

Course: DMED 520: Projects 1 (6 credits)
Term: Fall 2026
Instructor: Thelma Wiegert, Vincy Kwong
Email: thelma_wiegert@thecdm.ca , vincy_kwong@thecdm.ca

Acknowledgement of Coast Salish Peoples and Land

We respectfully acknowledge the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our campus resides.

Course Description

Building Digital Artifacts is the first project course. Teams of students from different backgrounds and disciplines design and implement a digital artifact. These projects have an explicit role in teaching human-centered iterative design, project management, team collaboration, and project execution skills. This hands-on immersion into a team-based problem solving environment is designed to break down student inhibitions and to foster rapid project planning and prototyping.

This course will focus on design thinking, production pipeline, user experience and project management techniques based on real-world examples. This course is extremely hands-on, heavily emphasizing critical thought, design, applied problem-solving, and rapid prototyping. The team-based projects will give students the necessary tools, background and experience to be successful at medium and large-scale digital media projects and will prepare students as they move into Projects II.

All MDM project courses are group-independent studies, where teams of three to six students work on digital projects during that semester. Projects I focuses on the design and implementation of artifacts (digital or physical) in order to solve a client's problem. This rapid immersion into a group problem-solving environment is designed to engage a student in project planning, management and execution. The course aims to provide a solid foundation of problem-solving, critical thinking and methodologies that will apply to future industry projects.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of Projects I, students will be able to:

- Define a project's problem space, goals, and opportunities by considering user needs, stakeholder perspectives, business requirements, and project constraints.
- Develop, prototype, test, and rapidly iterate on solutions using appropriate user-centred, technology-driven and business-centered design methods.
- Evaluate evidence, feasibility, and trade-offs to make and justify project decisions, adapting the solution as new information, constraints, or priorities emerge.
- Collaborate effectively within an interdisciplinary team, applying appropriate strategies for communication, role clarity, decision-making, conflict management, and accountability.
- Plan and manage a project within time and resource constraints, working in an interdisciplinary team, using appropriate production methodologies to define scope, priorities, responsibilities, workflows, and a realistic project pipeline.
- Communicate project decisions and outcomes professionally through presentations and documentation that clearly articulate the project rationale, evidence, trade-offs, and recommendations to relevant stakeholders.



Format of the Course

Projects I is a course in which student teams design and implement artifacts in a digital environment. The projects have an explicit role in teaching project management, iterative design/development, and best practices for team-based creation. The course will include lectures, in-class exercises and workshops that will illustrate techniques.

Students are assigned to groups that balance disciplinary backgrounds. Working together, they will develop a project that meets defined user needs and client expectations. Evaluation in project courses is based on both group and individual work.

Course Schedule

The course will run on Thursdays, September 10 – December 10, 2026 from 9AM – 4PM. Your instructors will confirm the schedule.

The following schedule outlines the majority of the topics covered during the course. Based on the interaction with students as well as the topics covered by parallel courses, some topics may be added or modified during the semester at the discretion of the instructor.

Class	Topic
Week 0 (Thursday, Sept 10)	Design Jam
Week 1 (Thursday, Sept 17)	Design Jam Retro, Project 1 Assigned
Week 2 (Thursday, Sept 24)	Project Development
Week 3 (Thursday, Oct 1)	Project Pitch Proposal
Week 4 (Thursday, Oct 8)	Project Development
Week 5 (Thursday, Oct 15)	Project Development
Week 6 (Thursday, Oct 22)	Project Development
Week 7 (Thursday, Oct 29)	Project Development
Week 8 (Thursday, Nov 5)	Project MVP Presentation
Week 9 (Thursday, Nov 12)	Project Development
Week 10 (Thursday, Nov 19)	Project User Testing
Week 11 (Thursday, Nov 26)	Project Development

Week 12 (Thursday, Dec 3)	Project Demo Day, Client Delivery
Week 13 (Thursday, Dec 10)	Project Final Presentation, Course Retro

