

COURSE DESIGN PROMPTS THAT CENTER ON THE USE OF BISOCIATION

The following prompts are those that an instructor wishing to have students utilize bisociation as a central focus of a course design project may wish to use. While bisociation is well suited for use as an ideation tool for ANY design project that requires ideation, the projects presented here try to truly play up the role of bisociation in a more substantial way. You can also utilize any of the prompts presented in painstorming that were envisioned as semester projects that began with painstorming but ideally moved on through the remainder of the design process (where bisociation could be included nicely during ideation).

1. You are a writer for your local small town newspaper. The paper, like much print media, is not doing very well. The paper is losing subscribers, local industries don't want to place ads, and you have seen your colleagues "let go" one by one. Your boss decides on an early retirement telling everyone to "get out while they can". However he is replaced by a new boss who you find exciting and engaging and just maybe the person who will save your job and the newspaper. The new boss seems to have a lot of energy, a lot of new ideas, and a good understanding of trends. He calls a meeting of all of the newspaper staff and announces "We are a newspaper. We need to remain a newspaper. But we have to figure out how to relate to our potential customers. And let me tell you, they don't want to read the newspaper, what they want is: 1. Taco Tuesdays, 2. Tiny Pets that Can be Carried Anywhere, and 3. A Personal Maid. We need to find a way to connect between what they want and what we can offer. Let's take each of these items that they want and one at a time bisociate, thinking about what each of things looks like, feels like, and represents to our potential users --- and see if that can help us come up with one or more ideas that will save our newspaper and makes it something everyone wants. We don't just want a new story idea....we want something game changing." (You will then take one of these ideas and move forward with the design process to design a functional, tested prototype (or alternatively a proof of concept demonstration).

2. You are the CEO of the leading manufacturer of firefighting apparel and gear, servicing the 48 continental United States. Your company has long prided itself on tradition, offering the same product lines with that "firefighter look" for years – tweaking most only for comfort and safety as new materials have come available. Recently your competitor revealed that they are redesigning their product lines based on lessons learned from other first responders including police and the military. These new innovations will surely raise their competition with you. You see that your competitor looked to related fields (other first responders) in inspiring their redesign. You believe you are at a point to truly revolutionize the firefighting industry. You begin to daydream, looking for inspiration. You first think about one of the most effective fire prevention initiatives: the Smokey the Bear Campaign. You then think about the one thing (incorrectly) always associated with firefighters: Cats stuck in trees. Finally you think about the photographs you took of the inside of your own home last week, for insurance claims in the case you ever had a fire in your own home. Take each of these items systematically and use them to bisociate radical new directions your company can go and new design ideas and products that have been inspired by the bisociation process. (You will then take one of these ideas and move forward with

the design process to design a functional, tested prototype (or alternatively a proof of concept demonstration).

3. You recently became a design engineer for a company that makes medical devices used for both regular medical care (e.g. stethoscopes, otoscopes, blood pressure cuffs) and specialized medical testing and needs (e.g. MRI/Catscan machines, IV stands, and external bracing). Like many medical devices, you are used to hearing complaints from pediatricians that your products terrify their young patients, making it more difficult for the doctor to interact with them in the way that they would like to. You have just been made the lead of a new division of the company that will focus on pediatric-friendly medical devices. You have a young niece so you call her for ideas. She doesn't have any ideas but she can't stop talking to you about the things that excite her most in her life right now: 1. Her new Daisy Girl Scout Troop, 2. The Happy Meal toy she got from McDonald's last week, 3. Her new baby brother and getting to help feed him his bottle, 4. Learning to read Dr. Seuss's Hop on Pop book yesterday, and 5. That her best friend from school learned to tie shoes last week using the "butterfly way". Your company doesn't just want to change the color or fabric of the products; they need to do away with their current look entirely – they really want to design the new product(s) in ways that will change the whole medical experience for the young patients and their doctors. Using all or some of the things that your niece told you are important to her, use them to bisociate transformative new product ideas. (You will then take one of these ideas and move forward with the design process to design a functional, tested prototype (or alternatively a proof of concept demonstration).