



INNOVATION@WORK
ENTP 6V99

<u>Summer Semester 2025</u> Class meetings/locations: Tuesdays, 6:00pm -9:45pm JSOM 2.107	Professor: Gowrishankar Sundararajan Office Hours: <i>Preferred by appointment</i> Email: gowrishankar.sundararajan@utdallas.edu <i>Please use subject line, "Innovation@work"</i>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Innovation@Work provides a unique experiential learning opportunity for students to work with startups and corporations in addressing real-world business challenges. This hands-on, lab-style course focuses on the entrepreneurial (or intrapreneurial) journey, guiding students through the process of understanding customer pain points, reimagining solutions, and developing go-to-market strategies. By collaborating directly with startups and corporations, students engage in a practical and immersive exploration of innovation.

Students are divided into teams, and each team is assigned a problem statement from a partner organization (startup or corporation). Student teams apply the tools and frameworks to develop compelling, innovative solutions. The flipped-classroom approach emphasizes active participation, with regular team presentations where students share insights gathered from customer interviews, receive feedback, and refine their solutions. By the end of the course, student teams deliver actionable strategies and insights to their partnered organization.

The course integrates leading frameworks and methodologies, such as the Buyer Utility Map, Business Model Canvas, and Non-customer framework, to help students deeply analyze market opportunities, innovate solutions, and validate business models. Through structured modules—Understand, Imagine, Explore, and Validate—students work iteratively to refine ideas, conduct customer interviews, and test market-fit strategies.

This course is open to all disciplines and is designed for those who want to gain practical experience in innovation, design thinking, and entrepreneurship. Note: Due to the course requirements, including customer and stakeholder interviews, the time commitment is 7-10 hours per week.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Gain a deep understanding of customer pain points and unmet needs through structured problem validation and customer discovery.
2. Identify and analyze untapped market opportunities using advanced innovation frameworks.
3. Rapidly ideate and iterate innovative solutions while striving for product-market fit.
4. Develop actionable go-to-market strategies and deliver insights that address real-world challenges faced by startups.
5. Apply storytelling and presentation techniques to communicate ideas effectively to stakeholders.



TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS

- Kim, W. C., & Mauborgne, R. (2015). *Blue ocean strategy : how to create uncontested market space and make the competition irrelevant* (Expanded edition.). Harvard Business Review Press.
- Ries, E. 2011. *The Lean Startup*. Crown Publishing Group.
- Osterwalder and Pigneur. 2010. *Business Model Generation - A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers*. John Wiley and Sons. ISBN-13: 978-0470876411 (**abbreviated: BMG**)
- Osterwalder and Pigneur. 2014. *Value Proposition Design – How to Create Products and Services Customers Want*. Wiley. ISBN-13: 978-1118968055 (**abbreviated: VPD**)
- Constable, G. 2014. *Talking to Humans* <https://www.talkingtohumans.com/>

FORMATION OF GROUPS

Most of the work in this course will be performed in teams. Students will be organized into small teams (4 to 6 members per team) during the first week of the course.

ELEARNING & CLASS MATERIALS

eLearning will also be the method of communication regarding upcoming events, changes to the syllabus, and grades. I will provide power point slides and other class materials that will be made available (in eLearning) to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student Accessibility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

Flipped Classroom: This course adopts a flipped-classroom approach, where lecture materials are delivered online as part of your weekly homework. Watching the assigned lecture videos is essential to successfully complete your weekly customer interviews and prepare team presentations. In-class time is dedicated to addressing questions, discussing lecture content, and exploring supplemental materials. To make the most of class discussions, you are expected to come prepared with questions or comments about the lecture material. Active participation during these sessions is critical, as it mirrors real-world problem-solving scenarios.

Experiential Learning: This course emphasizes experiential learning through active engagement with real-world business challenges. Between classes, you will conduct customer, stakeholder, or end-user interviews, with each team expected to complete a minimum of 8–10 interviews per week. These interviews will focus on specific frameworks and tools, such as the Buyer Utility Map or Business Model Canvas, depending on the stage of your project. This course simulates the startup environment, immersing you in the chaos, ambiguity, and resource constraints that entrepreneurs face. By navigating these challenges, you will develop critical problem-solving and adaptability skills.

Peer-to-Peer Collaboration: Collaboration and shared learning are central to this course. During weekly team presentations, all students are expected to attentively listen, engage, and provide constructive feedback. Sharing insights, experiences, and even connections with your peers enriches the collective learning experience and fosters a culture of innovation and mutual support.



Class Culture: The class culture is designed to replicate the fast-paced, result-oriented environment of startups. Feedback will be candid, direct, and focused on driving immediate action. While this may feel intense at times, it is an intentional strategy to challenge you, push your limits, and help you grow as an innovator. Expect to receive weekly critiques of your work in a group setting and embrace the iterative process of learning and refining your solutions. The teaching team encourages active dialogue, where you are free to question and challenge perspectives constructively. By stepping out of your comfort zone, you will evolve faster than you ever imagined possible.

ASSIGNMENTS & ACADEMIC CALENDAR

The course is divided into four modules designed to guide teams through a systematic innovation process:

- **Module 1: Understand** – Analyze the organization’s current products/services, pain points, and market dynamics.
- **Module 2: Imagine** – Identify untapped customer segments and market opportunities.
- **Module 3: Explore** – Develop innovative solutions and rapidly test them with customers.
- **Module 4: Validate & Pitch** – Refine the solution through validation, create a go-to-market strategy, and deliver a final pitch.

