SI 250: Ideas to Impact Syllabus

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1. Course location and times

Section A1	Section C1
Wednesday 2:30-5:15pm HAR 316	Thursday 9:30-12:15pm HAR 316

2. Office hours

Day	Time	Person	Location
Mondays	1-3pm	Tabitha Fortner	Zoom (link tbd)
Thursday	2-4pm	Prof. Hannah	HAR 657
Fridays	2-4pm	Teesa Manandhar	Zoom (link tbd)

3. Course overview and objectives

This course explores the genesis and implementation of innovative ideas. The overall goal is to empower students to create change in their lives and society. We do so by exploring research evidence and practical frameworks related to human cognition, team dynamics, and

social institutions. Specific topics include recognizing hidden biases and assumptions, developing and refining novel ideas based on feedback and failure, engaging stakeholders, and examining tradeoffs competing goals and priorities. We rely on case discussions, interactive lectures, experiential simulations, and multiple extensive field research and design projects. A unique feature of the course is its iterative structure and experiential design, in which students are presented with multiple opportunities to apply, learn, and re-apply specific skills. Throughout the semester, students will be pushed to open their minds and get their hands dirty exploring new terrain and bringing innovative new ideas to life.

Specific learning goals include:

1. To improve your own skill and confidence as a creative thinker, and to develop an understanding of creativity as an iterative and learnable process.

2. To gain experience leading and contributing to diverse, interdisciplinary teams, and to learn frameworks for effective collaboration and shared work products.

3. To engage in first-hand social inquiry through field research on a novel problem, and to learn how to analyze and identify patterns from "in the rough" field data.

4. Overall, to develop the confidence and toolset to identify and tackle meaningful social and environmental problems in the world around you.

This course is designed to be accessible to students with diverse disciplinary and experiential backgrounds; effort and willingness to explore are the only non-negotiable prerequisites.

4. HUB learning outcomes

SI 250 carries three HUB units: Social Inquiry I, Individual in Community and Creativity/Innovation. As such, we have additional learning outcomes:

Social Inquiry I

1. Students will identify and apply major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behavior including, for example, the workings of social groups, institutions, networks, and the role of the individual in them.

Individual in Community

1. Students will analyze at least one of the dimensions of experience—historical, racial, socioeconomic, political, gender, linguistic, religious, or cultural—that inform their own worldviews and beliefs as well as those of other individuals and societies.

2. Students will participate respectfully in different communities such as campus, citywide, national, and international groups, and recognize and reflect on the issues relevant to those communities.

Creativity/Innovation

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.
2. Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.

5. Course content (for details, see http://bit.ly/si2502022)

Our time together will be split into a set of "modules", each mapping to a body of theoretical research and practical skills. Time for group work will be interspersed throughout.

1. Course launch. *Welcome and logistics*
2. Unseeing the world. *Biases, assumptions, and the burden of history*
3. The art of new ideas. *Understanding and harnessing creativity*
4. Creativity is a team sport. *Making teams work*
5. Finding problems. *Design thinking and user-centered design*
6. Field research. *Collecting and interpreting field data*
7. Jobs to be done. *A new lens on the products we buy and sell*
8. The mind of a scientist. *Lean design, hypotheses, and prototyping*
9. Build it, break it, fix it, change it. *Prototyping done right*
10. Getting off the island. *Stakeholders and the "wide lens" of innovation*
11. The road not taken. *Goals, trade offs, and deciding what matters*
12. Idea fair. *Your chance to share your ideas*
13. Reflections. *The power and duty to solve problems*

A more complete description of each session, along with readings, discussion questions, and additional notes can be found at the links above, or through the Blackboard site.

6. Course readings

In an effort to lower the burden of course material costs on students, all of our materials are available digitally and for free. The tradeoff is that everything isn't in one place. Course materials can be found in three locations (specified for each article/video):

1. Direct link (click the link!)
2. The **course materials** section of the course website

3. For HBR articles, you have the choice of viewing them online (limited views/month) or accessing any article at any time for free through the Pardee library [using these instructions](#)

If you have trouble accessing any readings, please reach out. Please note that Google will also lead you to many of our articles, which are often available on the web.

7. Course schedule and deliverables

All course readings and deliverables can be found in [a single table](#) at [https://bit.ly/SI2502022](#).

8. Assignments and grading

This is a learning-by-doing course. There will be few traditional lectures. Rather, our time in class will be spent on experiential simulations and case studies, in which we will immerse ourselves in the data and ambiguity of real-world scenarios. Outside of class, you spend time in the field collecting data, interacting with users, and developing solutions to real world problems. Overall, your grade will reflect your ability to work on difficult, unstructured tasks. The grading of this course is in compliance with elective guidelines, with grades assigned on a curve. The class average is expected to be a B+. Your course grade will be based on:

1. Course Contribution   35%
2. Engagement Checks   20%
3. Design Sprint   15%
4. Team Project   30%

Course Details:

1.   Class Contribution (35%)

This is a "community-led" course, meaning that the value of the course comes from YOU, inside and outside of the classroom. Ways to contribute effectively include:

● Attending sessions (synchronously) is critical, if possible.
● Actively participating in class discussions. I may cold-call on students, and will actively work to include a wide range of voices in the class discussion.
● Actively participate in small group discussions and exercises. This will be a **big** part of our daily class activities, and you will be asked to complete peer evaluations.
● Providing feedback on teams' work in progress.

