IDEO U

Cultivating Creative Collaboration

Course Syllabus

Course Calendar

May 21 - June 28

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
INTRODUCTION				**MAY 21** *Orientation Materials Open*			
LESSON 0 *Creative Collaboration*	**MAY 25** *Orientation Materials Open*						**MAY 31** *Assignment 0 Due*
LESSON 01 *Build a Foundation*							**JUNE 7** *Assignment 1 Due*
LESSON 02 *Choreograph the Work*							**JUNE 14** *Assignment 2 Due*
LESSON 03 *Tackle the Hard Stuff*							**JUNE 21** *Assignment 3 Due*
CONCLUSION *Activate Others*					**JUNE 26** *Final Reflection Due*		**JUNE 28** *Course Closed*

Cultivating Creative Collaboration

Course Syllabus

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Establish the cultural conditions that teams with diverse perspectives need to thrive.
- Design and guide the creative process, cycling through iterative phases of divergence and convergence to home in on solutions.
- Greet tension and conflict as an opportunity for evolution around ideas, in the team dynamic, and in 1 on 1 feedback.
- Get to innovative solutions by sourcing a diversity of perspectives.

In this course, gain the skills and techniques you need to foster creative collaboration and unleash the potential of a team. You'll learn IDEO's methods for guiding others through uncertainty, encouraging them to forge ahead into new territory by intentionally designing for moments where ideas can be shared, built on, and evaluated in a safe space.

VIEW COURSE

Week 1	**INTRODUCTION** *Creative Collaboration*	Learn how creative collaboration harnesses the power of diverse perspectives and creative thinking to develop innovative solutions.
Week 2	**LESSON 01** *Build a Foundation*	Create a culture of belonging and maintain the team dynamic through a set of agreements.
Week 3	**LESSON 02** *Choreograph the Work*	Set the conditions for creative thinking with an intentionally designed creative process.
Week 4	**LESSON 03** *Tackle the Hard Stuff*	Embrace tension as an opportunity to evolve ideas, team dynamics, and 1:1 feedback.
Week 5	**CONCLUSION** *Activate Others*	Empower others to grow their own skills and spread the energy of creative collaboration.

Creative Collaboration

In this lesson, you will:

- Learn about the different types of collaboration and the situations that call for creative collaboration.
- Get an introduction to the meaning of collaboration and the key elements that define it.
- Build an understanding of the optimal behaviors for collaborative teams.

VIDEO

What is Creative Collaboration?

Collaboration comes in many different forms. Some teams know what they are trying to achieve and they have a process in place for doing so, while others are stepping into the unknown, trying to do something totally new. Creative collaboration is a way of working that helps teams navigate ambiguity and bring innovative solutions to the world.

ARTICLE

Defining Creative Collaboration

Get aligned on how we define creative collaboration and its essential components.

VIDEO

Essential Collaborative Behaviors

Creative collaboration requires teams to take risks, explore the unknown, and try new things. Bringing a team together doesn't necessarily mean that they will be comfortable enough to do these things. The right conditions need to be set so that people feel safe enough to step out of their comfort zone.

VIDEO

Mentor Moment

IDEO's Sr. Global Director of Learning & Development, Heather Currier Hunt, talks about the extra considerations that leaders with formal authority will have to make if they hope to encourage the optimal conditions for creative collaboration.

ASSIGNMENT

Take Stock of Current Conditions

Before you start to shift the behaviors towards creative collaboration, take a moment to take stock of your current team conditions. When you start observing the interactions around you, you will see things in a new light and you'll be able to identify which collaborations are going well and which can be strengthened.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

EXPLORE MORE

Read and watch additional resources for more tips, tricks, and perspective.

REFLECT WITH COMMUNITY

Share an 'a-ha' moment from the week or a question you're still thinking through, and respond to one of your peers' comments.

LESSON 01

Build a Foundation

In this lesson, you will:

- Align the team on the expected norms for your collaboration by making agreements.
- Get an introduction to belonging and how essential it is for the success of teams.
- Build a sensitivity to your role as the guide of creative collaboration and how you can either inhibit or encourage the behaviors of creative collaboration through modeling.

VIDEO *Align the Team*	All too often, teams dive right into the work without taking the time to create alignment on the expected norms and behaviors. Sometimes teams operate with unwritten rules, or they have inherited them from other teams, but for creative collaboration to work teams need to have an open conversation about what matters most and collectively decide on their shared norms.
VIDEO *Mentor Moment*	IDEO's Sr. Global Director of Learning & Development, Heather Currier Hunt, talks about a few of her favorite tools for aligning the team before the work takes off.
GALLERY *Tools for Project Kick-Off*	See the other tools that IDEO uses to help teams get off to a great start at the beginning of a project.
VIDEO *Culture & Creative Work*	Part of building a solid foundation for creative collaboration is designing the team culture. Since creative collaboration relies on diverse perspectives and voices, the most important thing is to build a culture of belonging where folks feel seen and appreciated not just for what they can do, but for who they are as unique individuals.
ARTICLE *Ritual Primer*	Learn about rituals and their relationship to culture.
VIDEO *Mentor Moment*	IDEO's experience director, Chris Draz, shares her tips on designing rituals for belonging.
VIDEO *It Starts with You*	Guiding creative collaboration is a skill, not a role. At the same time, how the guide shows up has an outsized impact on the behaviors of the team. You will need to model the behaviors for creative collaboration and make sure that what you say aligns with what you do. Here are three tips for modeling leadership.
ACTIVITY *Craft Team Agreements*	Crafting team agreements helps everyone get on the same page and they become really helpful down the line when the work is underway. When the team starts veering away from the ideal behaviors, you can point back to the agreements and get folks back on track.
PEER FEEDBACK	Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.
EXPLORE MORE	Read and watch additional resources for more tips, tricks, and perspective.
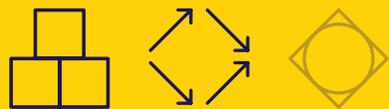
Choreograph the Work

