**Think Bigger**

**Spring 2024**

**Location & Time**

**Geffen 590**

**Section 01: Tuesdays, 2:20PM-5:35PM**

**Section 02: Wednesdays 9:00AM-12:15PM**

**Professor**

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**Course Coordinator/Administrator**

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**Course Overview**

Think Bigger is the course for you if you want to be on the cutting edge of innovation and knowledge-gathering. In Think Bigger, we answer a timeless question with enormous implications for problems of all kinds: “How can I get my best ideas?”

Drawing on recent advances in neuro- and cognitive sciences, Think Bigger offers an evidence-backed method with six steps for innovative problem-solving. Think Bigger uses three essential tools to spark creative thinking and help us make our most meaningful choices. For entrepreneurs, future team leaders, curious minds, and aspiring innovators looking to stand out, the black box of creativity is a mystery no longer. In Think Bigger, we upend the myth that big ideas are reserved for a select few – everyone can become the innovator they have always dreamt of.

In every class, you will learn the science behind the practice by completing Creativity Warm-Ups designed to help you strengthen your creative mind, and examining the real-life case studies that inspired each Think Bigger step.

Think Bigger is a new and unique ideation methodology only offered here at Columbia Business School. We go beyond mainstream methods for ideation, such as Design Thinking, by leveraging tools such as problem breakdown, the Choice Map for ideation, and the Third Eye Test for forecasting an idea before prototyping. You will become the expert in using this set of tools so you can come up with out-of-the-box solutions for complex problems, both big and small.

View the BIG ideas from past Think Bigger students: [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sheena-iyengar\_congratulations-to-my-think-bigger-students](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sheena-iyengar_congratulations-to-my-think-bigger-students-activity-7096486757520551936-ON7o?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop)

**Think Bigger Fellows**

The Think Bigger course was first established in 2016. Since then, leading global business practitioners from industries spanning technology, media, sustainability, food and beverage, venture capital/private equity, consulting, blockchain, and fintech have increasingly become involved in this course by providing students feedback and mentorship at critical points in the ideation process. We now have over 200+ Think Bigger Fellows. You will meet a number of these Fellows on Mentor Sessions. They serve as a valuable resource to Think Bigger students interested in developing their experience and skills in the innovation space. The Fellows are an important part of the Columbia Business School ecosystem and, as members of the Think Bigger social network, you can connect with any of them throughout your careers as innovators.

**Workload**

**Class Attendance and Participation (25%)**

**Attendance:** Think Bigger is not a class that you can learn through watching recordings. Your ability to learn this method depends on your in-class participation. To this end, attendance in class is mandatory. More than one day of class missed constitutes a drop in one letter grade for the course.

**Participation:** For every class, there will be an in-class assignment posted in the Assignments section on Canvas. You are expected to submit the in-class assignment before class ends. This submission is integral to your overall participation grade.

**Homework (25%)**

Always refer to Canvas for homework assignment descriptions. We will make note – in class and on Canvas – whether your homework should be completed as an individual or as a group. If you are given a group assignment for homework, all group members should work on it together and one person from each group must submit the final assignment with their group number in the submission title. Each member of the group will receive equal credit for the assignment. Homework (group and individual) should be submitted on Canvas.

**Presentations (25%)**

During the last day of class, you will present your problem and its solution beyond the classroom to a group of industry experts who act as Mentors! They will advise you on your problem and potential solution. You will present for no more than five minutes using a PowerPoint slide deck.

**Final Paper (25%)**

Take what you’ve learned from the Think Bigger method this semester to solve a problem! To accrue full points on this final, you must display that you understand all six steps of the method. That is, you should detail your definition of the problem, the subproblems in your breakdown, your search (in and out of the box), your grasp of Choice Maps and Big Picture scores, and how you used the "Third Eye."

You can accrue up to 15 points total: 2 points each for every step of the method, 1 point for overall creativity of your proposed ideas, 1 point for the overall usefulness/feasibility of your proposed ideas, and 1 point for the general clarity/organization of the document you submit.

For this exam, you have two options. You can choose any new problem that you want (entrepreneurial or personal) to solve or you can use the default problem we supply here:

*In your new leadership role at your dream job, you are assigned to hire and build the most creative team as part of a new initiative internally. How would you go about choosing the five most creative candidates to create a functional team?*

You must present your work on whatever problem you choose in 3-5 pages that include at least one fleshed-out solution and one less fleshed-out alternative solution that you came up with on your own. This submission must include a detailed Choice Map, highlighting some of the tactics that you used or were inspired by.

