

HABIB UNIVERSITY

Research Through Making: Practice Based Research in Design

"There is no whole system without an interconnection of its parts and there is no whole system without an environment." - Francisco Varela

Summer 2018

[TBD]

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Instructor: Ahmed Ansari
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Timings & Venue: 1pm-4pm, Tuesdays & Thursdays, Playground
Office Hours & Venue: Wednesdays, 12pm-3pm, E- 114 in D block or playground
Course LMS URL: --
Course Prerequisites: None
Content Area: Design Research, Research Through Design

I. Rationale:

One of the distinctive characteristics of research in design is that designers not only employ a large variety of frameworks, tools and methods borrowed from the social sciences in order to do research, but that they design and deploy material *things*, whether artifacts, environments or experiences, in order to construct and test hypotheses and interrogate and understand lived human experience and the structure of everyday life. This distinction between research that one does *in order to* design, versus research *driven by and through* design practice, shall be our point of departure for this course.

Apart from developing an understanding of the diverse landscape of research of, for, and by design, we will learn how to design artefactually-driven research experiments, making prototypes and simulations to investigate human behavior across space and time. While our time in each session will be mostly dedicated to lectures and discussions, participants should be expected to dedicate time outside of class to collaborate with colleagues in developing and deploying their tools and conducting their research studies. By the end of the course participants will be expected to have grown an understanding of how qualitative methods from a number of disciplinary domains such as sensory anthropology, media studies, interrogative art practice, and human-computer interaction can be modified and used by designers, developed a proficiency in creating entirely new methods, practices and tools, and acquired some skill in being able to collate, analyze and present important findings and insights.

II. Course Aims and Outcomes:

Aims

With the greatly expanded scope for practice for designers, new innovations, contexts, and problems are calling for a similar extension of the tools that designers use, and increasingly, designers distinguish themselves from other researchers through the application of their capacities to make propositions in the world material. This course is intended as an introduction to the design of research by making things, as hypotheses or as propositions. The course roughly covers four areas of concern for practice-based research: its history and its broader applications

and implications for both academia and industry; the design of research methodologies and an exposure to a broad range of methods adapted from the fringes of mainstream qualitative research; the relation between practice and writing, and the articulation and presentation of practice-based research; and potential avenues to extend present-day practice based research.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Have a basic understanding of the development of practice-based research and the issues and discourses surrounding it within the larger literature of qualitative research methods;
2. Have a handy grasp of a large variety of methods geared at understanding different types of socio-technical phenomenon;
3. Be able to design a research experiment, justify your design choices, determine a good sample population and size, and write up a research protocol;
4. Modify and creatively adapt your chosen methods to fit the specific criteria of the phenomenon you are studying, and design relevant tools and materials to help in executing them;
5. Collect data and be able to quickly extract and synthesize key findings and insights for the benefit of your team;
6. Figure out how to best present their work in order to best communicate its breadth and depth.

III. Format and Procedures:

This class shall be conducted over five weeks, for three hours twice a week. Roughly half the sessions will consist of an hour and half of lecture and discussion, and an hour and half of work time dedicated to designing research experiments to carry out over the week. The other half will revolve around a single group project where students will be given a brief, design a study, carry it out, and report back on their findings and the implications of their research.

Full attendance is vital to this course. Students are expected to arrive at least 5-10 minutes before class, since we start on the clock. Anyone who arrives later than 5 minutes into class will be penalized – three lates equal the fall of a full letter grade for the course. In the case that a student might be absent from a session, they must inform the instructor or the program coordinator at least a day before. Any uninformed absences will result in the loss of a full letter grade. This policy complements Habib’s policy of 85% or 75% attendance.

Students are expected to show respect for their colleagues – any explicit instances of rudeness, harassment, intolerance or any other form of improper behavior will result in the student being dismissed from class.

IV. Course Requirements:

1. Class participation policy:

While there is no grade for class participation, I encourage participation and discussion in class, and if students have any comments, observations or questions, they should raise their hands and voice them. I keep office hours on Wednesdays, from 12pm to 3pm.

2. Course readings:

There are no required texts for this course. Supplementary reading material will be provided after sessions on the course website and students are highly encouraged to read it, but it is not mandatory.

V. Grading Procedures: Grades will be based on:

(a) Class attendance: as mentioned above, attendance is vital for the course and tied to grades – lates and absences will result in being downgraded. **If you are a scholarship candidate then missing a session would result in termination of the scholarship contract.**

(b) Weekly Reflections: students will be divided into groups for each session and expected to carry out fieldwork each week. For each of the four weeks where we will cover frameworks and methods for different types of research, groups are expected to upload an overview of their process and progress onto the course website. These process reports should cover what methods were chosen and why, as well as what and how relevant materials were prepared, how the research was carried out, and what the groups found.