In this lesson, you will:

- Understand the two mindsets that drive the creative process.
- Learn the five key elements needed for designing any meeting.
- Learn how to guide collaborative teams through divergent and convergent moments.

VIDEO *The Creative Process*	Getting your team to go beyond small, incremental changes to get to the truly innovative requires a disciplined process. Though it may seem antithetical to think of creative exploration as a process, creative problem solvers are most effective when they have a structure in place to guide their work.
ARTICLE *Five Key Elements of Any Meeting*	Get tips and techniques for guiding your team through divergence and convergence.
VIDEO *Design for Divergence*	Divergence is the first step that teams take into the unknown. It is a time for teams to explore in different directions, expand options, try new things, and take risks. It can feel chaotic or uncomfortable at times, but that's the fun of it. Now's not the time to think about what's feasible; it's time to think about what's possible.
ARTICLE *Better Brainstorms*	When it comes to creative, collaborative teams, the main activity for divergence is brainstorming. Unfortunately, not all brainstorms are equally effective in getting teams to true divergence.
VIDEO *Design for Convergence*	Convergence is more than simple decision making; it is a creative act. It's not about getting rid of choices by crossing them off, but about understanding the essence of your ideas and keeping only the most promising elements in play.
ARTICLE *Tips for Virtual Collaborations*	Today, we have the benefit of being able to work from pretty much anywhere, but this changes how the team works together. We have seven helpful tips for guiding remote collaborations.
ASSIGNMENT *Choreograph a Meeting*	Meeting choreography is essential to getting the most out of your collaborative sessions. There's a lot to consider such as the environment, constraints, guidance, and gotchas. The most important thing is to carefully design divergence and convergence separately, giving the team specific moments to adopt the right mindset.
PEER FEEDBACK	Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.
REFLECT WITH COMMUNITY	Share an 'a-ha' moment from the week or a question you're still thinking through, and respond to one of your peers' comments.
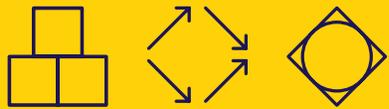
LESSON 03

Tackle the Hard Stuff

In this lesson, you will:

- Understand the transformative energy that tension brings with it.
- Learn five strategies for encouraging or managing tension around ideas.
- Understand the three-step process for navigating tension in the team dynamic.
- Build a culture of open, caring feedback that serves others' growth.

VIDEO *Diverse Perspectives and Tension*	Diverse perspectives create tension as a matter of course. When it comes to creative collaboration, this is a great thing! With a few techniques in your back pocket, you will be ready to provoke and manage tensions around ideas with your team.
VIDEO *The Power of Conflict*	Tensions arise all the time on collaborative teams. The worst thing is to ignore it, because tension brings with it an energy to evolve the team dynamic.
VIDEO *Mentor Moment*	IDEO's experience director, Annette Ferrara, gives actionable tips for creating the right environment for processing tensions with your team.
GALLERY *Mood-Meters*	Mood-meters show each team member's emotional journey during a project. The amazing thing about them is the diversity you end up seeing.
VIDEO *Navigate Tough Conversations*	How do we overcome the disconnect between wanting to get feedback and having a hard time giving it? The key here is to understand that feedback isn't mean—it's a gift—and to learn tools that will help you communicate directly and objectively while demonstrating that you care personally about the other person and their growth.
ARTICLE *More on Radical Candor*	This framework is a tool you can use to guide your interactions and help you gauge the nature of your criticism and praise.
GALLERY *Flight Tools for Mid- and Post-Project*	In Lesson 1, we shared some of the Flight tools for project kick-offs. In this gallery, you will find tools that help navigate team dynamics in the middle and end phases of a project.
ASSIGNMENT *Harness Tension*	Whether your team is stagnating in overwhelming consensus or about to pull apart at the seams, this assignment will help you understand the tension opportunity and choose an appropriate tool for addressing the tension (or lack thereof) with your team.
PEER FEEDBACK	Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.
EXPLORE MORE	Read and watch additional resources for more tips, tricks, and perspective.

CONCLUSION

Activate Others

In this lesson, you will:

- Understand how to activate others to guide creative collaboration.
- Learn what it means to "lead from the back."
- Reflect on what you've learned and plan for the next steps in your journey.