2.   Reflections (20%)

Each week you will be asked to complete a short, low-stakes "reflection" paper, which will be submitted through Blackboard. The goal of these reflections is to provide you with an

opportunity to synthesize the material from the *preceding* week (including both readings and class session). The rationale for these reflections is that research has found assignments such as these to be one of the most effective ways to learn material (see for example here or here). Students typically find this to be a personally valuable exercise.

Reflections must be completed **individually**. They are due at the start of the next week's class session (e.g., the reflection on week 2 is due at the start of week 3's class). You are encouraged to refer to course notes and readings while writing your reflection.

The specific prompts for each week can be found at bit.ly/si2502022

Formatting: Maximum 2 pages, ~1.5x spacing, size 11 or 12, any legible font. My goal is to see your thinking, not enforce pedantic rules; please simply be reasonable re: formatting.

We will have an estimated ten reflection papers over the course of the semester. *Before computing the component grade, I will drop the lowest score for each student.*

3.   Design Sprint (15%)

During the first part of the semester, we will work together in assigned teams to use design thinking to develop solutions to a real-word problem (prompt to be announced). This assignment will require you to spend time in the field interviewing users, collecting feedback, and testing prototypes. Additional information and instructions will be provided: please note however that this assignment will take substantial time and effort outside of class.

The deliverable for the design sprint will be a short report (approximately 2000 words) describing the overall design process and proposed solution. Specific instructions and rubric will be provided. While this course component is weighted at only 15% of the course grade, do not be fooled - it will be a substantial amount of work! The low grade weighting is intended to reflect the fact that this project is intended to be a learning opportunity.

At the conclusion of the design sprint, you will evaluate the performance of your teammates through an online survey. The aggregate (and anonymous) results of this survey will be used to adjust individuals' assignment grades up or down by a full letter grade. The expectation is that no adjustments will be necessary if everyone contributes and works together.

4.   Team Project (30%)

The final component of the course is a seven week intensive team project, in which teams of four students will a) identify an important problem in the community, and then b) apply course tools including design thinking, prototyping, lean design, and stakeholder analysis to c) develop an innovative solution to this problem.

This assignment will require you to spend time in the field interviewing users, collecting

feedback, and testing prototypes. **Please note that this assignment will take substantial time and effort outside of class**. In the past, many students have found this project to be one of the most valuable and interesting projects of their college careers.

At the conclusion of the project, you will evaluate the performance of your teammates through an online survey. The aggregate (and anonymous) results of this survey will be used to adjust individuals' assignment grades up or down by a full letter grade. The expectation is that no adjustments will be necessary if everyone contributes and works together.

9. Course attendance and communication

Attending course sessions is critical to your learning. Issues (health, holidays, conflicts) may prevent you from attending specific sessions. I trust you to manage and balance the competing demands on your time. However, regular failure to attend class may negatively impact your contribution grade, as well as your ability to succeed in other aspects of the course. Please reach out if you expect attendance to be an issue.

10. Diversity and inclusion

In this course, we are seriously committed to supporting diversity and inclusion among all classroom community members. We proactively strive to construct a safe and inclusive environment by respecting each other's dignity and privacy. We treat one another fairly and honor each member's experiences, perspectives, abilities, and backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identification, ability status, socio-economic status, national identity, or any other identity markers. Bullying and disrespectful or "othering" language or behavior will not be tolerated.

If you ever have any concerns about the classroom climate, please reach out to me. You can also reach the Questrom Diversity & Inclusion office at myQuestrom@bu.edu.

11. Accommodations for students with special needs

In keeping with University policy, any student with a disability who needs or thinks they need academic accommodations must call the Office of Disability & Access Services at 617-353-3658 to arrange a confidential appointment with a Disability & Access Services staff member. Accommodation letters must be delivered to me in a timely fashion (within two weeks of the date on the letter and not later than two weeks before any major assignment). Please note that accommodations will not be delivered absent an official letter of accommodation.

12. Sexual misconduct / Title IX policy

The Questrom School of Business is committed to fostering a safe learning environment for all members of the its community and preventing sexual misconduct. All forms of sexual

misconduct, including rape, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, stalking, and sexual harassment are violations of Boston University's policies, whether they happen on campus or off campus.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in federally funded education programs and activities. This law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources at http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/.

13. Boston University's academic code of conduct

The objective of Boston University in enforcing academic rules is to promote a community atmosphere in which learning can best take place. Such an atmosphere can be maintained only so long as every student believes that his or her academic competence is being judged fairly and that he or she will not be put at a disadvantage because of someone else's dishonesty.

In this class, the most common points of confusion are as follows:

1. You must complete the personal reflections individually. While you are welcome to consult your notes during the check, you may not discuss it with classmates.

2. All work submitted under your name (either individually, or as part of a team project) must be your own work. Knowingly allowing others to represent your work as their own is as serious an offense as submitting another's work as your own.

If you have any questions about what is allowable behavior, or have any concerns related to the academic code of contact, please feel free to reach out to me.

For more information: http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/

14. Intellectual property ownership

The project you work on in this class is for learning purposes only. At the conclusion of a course, any student will be free to further develop any idea incorporated into their team's project, with or without the participation of other students on the team. BU and its faculty will not be directly involved in any such activity, but organizations such as the BU startup law clinic and Innovate@BU can give students advice on issues arising during creation of a new venture. In our experience, the success of a startup venture is generally a function of the successful execution of the team that implements the venture, rather than the quality of the original idea.