

University of Waterloo, Stratford Campus
Masters In Digital Experience Innovation
MDEI 625
The Innovation Course
Winter 2017
Mondays, 5:00 to 8:00 PM, rm 3129

Instructor Information

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Course Description

This is a reading, discussion and seminar course designed to prepare MDEI students to contribute in professional settings where “innovation” is a key success factor in achieving organizational goals. The course readings, in-class discussions, activities and assignments will approach the subject of innovation from several perspectives: the relationship of innovation to creativity as form of thinking, innovation as a group practice, innovation as an organizational achievement. The connections between innovation, marketing, strategy, creativity, “insight” and customer experience will be explored. Some practical techniques – building-blocks for innovation – will be developed. We will also spend some time on the constraints and behaviors that tend to make innovation more the exception than the rule.

The readings for the course will familiarize students with a group of theorists who have made notable observations relevant to the topic innovation. Since innovation, by its nature, tends to resist reduction to a finite set of facts or even a tidy rules-based theory, the assessment of student performance will be based not on exams but on individual assignments that afford a degree of focused and self-directed learning. The in-class experience will also involve student-led curatorial discussions – hailing examples of innovation – and developing together language to describe kinds and qualities of innovation.

Rather than relying on a “text-book,” the weekly assigned reading load for the course will take the form of essays and chapters that, generally speaking, have been written for that portion of the business audience that is interested in design, innovation, creativity and customer experience strategy.

The course requires no group-work assignments outside of the classroom, but will involve occasional group activities in the classroom centered around the application of heuristics employed in innovation practice.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

The four learning objectives for the course are as follows:

1. To become more literate, through reading and discussion, with the concept of innovation as it has been discussed by influential theorists on the topic – especially with respect to the fields of marketing, business strategy, customer experience design and digital media.
2. To build a mental model of the connections between innovation, creativity, customer insight, strategy and customer experience, that are relevant in contemporary business and institutional practice.
3. To recognize constraints and barriers to innovation.
4. To add to your skill-set an inventory of resources that provide a practical response to innovation constraints and barriers.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Draw upon a vocabulary of innovation theories
 - in professional and academic discussions (including in-class seminars)
 - in work solving problems related to marketing, business strategy, customer experience design and digital media.
- B. Conceptualize the relationship between innovation, creativity, customer insight, strategy and customer experience, that are relevant in contemporary business and institutional practice.
 - In mapping dependency relationships in the design of innovative work
- C. Anticipate constraints and barriers to innovation
 - At both an individual and collective/corporate level
- D. Draw upon an inventory of heuristics and techniques to facilitate innovation
 - Making selections appropriate to a particular innovation context

Readings

There is no single textbook. Reading assignments will be shared on a weekly basis.

Weekly readings will generally be posted as web links on the LEARN 625 site.

Extended Reading List

There is an extended reading list for the course appended to this syllabus. Students are encouraged to always have one of these books on the go, and to get through as many of these as possible in order to enrich their assignments and their contributions to classroom discussion. One of them, at the student's discretion, will be the focus of an assignment described under Course Requirements.

Course Requirements and Assessment

Course requirements and assessments are briefly summarized below. Students can anticipate some further description and discussion in the classroom to fill in more details on these assignments. Note that the first of these assignments is due on the third week of class. In every case, students should anticipate that they may be asked to speak with the rest of the class about work they turn in – and in general they should regard that as a positive indication that their work submitted was regarded as an exemplary contribution to the classroom discussion and learning.

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Mind Map of Innovation with Critical Question	Due Week 3 in the schedule	5%
This Is Innovative! Mini-Seminar	Schedule to be Assigned	15%
Deep Dives – Commentary on Readings (4)	Ends on week 10	20%
Deep Deep Dive – Commentary on Book (1)	End of term	15%
Seminar: This Need Innovation!	Wrap-up Conference	30%
Mind Map Phase 2: With commentary on critical question	End of term	15%
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Total		100%

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Assessment 1

Mind Map, Phase 1

Overview:

“Innovation” is an abstraction. We typically understand abstractions in terms of other things (some of these metaphors or other abstractions perhaps). The purpose of this assignment is for you to set out for yourself an initial baseline of assumptions, associations, causal relationships and most of all, the questions about innovation that you will bring to our discussions together.

Instructions:

1. Using Prezi (www.prezi.com) create a mind-map in which you relate your present understanding of “innovation.”
2. Include at least one critical thinking question about this topic.

A critical thinking question is one with the following characteristics:

- (a) there is no clear and irrefutable answer
- (b) the answer has meaningful consequences
- (c) you care about the answer – either because of intellectual curiosity or some desired outcome

3. Make your prezi public, and publish the link in the LEARN dropbox for Mind Map Phase 1. (You can do that by uploading a document with the link or by pasting the link to your Prezi in that document.)