**Course Readings and Assignments**

**Readings**

* Iyengar, Sheena. *Think Bigger: How to Innovate,* Columbia University Press (2023)
* Fallows, James, *“*The 50 Greatest Breakthroughs Since the Wheel” *The Atlantic* (2013).
* Knowledge at Wharton Staff, “A World Transformed: What Are the Top 30 Innovations of the Last 30 Years?” *Knowledge at Wharton.* (2009)*.*
* Deloitte Insights. “Eyes to the sky: Three enduring eternities,” *Tech Trends of 2023* (2023).
* Keen, Greta and Whiting, Kate,“Emerging technologies: 10 years of top tech trends and how they've changed the world.” *The World Economic Forum.* (2021)*.*
* Schultz, Alex. “100+ global problems worth solving,” *World Innovation Forum* (2019).

*\*Any additional readings will be posted in Canvas*

\*\*All readings should be completed following the session for which that particular reading has been assigned. Readings are used as an aid for completing homework assignments. A digital copy of your readings will be posted to Canvas.

**Assignments**

1. Following every class, you will be asked to complete a one to two-page assignment. These assignments will be posted for each class on the course overview page.
2. In class, you will be responsible for completing individual assignments in addition to group assignments as prompted. These in-class assignments will count toward overall participation.

**Class Session Overviews**

**Session 1: The Creative Brain**

*How do our minds create? In this class, we will discuss the myths about creativity, how our minds actually come up with ideas, and how you can become the innovator you were born to be.*

Post-Session Reading: *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Preface

**Session 2: Where do Big Ideas Come From?**

*We will walk you through the “why” behind the Think Bigger methodology, what a big idea is, how Think Bigger works, and an overview of the Six Steps.*

Post-Session Reading: *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Chapters 1-2

**Session 3: Choosing the “Right” Problem**

*We often take it as self-evident that we know what problems we want to care about and what problems are worth solving. Yet, choosing the right problem – meaning a problem that is both solvable and worthy of solving – is one of the hardest things to do. In Session 3, we will complete in-class exercises to help us identify the problems we want to spend time solving.*

**Session 4: The Innovation Marketplace**

*Everyone comes to class with a problem they want to solve. Here, we created a unique exercise to survey the myriad potential ideas present amongst your peers. You’ll be able to invest in different ideas and seek investment in your own. This exercise serves as our “matching algorithm,” the process by which we will place you in your groups. Each group will be tackling a problem they collectively care about.*

**Session 5: Think Bigger Steps 1 & 2 – Choosing & Breaking Down the Problem**

*In this class, you will be introduced to the first two steps of Think Bigger. You will be introduced to your first tool for Think Bigger, the Choice Map. Additionally, we will go over exercises to ensure you drill down to the specifics of the problem and identify the core of what you want to solve. Every problem is composed of sub-problems; the pieces that make it whole. We will show you the process for breaking down a problem, and how much to break it down.*

Post-Session Reading: *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Chapters 3 & 4

**Session 6: Think Bigger Step 3 – What’s the Big Picture?**

*Why do you want to solve this problem? And, other than you, who else cares? This class introduces you to the second tool of Think Bigger, the “Big Picture Score.” You’ll use this tool to assess your problem breakdown and to eventually choose among the ideas you’ve generated so you’re able to find the best solution for your problem.*

Post-Session Reading: *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Chapter 5

**Session 7: Think Bigger Step 4 – Search Inside and Outside the Box**

*You have probably been told at some time to “think outside the box.” But has anyone ever told you how to do it? Today, you will learn a method for searching that shows you how to get your most out-of-the-box ideas. Here, we will teach you how to search far and wide – going into other boxes – so you can create your most meaningful solutions.*

**Session 8: Step 4 (Continued) & Step 5 – Choice Mapping**

*We continue with Step 4 and begin Step 5: The Choice Map. In this session, we will show you different techniques for Choice Mapping so you can generate multiple solutions to your problem.*

Post-Session Reading: *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Chapters 6 & 7

**Session 9: Choosing Your Best Idea**

*In this session, each group will have multiple solutions to choose from. You will share your individual solutions and use your Big Picture Score to iterate and make a choice about which solution you will take to the next step which you will expand upon for a presentation.*

**Session 10: Step 6 – The Third Eye**

*You now have an idea that feels like a flash of insight. But what is it, exactly? How does it differ from what’s already out there? How will others see it? In the sixth and final step of Think Bigger, you will learn a new, unique way to collect feedback.*

Post-Session Reading: *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Chapter 8

**Session 11: Mentor Day**

*Each group is paired with up to five mentors for thirty minutes to present their idea and gain constructive feedback.*

**Session 12: Final Presentations**

*Time for some fun! We will invite judges across industries to hear and “invest” in your group ideas. Each group will complete a 3-minute presentation of their final idea in front of a panel of judges.*