ID 4863 Syllabus

Special Topics: Applied Design Methods for Community Well-Being

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Description

Catalog Description: Special Topics Course

This course explores the intersection of community-based learning and design methods. Students will engage with real-world communities and stakeholders to design solutions that enhance well-being through design interventions. Emphasizing participatory and human-centered design methodologies, the course will challenge students to collaborate with organizations, analyze user needs, and develop design strategies that foster positive impact.

Pre-Requisites

ID 2325 or ID 3320

Course Learning Outcomes

This course integrates community-based learning with industrial design education, emphasizing applied design methods and socially responsible design. Through direct collaboration with a community partner, you will apply human-centered design methods to identify real-world challenges, co-develop solutions, and refine interventions that enhance well-being. The course fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, ethical awareness, and hands-on experience. By engaging in research, stakeholder interaction, and iterative design, you will develop research and design skills, critical thinking, and social impact-driven design, preparing you for professional practice in human-centered design fields.

Upon completing the course, you are expected to demonstrate the ability to:

- Cognitive:
  - Utilize research methods to understand user and community needs.
  - Implement human-centered design methods in the course project.
  - Reflect critically on the ethical and social responsibilities of industrial design.

- Behavioral:
  - Collaborate effectively with stakeholders, demonstrating adaptability and professionalism.
  - Create context-relevant designs for real community needs through iterative development.
  - Communicate research and design processes effectively through presentations.
- Emotional:
  - Demonstrate empathy when engaging with vulnerable populations.
  - Build emotional awareness by navigating the complexities of designing.
  - Develop a sense of personal and social responsibility through direct community engagement.

Required Course Materials

Course Text

Articles and books for this course are available through the Georgia Tech Library. All other course materials, including slides, assignment instructions, and grading criteria, will be available on Canvas.

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Canvas is the means to disseminate course information, provide resources, and submit assignments. Students are expected to check it weekly.

Grading Policy

Final grades in this course are based on a combination of individual and group assignments. Each assignment contributes to your final grade.

Grades reflect both the quality of submitted work and adherence to assignment requirements. Because the course is project-based, consistent engagement, timely submission of work, and active participation in group assignments are essential to success.

Assignments

1. Participation & Ethical Engagement: Active participation in community engagement activities (Individual) — 15% towards grade
2. Research & Insights Report and Presentation: Analysis of stakeholder needs and secondary research (Group) — 30% towards grade
3. Concept Presentation: Presentation of initial concepts and feedback integration (Group) — 20% towards grade
4. Final Project: A fully developed research, a poster, and a design presentation (Group and individual) — 35% towards grade

Total – 100%

Each assignment includes specific criteria for success, as outlined in this syllabus. Grades for each assignment will be posted on Canvas, allowing students to track their cumulative performance and estimate their final course grade throughout the semester. Grades are assigned based on predefined criteria and standards, not on relative performance compared to other students.

Description of Graded Components

Participation & Ethical Engagement (15%; individual):

- CITI Trainings (5%):

Purpose	To ensure that you are prepared to conduct ethical research by completing federally recognized training in responsible research practices. Completing the CITI Program trainings will earn you a nationally recognized certification that is highly regarded and will strengthen your academic and professional credentials.
Task	Complete both required ethics training modules: • Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) • Group 2 Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel Follow the provided instructions to register, complete, and submit proof of completion on Canvas by the deadline.
Success Criteria	• Certificates of completion for both modules are submitted on time. Training completion is verifiable in the CITI system.

- Collaboration (10%):

Purpose	To foster professional collaboration and reflective practice by documenting your learning and insights during community engagement. You are expected to collaborate effectively with peers and stakeholders, demonstrating curiosity, critical thinking, and a commitment to ethical and socially responsible design.
Task	Maintain a field diary and complete prompt-specific reflections after each site visit. Engage respectfully and proactively with peers and stakeholders.
Success Criteria	• Diary entries are complete, clear, and submitted on time. • Reflections respond to prompts thoughtfully and draw on concrete site observations. • Evidence of respectful collaboration and active contribution in group settings.

Research & Insights Report and Presentation (30%; in groups):

Purpose	To develop a research-based understanding of stakeholder needs, challenges, and opportunities for design intervention.

Task	Conduct research, including interviews, observations, moodboards, and data analysis. Prepare a written report synthesizing findings into actionable insights and present these insights to peers and community partners.
Success Criteria	• Report clearly documents methods, data, and synthesized insights. • Moodboards and secondary sources are integrated into the analysis. • Presentation communicates findings clearly, visually, and persuasively.

Concept Presentation (20%; in groups):

Purpose	To articulate and justify an initial design concept grounded in research. This checkpoint allows for constructive critique from instructors, peers, and community partners, with a focus on clarity, feasibility, and responsiveness to user needs.
Task	Prepare and deliver a presentation that explains the design problem, concept, and rationale, supported by research evidence.
Success Criteria	• Concept is aligned with research findings and user needs. • Presentation is well-structured, visually clear, and delivered within time limits. • Constructive feedback from instructors, peers, and partners is incorporated in the next iteration.

Final Project (35%; in groups and individual):

- Report, Poster, and Presentation (30%)

Purpose	To integrate research, design, and real-world applicability into a complete project outcome.
Task	Produce a final report, poster, and presentation showcasing your concept, methods, and potential impact. Deliver to a public audience, including stakeholders.
Success Criteria	• Concept takes the form of a product or environmental intervention aligned with stakeholder needs. • Deliverables meet professional standards in clarity, design quality, and accuracy. • Project demonstrates integration of research insights into the proposed intervention. • Presentation is engaging, well-paced, and responsive to audience questions.

