

Course: DMED 502: Interdisciplinary Improvisation – 3 credits
Term: Fall 2019
Instructor: Patrick Pennefather
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Requirements: Canvas account setup, a large journal 30-40 pages (provided)

Course Goal

The goal of the course is to identify, exercise reflect and develop improv abilities that are expected in interdisciplinary collaborative digital media co-construction. Improvisational exercises are drawn from many creative disciplines and can be used strategically to support how teams *innovate, collaborate, manage and design* on digital media production pipelines.

Learning objectives

By the end of the interdisciplinary improvisation course learners will be able to:

- *Identify* where and when improvised behaviors manifest in their own work flow and in those of others;
- *Exercise* targeted activities intentionally to support how they collaborate, manage, design and innovate on projects;
- *Reflect* on specific activities in order to deepen how improvisation can support their collaborative work;
- *Develop* their own vocabulary of exercises to improve their team-based work.

Learners will also:

- Improve presentational skills (speaking, presence, focus, presence, confidence) through improvisational structures;
- Practice problem solving with others through scenario-based activities;
- Take responsibility for their own learning.

Course Characteristics

- *Learn-by-doing.* A short amount of time is devoted to lecturing making attendance a must;
- 3-4 hour workshop-oriented sessions integrating aural, visual and kinesthetic exercises.
- Assigned readings and responses to support some of the ideas presented each class.
- Assignments that intersect with other courses.
- Weekly self-reflective journal assignments.

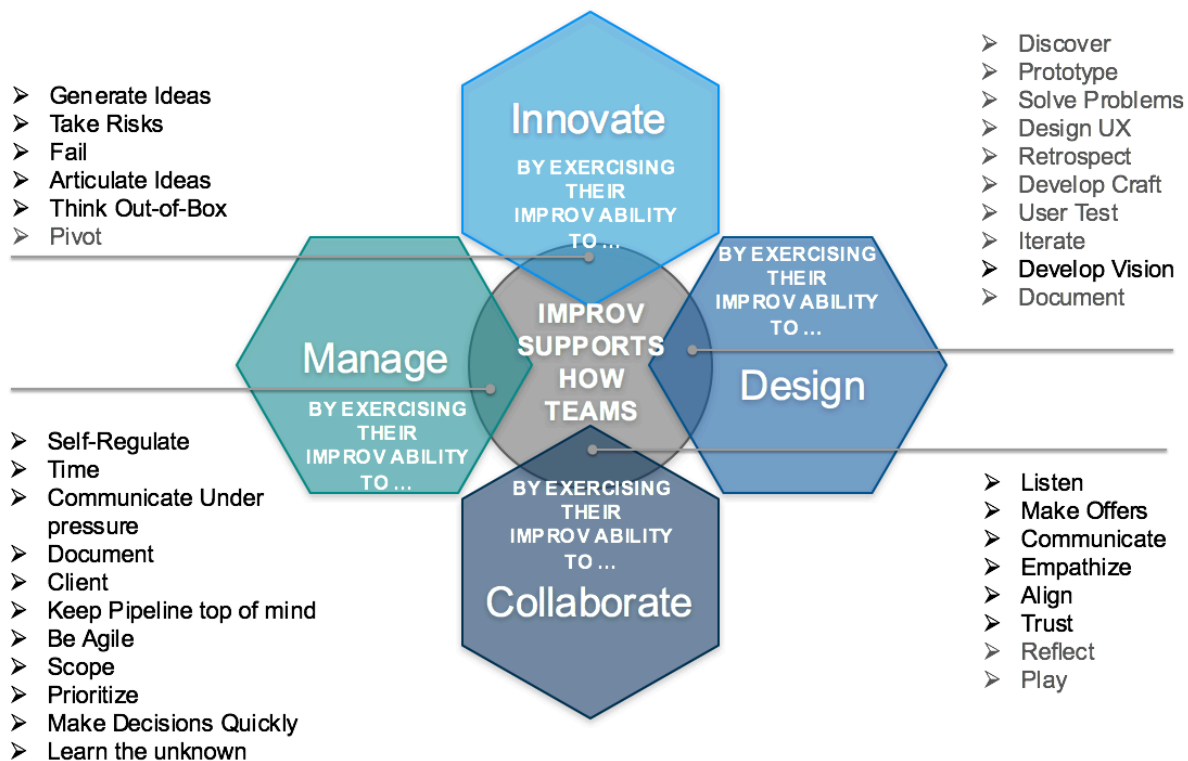
Note 1: Weekly revision of course activities in each session WILL OCCUR based on the degree of assimilation of content by the entire cohort and in alignment with the other fall courses. Changes will be communicated via email and canvas at the end of each week as performance in other core courses may also inform specific changes.