Session	Topic to be covered	Team Presentation	Sponsor's in-class presence (or Virtual)	Outside class activity
WEEK 1 June 03, 2025	Introduction Team Formation Interview skills			
	Sponsor presentation of problem statement Teams interview experts to understand the business context Schedule weekly meeting with sponsor Plan for first fieldwork		YES	
WEEK 2 June 10, 2025	Pain-point analysis using Buyer Utility Map	Customer User Journey Map - What does the current product/service do and for who - Who are the competitors and what are the other alternatives for the user		Interview users to understand user pain points, what matters and gather insights on opportunity to innovate



WEEK 6 July 08, 2025	Business Model Canvas	To-Be User Journey Maps Value proposition Prepare sales pitch		
WEEK 7 July 15, 2025	Class Lecture Target Pricing Go-To Market Strategy Adoption hurdles	TEAM PRESENTATION - MODULE 3 DELIVERABLE 1.) To-Be User Journey Maps 2.) User feedback on product/service (Identify adoption hurdles) 3.) Business Model - SUBMISSION DUE -	YES	
WEEK 8 July 22, 2025	Storytelling	Review draft presentation with peer feedback		Validate (new ideas, pivot, etc. based on feedback) and refine approach
WEEK 9 July 29, 2025		Review draft presentation 2 with peer feedback		
WEEK 10 Aug 05, 2025		FINAL TEAM PRESENTATION - SUBMISSION DUE -	YES	



GUIDELINES ON SUBMISSIONS

There are two types of submissions:

1. **Regular Class Presentations:** Teams must email presentation files in PowerPoint format before the scheduled session.
2. **Deliverables for Grading:** For each module, teams must submit the following via the e-Learning portal by the specified due date:
 - **One-Page Memo (PDF format)**
 - **Updated Presentation Document incorporating class feedback (PDF format)**

One-Page Memo Requirements: The memo should be concise, insightful, and include the following:

- Project Title and Team Members
- Key Insights gathered
- Shortcomings in findings or methodology
- Questions/Support sought from the instructor
- Next Steps planned

Submission Details (Applicable to Deliverables for Grading)

- **Format:** All submissions must be in PDF format.
- **Deadline:** Deliverables are due by 11:59 PM on the specified due date.
- **Submission Process:** Use the upload link provided on the e-Learning portal. Only one submission per team is required.

Due Dates(Applicable to Deliverables for Grading):

	Deliverable	Due Date
1.	Module 1: Understand	June 17, 2025
2.	Module 2: Imagine	July 01, 2025
3.	Module 3: Explore	July 15, 2025
4.	Final submission	Aug 5, 2025

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADINGS

The class schedule list, class activity and recommended readings are shared in this document. Any supplemental readings will be shared through e-Learning or email.

Advance preparation and enthusiastic participation in class discussions is an important part of the learning experience in this course.

There will be no quizzes or exams. Your grade will be based on group written assignments, presentations and your contributions to class discussions as summarized in the table below:

	Deliverable	Due Date	% Grade
1.	Module 1: Understand	June 17, 2025	20%
2.	Module 2: Imagine	July 01, 2025	20%
3.	Module 3: Explore	July 15, 2025	20%



4.	Final submission	Aug 05, 2025	25%
5.	Class participation		15%

MORE ON GRADING POLICIES

- Cheating in any form will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permitted by the university.
- Plagiarism is cheating and is a very serious offense. Plagiarism occurs when you use another's intellectual property (words or ideas) and do not acknowledge that you have done so. If it is found that you have plagiarized—deliberately or inadvertently—you will face serious consequences.
 - The best way to avoid plagiarism is to **cite your sources**, including materials gathered through the Internet and the use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT), both within the body of your assignment and in a bibliography of sources you used at the end of your document.
- How to cite? Learn here: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html or use other tools such as: <https://www.easybib.com/>
- Note: ChatGPT and other AI tools are not a replacement for your own critical thinking and original ideas. The ultimate goal of this course and any tool used to submit work is to enhance your own learning and understanding, not to undermine it.
 - Cite or explain any AI tools you use. Provide the name of the AI tool, the date of access, the URL of the interface, and the specific prompt or query you used to generate the output.
 - Be transparent and honest about how you used the AI tool and how it contributed to your assignment. Explain what you learned from the AI tool, how you verified its accuracy and reliability, how you integrated its output with your own work, and how you acknowledged its limitations and biases.
- All assignments must be turned into eLearning by the submission date and time mentioned above
- Late assignments may be penalized with a drop in scoring.
- There will be no extra-credit work.
- To appeal a grade, submit a typewritten request explaining your position (along with the original assignment) within 7 calendar days of receiving your grade. Document your points with the appropriate course material. After reviewing your explanation, the instructor will either award you additional points or schedule a meeting with you to discuss the disputed issue(s). The instructor reserves the right to re-grade the entire assignment when an appeal is submitted. This may result in a lower grade.
- The weighted average score calculated from the course requirements will be converted into a grade using the follow cut-off points. No rounding will be applied; grades are truncated at the cut-off point.

GRADE SCALE

A- = 90 to 92%	A = 93% or greater	
B- = 80 to 82%	B = 83 to 86%	B+ = 87 to 89%
C- = 70 to 72%	C = 73 to 76%	C+ = 77 to 79%
D- = 60 to 62%	D = 63 to 66%	D+ = 67 to 69%

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies](#) webpage for these policies.



Academic Support Resources

The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students. Please go to [Academic Support Resources](#) webpage for these policies.

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same: *"As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do."*

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.