Design Thinking Frequently Asked Questions
For more information on the programs and offerings found below, visit taylor.tulane.edu.

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THE BASICS

1. **What is design thinking?** Design thinking is a creative, collaborative approach to creating social value through better services, experiences, systems, organizations and (sometimes) products. It is more ways of listening, seeing, being, and doing, than thinking. Design thinking is for anyone. It brings designer skills of visualizing, getting creative, and thinking "outside-the-box" to non-designers. "DT" often refers to human-centered design, but it spans other design disciplines, too.

2. **What is design thinking for social impact?** Social impact means applying design thinking to understand and address persistent social and environmental problems, not just for financial profit, or to invent gadgets or processes without a clear purpose and beneficiaries in mind. We aim to apply design thinking and other expertise for social missions, to address social problems. Pure market-based innovations, or science or technology-driven inventions are a contrast. It is a term often associated with the design firm IDEO and the Stanford Institute of Design. It is now widely used around the world and adapted to different contexts.

3. **What is human-centered design (HCD)?** Design thinking is also called human-centered design: a design discipline and approach to solving problems and developing solutions that starts with and keeps people at the center, and has deep focus on empathy. It is a package of mindsets and known methods. For example: design thinking is not just brainstorming what you already know, but the broader realm of discovery, finding insights, new idea generation, and testing that leads to workable solutions.

4. **Why are we doing this at Tulane?** To develop changemakers! We see human-centered design as an essential part of a toolkit for changemakers—people who use their skills, expertise, gifts, and power in a way that creates positive social change and affirms the humanity of all people. Changemakers have the freedom, confidence, and societal support to address any social problem and drive change. (Ashoka)

5. **How long have you been doing this at Tulane?** Design thinking was included as a founding 3-credit course for the Tulane undergraduate social innovation and social entrepreneurship (SISE) minor since planning stages in 2011. Taylor expanded offerings to reach the wider campus and our greater community. We now offer short public workshops and the weekend Fast 48 bootcamp, host the student-led Design for America chapter, and manage a DT-rich residential learning community. We also offer "Taylorized" facilitations on case-by-case basis. We promote scholarly research on themes of design thinking for social impact and aim to publish more widely.

6. **What is Taylor?** The Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking (Taylor) is a university-wide center founded in 2014 at Tulane University. Taylor embraces a range of academic, curricular, and non-curricular programs to spread mindsets of collaborative changemaking. The Taylor Center team embraces design thinking as an essential part of the process of generating innovative solutions to social and environmental issues.

7. **Who is "Taylor"?** The Taylor Center includes staff, faculty, administrators, student fellows, enrolled students, participants and alumni of our programs, and community organization partners. We are a community of creative, optimistic, collaborative changemakers, forming a living ecosystem to explore, understand and address social and environmental problems. Phyllis M. Taylor, the benefactor of the Taylor Center, is a real person, born and raised in Louisiana, committed to education, with a passion for creative people, ideas, and action.

8. **What do you mean, you teach design thinking as a skill set to be a changemaker?** At Taylor, we view design thinking, leadership, systems thinking, practical business thinking, and a deep curiosity about and commitment to addressing social and environmental problems as key skills for changemakers. We believe design thinking helps prepare changemakers to better navigate ill-defined, complex problems, by building their sense of agency and cultivating design mindsets grounded in empathy.

GETTING INVOLVED

1. **Is this just for enrolled students?** Taylor programming is open to non-students. We welcome faculty, staff, community members, small businesses, government employees, educators, artists, high school students, and other learners. We serve Tulane and the larger community. The public crash courses are a good place to start. The Fast 48 bootcamp weekend, while designed for graduate students, is also open to professionals, staff, and faculty. We host numerous public lectures and events throughout the year that are usually open to the public.

2. **I'm interested and know nothing: Where do I start?** We offer introductory workshops and courses with different levels of time commitment for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the Tulane and New Orleans (and wider) community.

   - **Tulane undergraduate students:** Undergraduate students from any major pursuing a SISE minor will take the SISE 3010 Design Thinking course. Non-curricular options include the public crash course workshops, Changemaker Residential Learning Community, and the Tulane chapter of Design for America, a not for credit, studio-based interdisciplinary organization using design to tackle social issues.
   - **Tulane graduate students:** Join the Fast 48 to build resume-boosting skills in design-thinking for social impact. Learn practical design research, community-based fieldwork, team-based work, information synthesis, problem redefinition, visual and making skills, and more. Prepare yourself for meaningful, creative work in the social innovation sector – many domestic and global organizations are hiring people with these skills. The Design for America chapter is also open to graduate students. It offers practical applications, experience and a network. A new graduate course - developing a "social innovation toolkit" centered on design thinking - is piloting Spring 2018.
   - **Greater New Orleans community:** Start with a public workshop - DT & Donuts Paired Crash Course is a 2-hour hands-on introduction to human-centered design. Experience being a "designer" and "user" and tackle small problems as an introduction to how to address bigger ones. The Team Design Workshop will get you working together in small teams learning group-based methods. The low-cost Fast 48 is an intensive weekend bootcamp working with and in the community to explore solutions; no experience is required. See the Taylor calendar for upcoming dates of these events. Finally, "Taylorized" facilitations can meet specific needs to bring design thinking to your organization. Visit our website to learn more.

3. **What do your workshops, services, and events cost?** Aside from formal SISE academic courses, most events are free or low-cost. The public 2-hour design workshops are free. A low fee for the Fast 48 covers all costs, including curriculum, trainers, food, and supplies. Taylorized facilitation fees vary.