Note 2: The cohort will be divided into rotating groups to provide learners the opportunity to practice exercises with every member of the cohort. **All learners must be available according to the attached calendar (page 5) throughout the semester.** Learners will be placed at the discretion of the instructor by September 9th and cannot choose which slot to participate in. Learners may at times be organized according to their Projects 1 teams. On occasion the full cohort will come together for a class. These times will be noted in the calendar.



Sessions Overview

Each class or session will challenge learners to practice improv abilities that have been identified through interviews, teaching and research in the development of competencies that are essential to collaborative-based organizations. Exercises are organized around four main pillars: how teams *collaborate, manage, innovate and design* together. Assignments will consist of reading responses based on specific readings, low fidelity prototyping, reflection on-action, and physical journal reflection.



Session by Session breakdown: (subject to change)

Session	Outcomes	Activities	Description	Pillar
Week 0 FRIDAY Sept.6th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify where and when improv abilities might manifest during interactive production pipelines 	Ice-breaking exercises, trust-building	<p>Practice breaking the ice with new people. Reflect where improvised actions manifest on production pipelines.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Free Play, Improvisation & Principles and Techniques for Design.</i></p>	Overview of all
1 MONDAY Sept.9th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an improv map or where spontaneous behavior manifests in collaborative production. Understand the user by becoming the user. Learn how you share and how you receive in planned and unplanned settings 	<p>Mapping what we've done.</p> <p>User as improviser.</p> <p>Making and Receiving offers, Listening, Re-assemble someone else's awesome.</p>	<p>Identify what spontaneous actions took place during the design jam. Describe the UX of another person's interactive installation. How do users understand our design (what spontaneous behaviours do we expect them to have?)</p> <p>Reading: <i>Make it fast & Practicing Collaboration in Design.</i></p>	Collaborate Innovate Manage
2 MONDAY Sept.16th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose out of box ideas Solve problems under pressure with others 	<p>Dissociative thinking, Re-naming of things</p> <p>Yes AND; Keep Talking.</p>	<p>Understand the role of improvisation when you solve problems together under pressure and align solutions to ill-structured design problems.</p> <p>Reading: <i>Why Bad Ideas are good ideas</i></p>	Design Innovate Collaborate
3 MONDAY Sept.23rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and understand the purpose of different types of prototypes; De-construct briefs and propose low fidelity prototypes Ideate using user-centered tools to prototype customers 	<p>Proto-users, personas, User stories, 5 Why's</p> <p>Scenario 3: <i>Use-Case Prototyping</i></p>	<p>Re-think the act of prototyping and become comfortable generating spontaneous, low fidelity prototypes quickly.</p> <p>Assignment: <i>Dream House Low Fidelity Drawing.</i></p>	Design Innovate