VIDEO
Pass It On

When you are directly guiding the team and working among them, you are leading from the front and alongside. Now that you've worked to develop the right conditions, mindsets, and behaviors for creative collaboration, it's time to think about how you can pass on what you've learned and empower others to guide. This spreads leadership and deepens the team's commitment to this new way of working.

ASSIGNMENT
Final Reflection

Reflect on all you have tried with your team; what worked, what didn't, when did you feel most comfortable or uncomfortable, and how will you lean in to strengthen the foundation you've already built? After this reflection, you will craft a written reflection to share with your team and invite their feedback. You will also make a plan for continued practice in the behaviors, skills, and mindsets you've been working with during the last several weeks.

PEER FEEDBACK

Provide feedback on the work of at least two of your peers' assignments.

EXPLORE MORE

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REFLECT WITH COMMUNITY

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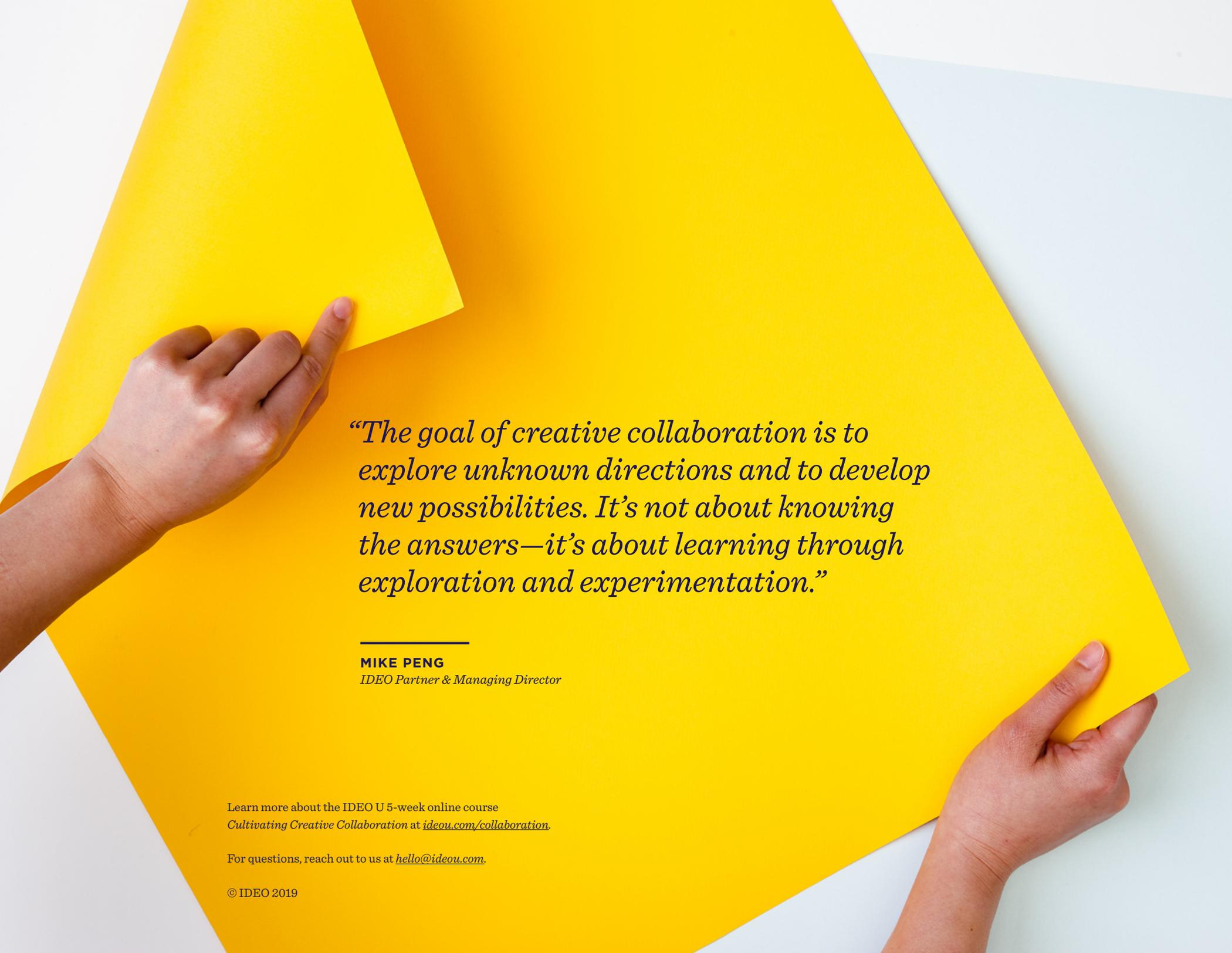
"The goal of creative collaboration is to explore unknown directions and to develop new possibilities. It's not about knowing the answers—it's about learning through exploration and experimentation."

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MIKE PENG
IDEO Partner & Managing Director

Learn more about the IDEO U 5-week online course
Cultivating Creative Collaboration at _ideou.com/collaboration_.

For questions, reach out to us at _hello@ideou.com_.

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