Innovation and Entrepreneurship: New Ventures in Digital Technology  
COMM 597

An elective course developed for the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology (MACT) program

Course Description and Objectives

This course explores the global forces shaping today’s innovations in digital media. Students in this course will be able to examine the factors and accelerators underpinning the current digital innovation landscape. They will also be given an opportunity to solve problems and serve consumers or audiences using a tool and a rigorous approach in launching an entrepreneurial pursuit.

A key part of this class is to learn about current trends and to analyze the issues shaping today’s innovation environment. With the help of some focused reading, students will be asked to articulate and critique some of the principles which need to be embraced and adapted in order to survive the burst of ‘disruptive innovations.’ Students will also be asked to think about and consider implementing some well-known strategies for innovating and managing change within the context of an organization.

One of the main requirements of this course is the final project presentation which involves the creation of a pitch deck (using PowerPoint). The pitching exercise allows the student to get a glimpse and, to learn from, the best practices in terms telling a story and convincing funders or investors to support an idea. The creation of a pitch deck is the final outcome of a ‘startup’ exercise process which begins with the identification of a pain point (ideation) followed by a series of steps which includes validation, primary market research, creation of customer profile or persona, etc.

Digital media files (audio and video), articles and other readings by industry experts and thought leaders will be used in order to help students deepen their understanding of concepts introduced in this course. Discussion fora and online chats led by the instructor help students navigate the eClass interface and prepare for assignments.

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- Describe and critique current ‘disruptive’ innovations in digital tech with emphasis on the ones covered by class readings (e.g. machine learning, etc.)
- Discuss some of the key factors—global connectedness and computing power—which serve as accelerators to innovation
- Articulate the key principles involved in fostering innovation (push vs. pull, emergence over authority, etc.) and managing change within an organization
• Apply a disciplined entrepreneurship (DE) approach introduced in this class in order to implement an innovative idea or startup concept within the context of an organization or within the digital media milieu.

Delivery Format and Resources

This course will be delivered asynchronously online using the Moodle learning system. Materials will include a customized readings package. Online resources including videos, online articles and reference to relevant web sites will also be provided. Pre-reading will be required.

For more information, contact Susan Petruszczak at 780 492 1538 or susan.petruszczak@ualberta.ca

Enrolment is limited to 20. Early registration is suggested due to delivery format.