4 Sept.30 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice listening intently to what is being asked of you and your team Practice responding in-the-moment to challenges 	Listening 3.0, Mirror mirror Scenario 9: Active vs Passive Client Meetings	Practice spontaneous actions and reactions to an assortment of different client scenarios; all based on previous case studies.	Collaborate Manage
5 MONDAY Oct. 7 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice another compressed agile dev cycle using iterative prototyping for an unknown product. Be comfortable with pivoting 	Dream House, Iterative, prototyping, 3 Acts, Visual Vocab 4 Scenario 4: The Pitch	Practice going from paper to digital in a short period of time and without much thinking. Reading: <i>Yes to the Mess, followership.</i> Assignment: <i>Video and assigned reflection. Video Bio V.1</i>	<i>Manage</i> <i>Design</i> <i>Collaborate</i> <i>Innovate</i>
6 THURSDAY Oct. 17 th (Session will occur the same day as Projects 1 class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase comfort in presenting unplanned ideas Understand how you and your ideas are perceived in the moment. Practice listening/responding with others quickly to extend their ideas. 	Presentation tips, Experts, Die, Walk into the room, Shoulder judges, Visual Vocab 5	Become more comfortable responding to unknown variables when you present in front of others.	<i>Innovate</i> <i>Design</i>

Session	Outcomes	Activities	Description	Pillar
7 MONDAY Oct.21st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn an instrument to contain your feedback to others during retrospective Re-learn the fine art of constructive criticism 	Feedback instrument, Constructive Criticism Session. Scenario 5: Depth Reflection	Respond on your feet to individual and team evaluation in a largely reactive and impromptu session. Assignment: Feedback Instrument (Self)	Collaborate Manage Design
8 MONDAY Oct.28th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to properly stage everything from a meeting to a user-test 	Staged user-testing Staged client meetings Staged VIP visits Stage networking Staged public presentation	We can't think of everything when we design user experiences. What opportunities are afforded when we see through the	Manage Collaborate Design



			lens of an improvised performer?	
9 MONDAY Nov.4th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to persistently give attention to and support of your team's culture 	Listening 2.0, blind leading blind, Developing a culture of play, Refinement of Rules of Play; Scenario 8: Culture Jamming	How does buy-in becoming a perpetually motivating engine for you and your team? How can the practice of improvised activities sustain motivation?	Collaborate
10 FRIDAY Nov. 15 th (due to holiday Nov. 11 th)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify gaps and exercises that will help you and your team overcome them. 	Yes And, Various student led activities	What specific activities that involve some type of improvisation can we leverage to improve my and my team's knowledge of	All
11 MONDAY Nov.18th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice the rapid deployment and evaluation of a user test for your product. Learn to negotiate change and adapt to pivots with team and clients Practice the rapid re-prioritization of features and plotting out a sprint 	Identifying what is being tested, Yes/No questions, impromptu interviews, emerging methodologies Scenario 6: The User-Test	Practice the design, execution and post-test use of user-testing data. Understand what you are willing to and not willing to change spontaneously. Assignment: Feedback instrument (user-testing).	Design Manage Innovate
12 MONDAY Nov. 25th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice articulating your own project ideas in front of others 	Experts 2 Scenario 10: Presenting your project	Improve upon the spontaneous articulation of your ideas and those of others	Manage Innovate Design
13 MONDAY Dec.2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a critical evaluation to uncover knowledge gaps Identify what you were able to change 	Gaps Exercise, Self-evaluation instruments, Dragon panels, client scenarios, course evaluation	Use gut impulses to quickly identify gaps in your own competencies and convert these into goals.	Collaborate Manage



	and what remained the same, and why.			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what stuck 			

Course Schedule

You will be assigned to 3 different groupings or splits of the full cohort. This means you will not always be in a cohort grouping with the same peers. What split you are assigned to will occur at the end of the first week of classes or Week Zero. Session sizes have been split to maximize more one-on-one attention. There is no class on Monday October 9th.