Course Topics

- Production and pipeline methodologies
- Developing business value through primary and secondary research
- User-centred design (UCD) and Technological-driven design (TDD)
- Iterative design/ideation/development
- User research and testing
- Project management concepts and frameworks
- Effective communications and documentation for internal and external purposes
- Presentations, pitches, prototypes, and demos

Course Assignments

Note: Assignments, due dates, and weighting are subject to change before the start of the semester

Project 1 (group work), including but not limited to: Design Jam, Pitch Proposal, MVP, Final Presentation, Documentation	65%
Individual, including but not limited to: Growth, performance, self-reflection, peer review	35%

Suggested Readings/Materials

- Knapp, J., Zeratsky, J., & Kowitz, B. *Sprint: How to solve big problems and test new ideas in just five days*. Simon & Schuster, 2016
- Pennefather, Patrick Parra. *Mentoring Digital Media Projects: Project-Based Learning and Teaching for Professional Development*. Apress, 2022

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance is expected of students in all their classes (including participation, group work, tutorials, seminars, online etc.). Students who are unavoidably absent due to illness or disability should notify their instructors of their situation.

- Students are expected to attend every class on the schedule (based on their assigned group) and be fully present. While sickness is sometimes inevitable, understand that due to the experiential nature of the material, classes cannot be made up.
- Lateness also informs grading. Classes start punctually every week according to the schedule. 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, a student may be marked as absent.
- Due dates: Late assignments will not be accepted without the explicit permission of the instructors and may be subject to a late penalty.

<https://www.sfu.ca/students/enrolment-services/policies-and-procedures/academic-concessions.html>

Grading Profile

A+	95-100	Exemplary expectations
A	90-94	Exceeding expectations
A-	85-89	Meet expectations
B+	80-84	Approaching expectations
B	75-79	
B-	70-74	Below expectations
C	60-69	Far below expectations
F	0 – 59	Fail (Students must retake the course)

A student in a master's or doctoral program must maintain a CGPA of 3.0. Under no circumstances will a student whose CGPA is below 3.0, be awarded a graduate degree.

<https://www.sfu.ca/students/advising-resources/calculators/gpa-calculator.html>

Laptops & Cell Phones

The use of laptops and cell phones during class is at the discretion of the instructor. *Please respect your classmates and instructors and refrain from text messages, social media, games and videos during class and workshop times.* Please note you should always bring pen and paper to class.

Written & Spoken English

English is the official language of the school and all communication (written and spoken) is expected to be conducted in English. SFU and the MDM Program provide a wide range of free language support for those who need and it's up to each learner to seek that support.

Accommodations

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, preferably the first week of class, if you will require any accommodations on these grounds. The Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) will make every effort to assist students with disabilities so that they achieve their educational goals. <https://www.sfu.ca/students/accessible-learning/establishing-accommodations/accommodation.html>

Academic Integrity: Your Work, Your Success

SFU's Academic Integrity website <http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity.html> is filled with information on what is meant by academic dishonesty, where you can find resources to help with your studies and the consequences of cheating.

Each student is responsible for their conduct as it affects the university community. Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is ultimately destructive of the values of the university. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to the majority of students who pursue their studies honestly. Scholarly integrity is required of all members of the university. <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html>
If you are using generative AI to produce content that will be part of your graded work in the course, you must be transparent about the tools that you use. Undeclared use of the tool/technology will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Be aware that any tool used will require you to evaluate the output for accuracies and be responsible for making the appropriate corrections.

Inappropriate use of technology in coursework

If you are using any technology, including generative AI, to produce or edit content that will be part of your graded work in the course, you must be transparent about the tools that you use. Undeclared use of the tool/technology will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Be aware that any tool used will require you to evaluate the output for accuracies and be responsible for making the appropriate corrections.

Graduate Studies Notes

Important dates and deadlines for graduate students are found here: http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/important_dates/guidelines.html.