for the missed work, and for clearly communicating this information to the relevant student(s), when absences for Institute activities are approved.
5. Student Responsibilities
 - a. Individual students requesting approval from the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee are expected to do so at least two weeks before their requested absences;

- b. Students are expected to inform their instructors about their approved absence by the end of the class meeting immediately following receipt of their approval notice.
6. Course Instructor Responsibilities
 - a. Course instructors receiving timely notification of student absence (as outlined above) are expected to establish reasonable deadlines and/or make-up materials for missed work, and for clearly communicating this information to the relevant student(s).
7. Faculty/Staff Sponsor Responsibilities
 - a. Faculty/staff sponsors of student organizations are expected to submit requests for absence approval, to the Office of the Registrar, at least one week before the date of the expected absence(s);
 - b. Faculty/staff sponsors are expected to provide the Office of the Registrar with roster changes in as timely a fashion as possible, to reduce negative impact on the ability of students and instructors to coordinate their plans;
 - c. Faculty/staff sponsors are expected to notify students of approved absences, along with instructions for notifying their instructors, within two business days of receipt of approval from the Office of the Registrar.
8. Students who are absent because of participation in a particular religious observance will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absence with no late penalty, provided the student informs the course instructor of the upcoming absence, in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and provided the student makes up the missed material within the time frame established by the course instructor. Exercising one's rights under this policy is subject to the Georgia Tech Honor Code. The course instructor is responsible for establishing reasonable deadlines and/or make-up material for the missed work, and for clearly communicating this information to the student. Students may choose to appeal to the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate for formal approval of this type of absence.
9. In alignment with **section 4.1.3 of the University System of Georgia (USG)'s general Student Affairs policy**, students are encouraged to vote in all federal, state, and local elections. Students are encouraged to plan their voting to avoid missing classes. Students are also encouraged to participate in early voting whenever possible or to vote before, in between, or after classes on election day. For students who are registered elsewhere, they are encouraged to request absentee ballots by the appropriate deadlines. However, faculty should not penalize students for missing a class to vote on election day. In this case, a student should inform the course instructor at least 5 business days before election day about the absence for voting in writing. The course instructor is expected treat the absence as an officially excused absence if a student chooses to vote in person on election day.

10. Faculty members must provide students with reasonable accommodations for making up graded work missed while on jury duty.

Academic Honesty/Integrity Statement

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review the student [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Academic Honor Code](#), especially [Appendix A: Graduate Addendum to the Academic Honor Code](#).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student Well-being

At Georgia Tech, you are recognized as a human being navigating life's ups and downs. You may experience negative stressors that can impact both your academic journey and your personal wellness. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing disruptive challenges, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. A comprehensive list of student services and resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being, and you can find access that list here: <https://students.gatech.edu/student-resource-guideLinks> to an external site.

- a) In an emergency, please call Georgia Tech Police Department at (404) 894-2500 or 911.
- b) For immediate mental health support, you can call the Center for Mental Health Care and Resources at (404) 894-2575.
- c) You can call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.

Student Code of Conduct

You can find the link to Code of Conduct and more information here:
<https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>