Date	Team	Members	Session
September 6th	Full cohort	Everyone	Orientation Week 0
Monday September 9 th , 10am-1pm	Full cohort		1
Monday September 16 th , 10am-1pm	Split B1		2
Monday September 16 th , 2pm-5pm	Split B2		
Monday September 23 rd , 10am-1pm	Split C1		3
Monday September 23 rd , 2pm-5pm	Split C2		
Monday September 30 th , 9-12pm	Split A1		4
Monday September 30 th , 1pm-4pm	Split A2		
Monday October 7th , 10am-1pm			5
Monday October 7 th , 2pm-5pm	Split B1		
Monday October 14th, NO CLASS	No Class	No Class	
***Thursday October 17th, 9am-12pm	FULL COHORT	Combined Class with Projects 1	6
Monday October 21 st , 10am-1pm	Split C1		7
Monday October 21 st , 2pm-5pm	Split C2		
Monday October 28 th , 10am-1pm	Split A1		8
Monday October 28 th , 2pm-5pm	Split A2		
Monday November 4 th , 10am-1pm	Split B1		9
Monday November 4 th , 2pm-5pm	Split B2		
Friday November 14th, 9am-12pm	FULL COHORT		10
Monday November 18 th , 10am-1pm	Projects 1 teams		11
Monday November 18 th , 2pm-5pm	Projects 1 teams		
Monday November 25 th , 10am-1pm	Projects 1 teams		12
Monday November 25 th , 2pm-5pm	Projects 1 teams		
Monday December 2nd, 10am-2:30pm	FULL Cohort	Everyone	13



Required Readings:

All assigned readings are available digitally via canvas as pdf's. Learners are encouraged to read them all prior to the first class to best understand the context of the process and tools that they will be learning. Readings are assigned in the first 6 weeks of the course and learners will be prompted to answer specific questions within a canvas thread by the instructor.

- Reading 1: Free Play (Excerpt), *Inspiration and Time's Flow* (for class1)
- Reading 2: Improvisation Principles and Techniques for Design. (for class 1)
- Reading 3: Practicing Collaboration in Design Excerpt
- Reading 4: Why Bad Ideas are a Good Idea.
- Reading 5: Make it Fast. Game Developers Magazine.
- Reading 6: Yes to the Mess (Excerpt).

Optional readings that will provide those interested with a broader context of improvisation in culture and management:

- The Culture of Spontaneity (book)
- Creating a level playing field: Improvisational play in collaboration and education
- Organizational Improvisation. pg. 3-18.

Recommended readings to support collaborative design activities in this course, your other courses and projects courses:

- Drawings on The Back of the Napkin. Dan Roam. Introduction. Chapters 1-3.
- The Mind Map Book. Tony & Barry Buzan. Chapter 1.
- How Pixar Fosters Collective Creativity
- Understanding Visual Thinking
- Waterfall to Agile: Lessons Learned

Evaluation:

Each of the three grading zones below is further broken down into quantifiable measurements of each learner's developing abilities. Grades are highly individualized, impacted by their interaction with others, and directly proportional to 100% conscious attendance, with weekly observation and documentation of the amount of effort, improvement and persistent communication each learner undertakes in the further development of their collaborative abilities. *Mid-term grades* (in a one-on-one setting Week 7) are provided as a barometer of progress and to give each learner the ability to improve their performance in the course.



Participation	Percentage of Total Grade	30%
	<p>Weighted according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Punctuality (arriving to all classes on time or before) • Participation in discussion • Presence (maintain attention and focus in the room) • Receptivity to other people's ideas • Collaborative initiative (actively engaging in team work) • Risk-taking beyond comfort zone (ex. first to volunteer, not waiting to be volunteered, fearless offers) • Practice and improvement over time • Communication and offering of ideas spontaneously and improving presentation of self (voice, body, clarity) 	<p>15 10 15 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>Total: 100 Converted to 30%</p> </div>
Assimilation	Percentage of Total Grade	30%
	<p>Weighted according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to try all exercises • Improvement of performance over time • Taking direction and feedback and applying it • Accepting challenges offered by instructors • Improving collaboration with others in Projects 1 • Application of materials to other classes 	<p>20 20 15 15 15 15</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>Total: 100 Converted to 30%</p> </div>
Assignments	Percentage of Total Grade	40%
	<p>Weighted according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal: Reflection in a physical journal. Completion of assignments related to the course content weekly. Due by the beginning of the next class. Criteria include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visual Detail ○ Timely completion of task ○ Refinement ○ Quality ○ Improvement based on in-class feedback • Reflection In-Action (In-class Discussion) 	<p>10%</p> <p>10% 10%</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection On-Action (Online thru Canvas). Weekly reflection based on prompts. Criteria include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detail ○ Timely completion of task ○ Refinement ○ Quality ○ Improvement based on in-class feedback Comments on readings: Weekly readings and responses to readings based on prompts. Criteria include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timely completion ○ Responding to other learner responses ○ Understanding of the reading ○ Clear articulation of response ○ Quality (grammar) ○ Improvement based on feedback 	10%
TOTAL		100%

