



The COVID-19 pandemic has provided many examples revealing the value of design and designers in addressing public health matters. Since March 2019, designers were called upon to activate public health measures and imagine strategies nudging the population to follow sanitary prescriptions; from improving mask design to the development of expressly burdensome and inconvenient testing procedures in hope of motivating people toward vaccination. But the reach of public health obviously expend far greater than the extraordinary circumstances and demands associated to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the American Public Health Association (APHA), “Public health promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play.” As such, broad issues like racism, literacy, internet access, food safety, sexual wellbeing, tobacco uses, etc., are all to be considered as public health matters of concern. The kind of wicked and complex social problems for which Social Design as develop an appetite for (Gauthier, Proulx, Vial, 2017). Interestingly, the field of public health remains somewhat blind

to potential agency designers may have in their practice. To explore this blind spot, this collaborative studio will challenge students to envision design proposals to a series of public health challenges. To emphasize the originality of design perspectives and capabilities, the course will focus on the development of subversive, critical and disruptive ways through which design can engage with public health issues. Calling upon designers to develop public health interventions ought to shed light on the value of a user-experience focus practice in the development of contextually fitted health programming.

Given the nature and horizon pursued in this course, enrolled students will leave their typical major specialization at the door and come ready to think more broadly and strategically about how designerly ways of thinking and doing may be called upon in the context of designing for public health. The potential projects are open in form but could include: service design, products, policy, environmental design, ubiquitous digital technology, signage, etc. The outcomes of the class explorations could lead to a collective publication or exhibition.