Teaching Innovation in Interdisciplinary Environments: Toward a Design Thinking Syllabus

Abstract:
An increasing number of universities offer user-centric innovation courses based on the principles of design thinking. Lecturers combine a plethora of design thinking elements in design thinking course syllabi and thereby adopt teaching styles that range from autonomy-supportive to structured. Using a balance between these two teaching styles seems most suitable to optimally engage students and provide guidance through the innovation process. To develop a syllabus for innovation courses, we draw on best practices currently being undertaken in universities worldwide and examine 11 design thinking syllabi from different departments (Engineering, Design, Business, and Information Systems). We identify 17 common and 18 unique elements of design thinking courses and related course materials. Based on our results, we propose a design thinking syllabus that includes suggestions for course
objectives, course setup, assignment design, and team composition using a balance between autonomous-support and structural teaching styles.