

# ID2801 - Design Behavior: Contextual Awareness

Design Bloc 5-Week Mini-Mester | Fall 2026, MM2: 9/28-10/30

## Course Instructors

Wayne Li

[wayne.li@design.gatech.edu](mailto:wayne.li@design.gatech.edu)

Sara Martin

[sara.henderson@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:sara.henderson@innovate.gatech.edu)

Melissa Heffner

[melissa.heffner@venturelab.gatech.edu](mailto:melissa.heffner@venturelab.gatech.edu)

Shane Owens

[Shane.Owens@gtri.gatech.edu](mailto:Shane.Owens@gtri.gatech.edu)

Chris Chapman

[cchapman891@gmail.com](mailto:cchapman891@gmail.com)

## Instruction Time

MW

2:00-3:15 pm

## Office Location

Design Bloc Space  
Woodruff Connector,  
890 Curran St

## Office Hours (by appt)

## Course Description

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This course is a five-week seminar serving as a foundation for human-centered design and entrepreneurial endeavor. Contextual Inquiry is at the heart of understanding human systems, society, creation and production of goods and services. As one of the key design behaviors which support the design process and human centered design methodology practiced within Design Bloc, this mini-mester will teach students contextual inquiry, systems analysis, and design production.

Students in this course are taught collect and analyze contextual cues gathered during the design research process; these findings, when synthesized appropriately, are often paramount in identifying valuable design interventions. To drive this assessment and reflection, students will be provided with in-class activities and receive feedback from both instructors and peers applicable to a project or work prompt. Throughout this mini-mester, students will concurrently identify and analyze implicit factors that shape system design, co-creating with a self-selected contextual space where they can demonstrate their understanding of the seminar through real-world application. At the end of the course, students will present the result of this practice and reflect insights they've uncovered through data synthesis.

## Co-Requisite Course(s)

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The 5-week course exists as a larger series of short-term courses being facilitated by Design Bloc. As a center that supports multi-disciplinary learning and human centered design, students are not required to have prior art or design knowledge to enroll in this course. However, it is encouraged that this course be taken in the same semester as "Design Behavior: Cognitive Empathy" which will be offered in Term 1 of the same semester. In addition, students enrolled in Design Bloc's VIP: Community Design course are encouraged to enroll in this course to provide a seminar component to their service-based work across the full semester.

## Course Objectives + Learning Outcomes

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This class will advance the understanding of participating students through exposure to and application of design behaviors. Through this course you will learn and develop the ability to:

- understand the importance of reflexivity and inquiry as methods to self-assess / assess situations (use-cases) in cohort cultural groups (e.g., demographic, tribal, global, etc) in an effort to discover the needs, values, and beliefs present at a group (societal) level, rather than an individual need.
- use several frameworks and social model methods to synthesize creative community endeavor. This is a systemic approach to need-finding and problem framing.
- compare demographics, experiences, socio-political factors, and manufacturing scale as a central frame upon which to build.
- Compose a group's narrative which can serve as a source for "reframing" understanding, and illicit ideas for societal, systematic change.

## Course Format and Semester Overview

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The nature of this course is designed to provide both instruction in design behaviors and an immediate opportunity to apply this learning through student-selected projects. To support this, classes will consist of student participation in the following:

- Short lectures on relevant topics, methods, techniques, and strategies relevant to the course's design-behavior focus.
- In-class demonstrations, activities, and discussions to provide familiarity and feedback on how to best apply the lecture material to the student's area of study.
- Assignments to be performed outside of class to further reinforce class material through an on-site, real-world area within the student's immediate environment.
- Out-of-class activities to be performed during open studio sessions, outside of class, and/or with a participating community partner.

Please note that the schedule provided below is for general reference on how the topics covered in this course will be presented during instruction times. While these dates are subject to change, please refer to the Canvas site for the most up-to date, specific information.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activity or Event</b>
1	Sept 28th Sept 30th	<b>Identifying</b> Course Introduction / Expectations Introduction of Contextual Awareness "What is Context" / Triangulation Formative Research Methods / PESTLE / TRIZ
2	Oct 5th Oct 7th	<b>Mapping (Typologies) / Making</b> Cultural Probe / Global vs Tribal / Flow Diagram Prototyping Fidelity / Manufacturing Scale
3	Oct 12th Oct 14th	<b>Synthesizing</b> Why-How Laddering / Typologies Market Positionality / Marketing and Go to Market Strategies / Standards
4	Oct 19th Oct 21st	<b>Inspiring</b> Imperative Statements / HMW Framing Matching Brand and Story to Market Need
5	Oct 26th Oct 28th	<b>Offerings: Contextual Approach</b> Pareto Principle vs. Platform Business Model Canvas

## Grading

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The premise of this course is to create an opportunity for students to gain an exposure to the importance and practice of this design behavior through personal application and reflection. As a result, students will be expected to weekly refine their understanding of this material through practice in in-class scenarios, engaging with their peers in and outside of class, as well as documenting how their knowledge and proficiency related to these topics develops throughout each week.

Because the priority of this course is dedicated to hands-on learning and personal reflection, the grading process for this course incentivizes consistent engagement with the material in and outside of class. Though each student's progress and contribution to this course will be relative, everyone is assessed for their performance in all three areas below:

**Student Logbook / Course Documentation (40%)**

Notes / Reflections on In-Class Material (20%)

Homework / Evidence of Out-of-Class Application (20%)

- PESTLE/TRIZ (5%)
- Cultural Flow Diagram (5%)
- Fidelity vs. Manufacture (5%)
- Synthesis Tools: HMW/Market Positionality (5%)

**Class Participation / Homework Assignments / Exercises (40%)**

On-Time Attendance to In-Class Lecture (20%)

Enthusiastic engagement with in-class exercises (20%)

**5-Week Study / Final Presentation (20%)**

Demonstration of synthesis, scale, scope and depth (10%)

Final report of study findings, insights, and personal learnings (10%)

**Mini-Mester Attendance Policy**

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Due to the abbreviated nature of this course, students are only allowed two unexcused absences within this 5-week course. Upon the third absence, your final grade will immediately be reduced by one letter. Each late arrival to class will count towards one-third of an unexcused absence. Any student that can provide documentation for their absence via doctor's notice, an official document detailing their travel for Georgia-Tech related business prior to departure, and/or official communication from campus faculty will have their absence excused. In the event of a serious emergency that does not warrant these forms of proof, and relates to the student or the student's immediate family, an excused absence may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

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Georgia Tech offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services ([www.disabilityservices.gatech.edu](http://www.disabilityservices.gatech.edu)). If you have an accommodation letter from ODS, please provide your team advisor with a copy of your accommodation letter and discuss with them how your accommodations will be applied. This should be done as early as possible in the semester.