4. **How long will it take to learn design thinking?** Beneficial effects and light-bulb moments can occur ("I never knew I could be a designer…!") even within an initial 2-hour crash course. You can learn the basic principles in a few intensive days or weeks. Design thinking is a continuous learning process. It is not a single skill, but a set of mindsets and practices that benefit from practice, like any craft.

5. **Can I do this on my own?** Yes, you can learn on your own, but we recommend learning together. We value the inspiration and reinforcement that comes from collaboration and interdisciplinary teams as they challenge our way of thinking. That said, get started on your own!

6. **The Fast 48 bootcamp sounds grueling: what can I expect?** You can expect to learn a lot and have lots of fun in a short period of time! While fast-paced and intensive, there are no real push-ups. The Fast 48 condenses the design cycle into a single weekend of non-curricular learning for individuals with Monday-Friday work or classes. Participants learn hands-on applications of design methods, in small teams with a community partner organization, around a real problem. We also provide resources to continue learning. Alumni can learn even more by returning to work as a facilitator/coach for another Fast 48.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

1. **I'm tenure-track faculty trying to do research, write, and teach and mentor students. Won't this distract me from my own academic scholarship?** Design thinking can enrich your academic research, classroom teaching and advising, and academic and community service. Find out sooner what might or might not work through rapid prototyping. Make meetings more fruitful as you lead colleagues through effective ideation for a grant proposal. Explore the Social Entrepreneurship professorships to complement and enhance research in your discipline.

2. **I'm full-time staff at Tulane; what can this approach do for me?** Find ways to be more effective and inspired in what you do at Tulane. Design thinking can help you infuse low-cost, fun-filled problem-solving into your workplace. Learn to creatively address organizational bottlenecks. Identify and address pain-points for your constituents be they students, advisors, faculty, administrators, or donors. Try the Taylor Your Life class to apply these skills to your personal and professional development.

3. **I work for a community organization in the New Orleans region: What are my options?** Start with monthly public crash courses, and join the weekend Fast 48 bootcamp. Come to speaker events, visit a class, and talk to us about how design thinking fits into YOUR toolkit for change. Explore partnering with a SISE class or Fast 48. If you are interested but not sure what to do, get in touch!

4. **I'm faculty or staff at Xavier, Loyola, Delgado, UNO, SUNO and other universities: Are their opportunities for us?** Yes! Our workshops, lectures, and other events are open to other universities. If you have a specific partnership in mind, feel free to reach out.

5. **I'm looking for work: Are you hiring?** Enrolled Tulane students may apply to be Taylor Student Fellows and SISE Teaching Assistants. Other student worker positions emerge occasionally. If you are a professional with experience in design instruction or practice, please get in touch with us.

HOW IS DESIGN THINKING DIFFERENT?

1. **Design thinking is empathetic. How is this different from the care professions?** Social work, counseling, and other care professionals are empathetic, and will benefit from a structured process to develop solutions for their community, clients, and workplace. At Taylor, we focus in on cultivating empathy with other people to understand latent needs, then translate that understanding to actionable ideas to solve problems with together.

2. **You say design thinking is action-oriented: How is it different from action research or participatory research?** Design thinking calls for diverse teams, including experts and non-experts, to help generate solutions that arise from a deep understanding of the "end-users." This approach can overlap with action research or participatory methods that aim to empower participants and address real-world problems. Design thinking also emphasizes tools for creativity and iterative approaches to develop and test solutions that can build on action research modes of documentation and practical intervention. Outside participants can bring fresh thinking to enrich community-based action research.

3. **Design thinking experimental: How is this different from scientific research?** Design thinking involves learning-by-doing to test hypotheses that arise relevant to the design challenge and context. It also involves design research as practical methods to learn from about real people and uncover insights to leverage in our designs. This is not the same as, nor intended to replace, formal scientific experiments for universal, generalizable knowledge. The design process can be combined with a scientific one, but they are different. "Design research" primarily serves the purpose of informing the design process for a context, not to produce generalizable scientific knowledge. You can be a designer and a scientist.

4. **Design thinking is creative: How is this different from other forms of artistic and creative expression?** Design thinking processes can empower anyone to be more creative and align that with problem-identification and solution-finding. We aim to harness this combination to address social challenges. Artists can benefit from working with other experts and in teams to promote solutions for ordinary people that might stick for the long run.

5. **Design thinking is systems-thinking: What does that mean?** We see design thinking as both a systematic, intentional, structured, recognized process and as one that recognizes the growing complexity of systems we live in—we need to see the bigger picture of dynamic, changing interconnections. This will help us understand the problems and find useful places to intervene to find solutions.

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6. **I am an architecture student learning design--how is this process different from what I am learning in school?** The process of designing buildings might use "charrettes" to get feedback and glean what people in the community want in relation to a proposed design. Human centered design starts with an open exploration of what people want, aiming to understand and reframe the problem before it gets to formal "design," in an architectural sense. Design thinking can also help you expand beyond buildings and into the territory of designing experiences and/or processes that broaden the scope of potential impact of your work.

7. **I am a professional designer already: How is this different from what I do every day?** Design thinking takes design out of the professional domain to work for and with ordinary people. Human-centered design might resemble a methodology you use already, such as exploration, iteration, or learning by making, but you'll learn to use it in domains and with teams beyond the norm. This might lead you to (re)design the process of building something, beyond the design of the thing itself; or (re)designing the strategy for delivering a product or service, beyond the product or service itself.

8. **More questions?** Write to us at Taylor@tulane.edu with the subject line "DT FAQ".