

The background features a vertical gradient from light blue at the top to yellow at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several thick, 3D-style arrows and paths in various colors: red, orange, yellow, blue, and green. Some arrows point straight up, while others are L-shaped, indicating a path that moves horizontally and then vertically. A prominent white path starts at the top center, pointing down, then turns right, then down again, and finally right towards the right edge. The text 'LIVING WELL BY DESIGN' is rendered in a tall, thin, white, sans-serif font, positioned on the left side of the image.

# LIVING WELL BY DESIGN

**NEWLY LAUNCHED DESIGNING YOUR LIFE COURSE TEACHES**

**STUDENTS HOW TO APPLY DESIGN THINKING TO LIFE**

After graduation, Northwestern Engineering senior Angela Hosbein will work at global manufacturer ITW as a product development engineer. Just because she's already accepted the job doesn't mean she knows how her life will look after June.

"I have a vision of what work will look like, which is great," says Hosbein, a mechanical engineering major. "But I'm nervous about all the stuff outside of work. How will I make friends? What activities should I be involved in? Where will I live?"

Although Northwestern students usually experience enormous pressure during their job searches, finding a job is just one piece of the puzzle. A new course offered by Segal Design Institute helps students fit the rest of the puzzle together in a way that can lead to a happy and fulfilling life. The course, *Designing Your Life*, gives students experience in approaching life as a series of design projects.

Hosbein was among the 27 undergraduate students who took the first offering of the elective course at Northwestern during fall quarter 2016. "A lot of students think finding a job will make them happy," she says. "But they possibly don't think beyond that."

## ▶ THE STANFORD MODEL

*Designing Your Life* was inspired by a course of the same name offered at Stanford University. Through seminar-style discussions, role playing, writing assignments, guest speakers, and individual mentoring and coaching, that course teaches students to use design thinking to explore many of life's major challenges, such as pursuing careers they love and finding personal fulfillment.

Bill Burnett and fellow Stanford professor Dave Evans launched the course in 2008 because, as Burnett put it, "neither of us liked the advice we got in college."

"Life isn't something that you can plan or engineer," says Burnett, who is executive director of Stanford's design program. "Life is one wild and wonderful adventure. So if you're trying to invent the future, use a design methodology rather than a planning or engineering methodology."

## ▶ NORTHWESTERN'S TAKE

After Dean Julio M. Ottino learned about Stanford's course, he worked with faculty at Stanford to successfully bring it to Northwestern and use the same name. Ottino tapped Bruce Ankenman, co-director of the Segal Design Institute and professor of industrial engineering and management sciences, and Pam Daniels, Segal's design innovator in residence and clinical assistant professor, to develop a version of the course tailored to Northwestern's culture and curriculum. The Northwestern course emphasizes a more hands-on component involving fieldwork and prototyping.

"We want our students to get a good grounding in what the design process is through the class," Daniels says. "They should really feel what it means to create with intent and iterate, iterate, iterate."

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SEGAL DESIGN INSTITUTE

## ▶ NOT FALLING BEHIND

Shortly after Northwestern launched its course, Stanford's Evans and Burnett visited to guest-lecture on the subject of "reframing," a powerful design-innovation tool that emphasizes getting the questions right long before exploring the answers.

"There's always an age in which the culture tells you that you're supposed to have it figured out," Evans told the students. "This whole notion that you're late or that something is wrong with you, all of these things are completely dysfunctional."

Reframing these assumptions gave undergraduate Evan Witort relief.

"Freshman year, I felt like everyone was smarter than me," says Witort, a junior studying industrial engineering. "Now I talk to people who admit they felt the same way, but people are afraid to have that conversation."

## ▶ DOWN A DEEPER PATH

For several students in *Designing Your Life*, the class was the only place where they felt they could openly discuss these fears as well as true interests, curiosities, and different approaches to life. At the beginning of the quarter, students were organized into small groups in which they remained for the duration of the course. In addition to the class's regular meeting times, the small groups met for discussions during a lab section. This was often where the deeper, most fruitful conversations took place.

"It wasn't just small talk," Angela Hosbein says. "I formed relationships that will continue for a long time. For me, the class didn't answer all of my questions, but it taught me to at least start asking them."

According to co-instructor Ankenman, this class outcome was a success. "It's important for universities to help students develop values, develop themselves, and become good citizens of the world—not just good cogs in a machine," he says. "I feel like design is the perfect construction framework under which we can help students think about these issues."

AMANDA MORRIS