By the end of the course, students should have a total of 4 uploaded post, one for each of the first 4 modules. Each post is worth a straight 10% of your overall grade, for a total of 40% of the total grade.

(b) Major Project: again, working in groups, students will undertake a two week research study where they will design the methodology, choose relevant methods, create materials, and carry out the study, reporting back on what they find and what the implications for designing interventions are. Each group will document this entire process on a blog, and together with the grade for the final critique, this will form 60% of the final grade. Students will be provided with an assessment rubric when they are given the brief.

GRADING SCALE		
LETTER GRADE	GPA POINTS	PERCENTAGE
A+	4.00	97 – 100
A	4.00	93 – 96
A-	3.67	90 – 92
B+	3.33	80 – 89
B	3.00	75 – 79
B-	2.67	70 – 74
C+	2.33	67 – 69
C	2.00	63 – 66
C-	1.67	60 – 62
F	0.00	0 – 59

The grade for this course will not affect your CGPA. Based on your performance in this course, your transcripts will show either Pass/Fail.

VI. Attendance Policy:

Habib University requires that all freshmen and sophomores must maintain at least 85% attendance and all juniors and seniors must maintain at least 75% attendance for each class in which they are registered. Non-compliance with minimum attendance requirements will result in automatic failure of the course and may require the student to repeat the course when next offered. This policy is at a minimum. Departments, schools, and individual faculty members may alter this policy to include stronger attendance requirements and/or implement them for all levels

of students. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of their own attendance and speak with their faculty member or the Office of the Registrar for any clarification.

If you are a scholarship candidate then missing a session would result in termination of the scholarship contract.

VII. Accommodations for students with disabilities

In compliance with the Habib University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with the Office of Academic Performance to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

VIII. Inclusivity Statement

We understand that our members represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Habib University is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the Habib community

IX. Office hours:

Office hours have been scheduled, circulated, and posted. During these hours the course instructor will be available to answer questions or provide additional help. Every student enrolled in this course must meet individually with the course instructor during course office hours at least once during the semester. The first meeting should happen within the first five weeks of the semester but must occur before midterms. Any student who does not meet with the instructor may face a grade reduction or other penalties at the discretion of the instructor and will have an academic hold placed by the Registrar's Office.

X. Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Habib University Student Honor Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

Scholastic dishonesty shall be considered a serious violation of these rules and regulations and is subject to strict disciplinary action as prescribed by Habib University regulations and policies. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on exams, plagiarism on assignments, and collusion.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is the act of taking the work created by another person or entity and presenting it as one's own for the purpose of personal gain or of obtaining academic credit. As per University policy, plagiarism includes the submission of or incorporation of the work of

others without acknowledging its provenance or giving due credit according to established academic practices. This includes the submission of material that has been appropriated, bought, received as a gift, downloaded, or obtained by any other means. Students must not, unless they have been granted permission from all faculty members concerned, submit the same assignment or project for academic credit for different courses.

CHEATING: The term cheating shall refer to the use of or obtaining of unauthorized information in order to obtain personal benefit or academic credit.

COLLUSION: Collusion is the act of providing unauthorized assistance to one or more person or of not taking the appropriate precautions against doing so.

All violations of academic integrity will also be immediately reported to the Student Conduct Office.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both be in violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

XII. Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Exercise
Session I June 19	Research of, for, and by Design <i>What does research mean in design and what is it good for?; a short history of research in design; research by, for and of design; methods to explore, generate and evaluate; different types of research questions in design practice</i>	
Session II June 21	Designing Research <i>Designing a qualitative research experiment; criteria for method selection; constructing a research question; sampling and different sampling questions; data collection</i>	Designing a hypothetical research experiment
Session III June 26	Place + Environment <i>methodological approaches: psychogeography; touchstone tours; behavioral mapping; great scale models; graffiti walls</i>	Work Session
Session IV June 28	Time + Duration <i>cultural probes; diary studies; journey maps; transect walks; photovoice</i>	Work Session
Session V July 3	Things + Artifacts <i>personal inventories; semantic differential; wizard of oz; make tools</i>	Work Session
Session VI July 5	Narratives + Games <i>love letter; storytelling; roleplaying; fictional headlines; critical games; serious play</i>	Work Session
Session VII July 10	Major Project <i>brief given</i>	Work Session
Session VIII July 12	Work Session	Work Session

Session IX July 17	Work Session	Work Session
Session X July 19	Final Presentations & Wrapup	