4. Please include in your mind-map a photo of yourself, your name, and any background you care to share about yourself that might be helpful for your instructor in guiding the classroom conversation in your direction (for instance, undergrad major, industries you have worked in, countries of origin, hobbies & interests etc.)

Marking Rubric:

Marks will be assigned based on evidence of engagement with the challenge and the value of the question to advance discussion in the classroom.

Assessment 2

This is Innovative! Mini-Seminar

Overview:

Innovations are not always recognized in their time. The capacity to identify innovation, and the capacity to convince others of the innovative quality of something you observe are skills we wish to cultivate together in this class. The purpose of this assignment is for you to practice this, and in doing so, practice your ability to facilitate conversation about innovation.

Instructions:

1. Identify something you believe is an example (either widely heralded, or utterly unsung) of innovation. Your source material here is unrestricted – it might be a website, a political policy, a software as service business, a new product, a medical procedure, a livestock breed....

2. Build a brief (5 minute) presentation in which you explain why you think your example bears mention, and on what basis it stands out from less innovative practice.

3. Conclude your seminar (and your presentation with a single question for class discussion - a question that is related to the topic you have introduced that conforms to the qualities of a critical thinking question:

Once again, a critical thinking question is one with the following characteristics:

(a) there is no clear and irrefutable answer

(b) the answer has meaningful consequences

(c) you care about the answer – (either because of intellectual curiosity or some desired outcome)

4. This part is important to your mark, so don't ignore it. Make some retrospective notes containing your recollection of the seminar discussion, and upload those appended to your mini-seminar slide presentation to the drop box folder associated with this assignment.

Include your name (and if you wish your photo) in the presentation title page.

Your commentary should summarize the following:

- What was innovative?
- Why you felt it deserved comment?
- What was your critical question?
- What you learned from the discussion?

Marking Rubric:

Marks will be assigned based on (a) the insight of your selection, (b) the quality of your presentation and (c) the quality of your question and discussion facilitation, (d) the thoughtfulness of your follow-up notes.

Assessment 3: Deep Dives: Commentaries on Readings

Overview:

We are blessed with an abundance of writing on the topic of innovation. Not all contributions of course are of equal value. And even some of the most widely cited ideas on innovation can come under withering attack from other theorists from time to time.

An article will be assigned at the end of each of the first ten classes to be read as preparation for the following class. All students are expected to read this material weekly in order that we can have a coherent class conversation around the reading material.

Instructions

In addition to reading these articles and chapters, you will be expected to write a commentary on, or reaction to just FOUR of the articles submitted over the course of the term.

Think of these commentaries as a long-form blog-post - or a thoughtful article review. Length should be in the range of 500-1000 words.

Please submit as MS Word document or PDF, and again make sure your name is on the file.

Note: You are only required to submit four of these. This is intended to give you some control over your schedule. Since other assignments will pile up in the second half of the term, you will want to get started soon.

Marking Rubric:

Each of the four commentaries will be marked out of a possible 5 marks. Marks will be assigned based these qualities: - is it thought-provoking? Do you build upon the reading by connecting it to your own observations? Can you situate the ideas in the writing to other ideas that you find relevant? Can you critique the ideas either on the basis of logical

examination or with reference to a competing set of ideas that you feel have greater merit? And finally, can you project your own ideas with clarity, verve and style?

Assessment 4

“Deep Deep Dive” – Commentary on book from reading list.

This commentary is expected to be still modest in scope of effort, and similar in intent to the shorter commentaries on articles. Marking rubric is the same, but the marking weight reflects the more extensive effort to complete. Length of the written submission should be in the range of 1500-2000 words.

Assessment 5

Seminar: This Need Innovation!

Overview:

Part of what separates innovators from the rest of the world is the ability to see past the naturalized and especially the arbitrary nature of things and discern how things could be better. This assignment is aimed at cultivating that aptitude. Because this assignment comes later in the term, this does take the form of a culminating assignment in which students are expected to bring their expanded vocabulary of ideas on innovation into play in diagnosis, and to the extent they wish – prescription for how something they observe is ripe for innovation. From the standpoint of skills development, this is an individual presentation, in which you will be assessed for your ability to construct an argument, support it with presentation media, and deliver it persuasively.

Instructions:

This is a short seminar of 17 minutes duration (same duration as a TED talk), intended for delivery to the other students. These will be delivered back to back in a conference day at the end of term. Students are expected to prepare a presentation (prezi, keynote, ppt) to support the seminar.

Because of time constraints during these classes, students are asked to upload their seminar presentations to the drop-box folder so that all content is already available in the LEARN dropbox one day prior to the presentation.

Marking Rubric:

The presentations will be evaluated on the quality of the insight into the innovation gap, and the connection of the discussion to theories and terms discovered over the term. Also, as noted above, a portion of the mark will be based on skills exhibited in making a persuasive argument.