- **Self-Reflection (5%)**

Purpose	To critically assess your learning, growth, and contributions in the course.
Task	Respond to the reflection prompt provided on Canvas, discussing your process, challenges, and insights.
Success Criteria	• Reflection is complete, honest, and clearly connected to course activities. • Specific examples are used to illustrate points.

Feedback Process

- Instructor Feedback: Ongoing formative feedback during discussions, workshops, and check-ins.
- Peer Review: Structured critique sessions to encourage collaboration and design refinement.
- Community Partner Feedback: Direct input from stakeholders to ensure relevance and feasibility.
- Mid-Semester Concept Presentation: A formal critique session for refining design directions.
- Prototype Testing & Iteration: Iterative improvements based on real-world feedback.
- Final Project Presentation & Review: A summative evaluation of project outcomes and impact.
- Self-Reflection & Documentation: A critical assessment of individual learning experiences and growth.

Group Work

You will work in groups. Grading will be individual.

Final letter grades are assigned based on overall percentage performance, according to Georgia Tech grading standards:

Grade		Description	
A	90-100%	Excellent	*Consistently exceeds expectations in all criteria*. Demonstrates outstanding quality, creativity, technical execution, and clarity of communication. Work is thorough, well-documented, and engaging.
B	80-89%	Good	*Meets all expectations and occasionally exceeds them*. Shows solid and thoughtful work and clear communication. Minor weaknesses may appear in execution or depth, but overall work is strong.

Grade		Description	
C	70-79%	Satisfactory	*Meets some expectations but lacks consistency.* Work may be incomplete, surface-level, or unclear. Execution may contain gaps in clarity or polish.
D	60-69%	Passing	*Minimally meets expectations.* Work shows limited understanding of methods or insufficient development of ideas. Documentation, analysis, and presentation need significant improvement.
F	0-59%	Failure	*Does not meet expectations for assignments or course participation.* Work is incomplete, missing, or shows a lack of engagement with course materials.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to review the course Canvas page and assigned materials each week before class. You should attend all classes in person, as the lectures will not be recorded or broadcast online unless Georgia Tech formally informs us of "modified campus operations" and requires "digital learning" days.

For classes held on campus, arriving more than 30 minutes late will be counted as an absence.

For all classes held at community settings, students must plan to arrive at least 10 minutes early to register and stay for the entire scheduled time. Please do not arrive late. This commitment ensures respect for our community partner and allows us to engage in the collaborative design process fully. You are expected to approach each session with professionalism and care.

Attendance is required for all sessions. You should contact the instructor in advance if illness, participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, or athletic events), involvement in a particular religious observance, or an unanticipated event prevents you from attending a class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for reviewing the course content and can ask for our assistance if needed.

- For classes on campus, one unjustified absence is allowed without penalty. A second or third unjustified absence will result in a one-letter grade deduction. Four or more will result in a two-letter deduction.
- For classes held in community settings, any unjustified absence will result in a one-letter grade deduction per occurrence. Absences at community settings are tracked separately from on-campus attendance.

Academic Integrity

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 Georgia Tech's Honor Code and the student Code of Conduct.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

CORE IMPACTS

Not applicable.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services (404-894-2563) 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-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgment, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to Georgia Tech's ideals in this class.

Collaboration and Group Work

Final grades are based on a combination of individual and group assignments. We will monitor group work to ensure an equal workload for all individuals. You must notify the instructors immediately if group relationships and workload distributions seem unfair.

Use of Generative AI

You are encouraged to use AI tools to enhance your work in activities such as revising your text, summarizing class notes and academic papers. However, the use of AI to generate research data (for example, interviews and observations) or to analyze data is not permitted. It is also not permitted to use AI to generate creative outcomes.

This is a research-intensive course, so you are required to understand how to collect and analyze data. We recognize that in your future professional work, once you understand how research works, you may use these tools for data analysis, as you will then know how to audit the results.

You must disclose AI use in all assignments where it is applied. Any violation of these guidelines will result in an F grade for the specific assignment.

Extensions and Late Assignments

You should observe the class schedule and respect the due dates of assignments. Extensions should be discussed with the instructors in advance.

Late submissions without prior discussion with the instructors will incur a 25% deduction if submitted within 24 hours. After that, a 50% deduction will apply for submissions made within the next six days. Submissions beyond this period will not be accepted and will be graded zero.

All assignments should be submitted through Canvas as PDF, JPG, TIFF, or MP4. Assignments delivered via e-mail will not be accepted. You are responsible for ensuring that your file uploads are completed on time. You are also responsible for ensuring that files are not corrupted.

In-class assignments should be completed and posted on Canvas by the end of the class. Only one group member should deliver group assignments as a PDF file containing all group members' names.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

With developments and improvements to digital instruction over the past few years, the Institute has developed policies to leverage digital learning as much as reasonably possible. The policy sets forth requirements, procedures, and responsibilities related to the scheduling of digital instruction and/or make-up classes due to the modification of campus operations, closing of campus, or the necessary closing of instructional spaces for any reason (including but not limited to emergencies, such as inclement weather, power outages, or other infrastructure failures).

Students should await communications from their instructors regarding delivery of their classes during that period based upon the 'Digital Learning Days for Modified Campus Operations Policy' (https://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/academic-affairs/digital-learning-days-modified-campus-operations). Students should follow guidance and/or directions provided by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being regarding student activities, events, programs, and services.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Mobile devices and personal computers can be used to take notes and work on class assignments. You should not use such devices for other purposes in class.

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and information about advising can be found at Success at Tech.

Academic Support: Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Student Well-Being

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A comprehensive list of wellness-related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being (student-resource-guide (gatech.edu).