Note on Attendance and Participation:

Interdisciplinary improvisation is not a lecture-based course and therefore demands your full time attendance, presence and complete participation as detailed in the rubric above.

- You are expected to be fully present and are graded on participation at every workshop-oriented class on the schedule. **CLASSES CANNOT BE MADE UP.** Your grades are based on your attendance, participation and assimilation during every session at every stage of the course, and in relation to other learners. While sickness is sometimes inevitable, a doctor's note is required should you have to miss any class. **MISSING 3 CLASSES will lead to failure of the course. Missing 2 will reduce your grade significantly.**
- Lateness informs grading as does class attendance and full presence. Classes start punctually every week according to the schedule. **All latecomers must ask permission to join a session already in progress regardless of the reason.** Instructions will not be repeated nor will it be tolerated if a latecomer bothers another student for instructions. If arriving later than half an hour into a class, you can join but may be marked as absent.
- Texting, checking your email, using your smart phones or laptops for any other reason besides a guided class activity **will be noticed and your mark impacted negatively.**
- You are **required to attend all group classes and the final two classes** without exception.
- Failure to complete assignments will also impact the Participation grade.

Required Accounts

You are required to register personal accounts for Canvas, prior to first class. You are expected to go to Canvas regularly for any course updates, materials and readings. Weekly class updates are also emailed prior to each Monday of the course.



Required Blank Paged Journal

A blank-paged journal is supplied to each learner who is expected to take responsibility and ownership of it. Learners will be drawing in the journals for the improvisation course and expected to bring these to every class. All reflections should be contained within the journal. A digital scan of the journal entries must be submitted at the end of the semester, a week after the last class.

Dress Code

Please avoid dresses, heels, and hard soles for all improvisation classes. Wear comfortable clothes. It is a physical class. You are expected to participate in all activities and wearing clothes that prohibit this will impact your participation grade.

Written & Spoken English Requirement:

Written and spoken work may receive a lower mark if it is, in the opinion of the instructor, deficient in English. SFU provides a wide range of free support for those who need and it's up to each learner to seek that support.

Religious Accommodation:

The university accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodations on these grounds.

Academic Integrity

MDM Program considers plagiarism to be the most serious academic offense that a student can commit. Regardless of whether or not it was committed intentionally, plagiarism has serious academic consequences and can result in expulsion from the university. Plagiarism involves the improper use of somebody else's words or idea's in one's own work.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure you fully understand what plagiarism is. Please see the SFU website for an explanation of the various types of plagiarism and to take the plagiarism tutorial: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/plagiarism>

Grading Profile

A+	95-100
A	90-94
A-	85-89
B+	80-84
B	75-79
B-	70-74
C+	65-69
C	60-64
F	0 - 59



Policies

The student and academic policies of the Masters of Digital Media Program and of Simon Fraser University apply within this course.

Relevant SFU policies can be found at:

- Graduate General Regulations
http://students.sfu.ca/calendar/for_students/grad_regulation.html
- Academic Honesty and Student Conduct Policies
<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/Students/index.html>
- Teaching and Instruction Policies
<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/index.htm>
- University Policies (complete site)
<http://www.sfu.ca/policies>