Assessment 6

Mind Map Phase 2

Overview: This activity is intended to help you consolidate, organize and display the knowledge and perspective you have gained over the course of the term.

This assignment is due at the end of term, before exams begin. It should be seen as a culminating assignment that represents the new synthesis of your understanding of innovation.

You are encouraged to go back to your original mind-map as a starting point for this assignment, and offer a critical reflection on the connections, and assumptions that went into that map and the question you advanced as part of that initial assignment, noting how your understanding has changed.

The medium you select for this assignment is flexible – it can be a document, a presentation, or another prezi (with text commentary embedded).

Marking Rubric:

This assignment also gives you an opportunity to call the instructor’s attention to discussions where you brought insight or leadership to the class discussion – and so the marks for this assignment are in part a proxy for classroom participation.

Course Schedule (as of Jan 9th, 2017)

Week	Date	Discussion/Theme Explored	Readings To Prepare For Following Week
1	Jan 9	Course Overview, Then 7:00 PM for Atrium Screening	Roger Martin: Reliability and Validity
2	Jan 16	Barriers to Innovation - Culture	Christensen: Marketing Malpractice
3	Jan 23	Barriers to Innovation – Rule-Following	Drucker: The Theory of the Business
4	Jan 30	Barriers to Innovation – “The conceptual infrastructure”	Jill Lepore: The disruption machine,
5	Feb 6	The concept of “Disruption”	David Snowden, A leader’s framework for Decisionmaking
6	Feb 13	Innovation and Complex Environments	
7	Feb 27	Innovation and Cognitive Biases	James March, The Technology of Foolishness
8	March 6	Innovation and Kinds of Thinking	John Kolko, Abductive Thinking

Week	Date	Discussion/Theme Explored	Readings To Prepare For Following Week
9	March 13	Innovation and Creativity, Part 1	De bono, Serious Creativity
10	March 20	Innovation and Creativity Part 2	Min Basadur, Leading others to think innovatively together
11	March 27	Innovation and Creativity Part 3	TBD
12	April 3	Wrap-up	

Late Work

You are a graduate student. The instructor’s expectation is that you got this far by managing your time effectively.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

It will be very hard to spoof any of the assignments for this course.

Electronic Device Policy

Sitting in a classroom with other graduate students, united by common interests is a rare privilege. Please don’t fritter that away, or dishonour your fellow students by distracting yourself with social media or other such things in class. In general, I’ll expect you to turn wifi off, unless there is a reason to fire it up to support the discussion.

Attendance Policy

Much of the best part of the learning of this class will be experience driven, and impossible to gather by looking at class notes. If you don’t show up – you won’t learn as much – and you won’t contribute as much to the learning of your peers.

Institutional-required statements for undergraduate course outlines approved by Senate Undergraduate Council, April 14, 2009

Academic Integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity Webpage \(https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) and the [Arts Academic Integrity Office Webpage \(http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/current-undergraduates/academic-responsibility\)](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/current-undergraduates/academic-responsibility) for more information.

Grievance

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4 \(https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing academic offenses and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm) (<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm) (<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm>).

Appeals

A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm) (<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>).

Note for Students with Disabilities

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Extended Reading List

The extended reading list below, is offered to students as a resource to draw upon in completing the “deep deep dive” assignment, and also for developing literacy on the topic of innovation

All of these are well-regarded additions to a library of literature on innovation

Jumping the Curve: Innovation and Strategic Choice in an Age of Transition,

Nicholas Imparato and Oren Harari. 1994

Tilt: Shifting Your Strategy from Products to Customers .

Niraj Dawar. 2013

The Medici Effect: What You Can Learn from Elephants and Epidemics

Johansson, Frans. 2006

Serious Play: How the World's Best Companies Simulate to Innovate

Michael Schrage. 1999

Seizing the White Space: Business Model Innovation for Growth and Renewal

Mark W. Johnson. 2010

Blue Ocean Strategy: How To Create Uncontested Market Space And Make The Competition Irrelevant

W. Chan Kim;Renee Mauborgne. 2005

The Power of Pull: How Small Moves, Smartly Made, Can Set Big Things in Motion Brown,

John Seely; Davison, Lang; Hagel III, John. 2010

The Innovator’s Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail

Clayton M. Christensen. 2013

The Myths of Innovation

Scott Berkun 2010

Ten Types of Innovation

Larry Keeley. 2013

THE 46 RULES OF GENIUS An Innovator’s Guide to Creativity

Marty Neumeier, 2014-

Best Practices are Stupid. 40 Ways to Out Innovate the Competition

Stephen Shapiro, 2011

Escape Velocity

Geoffrey Moore, 2011

A More Beautiful Question, The Power of Enquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas

Warren Berger, 2014

(This list may be expanded as the term goes on.)