

Department of Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises  
Whitman School of Management  
Syracuse University  
Syracuse, NY

## The Art, Science and Philosophy of Entrepreneurship

~ A Multi- and Trans-disciplinary Perspective ~

Syllabus  
Fall 2009  
HNR360



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<b>Office Hours:</b>	<b>M/W 3:45-4:45pm (or by appointment)</b>
<b>Classroom:</b>	<b>SOM 302</b>
<b>Meeting times:</b>	<b>M/W 2:15-3:35pm</b>

## **Course Overview:**

Arguably, there is no area of academic pursuit that is more interdisciplinary and cross-functional than entrepreneurship. The assimilation and integration of entrepreneurship into other disciplines is a unique phenomenon and the purpose of this course is to understand entrepreneurship as a discipline evolving from the culture, logic and methodologies of other disciplines. Entrepreneurship is not about starting a business. Rather, it is a way of thinking and acting that transcends career, social and business dimensions. The real quest of the course is to explore the encounters of multiple disciplines using diverse sources of information in order to construct an integrative perspective on the question “What is entrepreneurship?”

The course starts by looking at entrepreneurship through the lenses of the disciplines from which the field originated before finally establishing entrepreneurship as a discipline in its own right. The theory of entrepreneurship is investigated through the discussion of classic and current articles, books, and guest speakers, while entrepreneurship practice is explored through a simulation and novel experiential learning activities. Throughout the course, students will be given the opportunity to review the historical and current roles of entrepreneurs in society, and subsequently assess their personal entrepreneurial potential. Students will learn about various perspectives, examine different methodologies, explore some original empirical research, make connections between theory and empirical research, and practice critiquing and identifying insight in research. These skills are important preconditions to developing one’s own original ideas.

## **Statement of Course Objectives:**

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*“Something in the world forces us to think.  
This something is an object, not of recognition, but of a fundamental encounter.”  
~ Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition ~*

The primary goal of this course is to provide an understanding of the worldviews and life-worlds of entrepreneurs. This seminar aims to:

1. Develop you into a curious, confident, competent, and creative entrepreneurial thinker;
2. Encourage you to explore concepts related to a problem from a multi-disciplinary perspective and master the core insights from each discipline;
3. Enable you to integrate diverse perspectives into your life as an entrepreneur by engaging in dialogue from different perspectives in an open, critical and creative manner;
4. Provide an integrative learning experience through an emphasis on both theoretical perspectives and “real world” practices;
5. Help you develop more independence from external sources of information and expert advice, and to think for yourself;
6. Inculcate the attitudes, values and psychological mindsets and strategic practices of entrepreneurial actors;
7. Hone creativity, critical thinking and decision-making skills in the process of becoming more entrepreneurial;
8. Foster an appreciation for the entrepreneurial perspective by having you actively participate in situations that require risk taking, tolerance of ambiguity, and innovative, proactive behavior, etc.
9. Engage you personally, intellectually and creatively in the study and analysis of entrepreneurship as a discipline, career, skill, behavior, and a way of life;
10. Help you refine their skills as insightful questioners, rather than good answer-finders.

A key objective of the course is to ensure that you THINK. You will synthesize material learned in prior classes in conjunction with new concepts that are introduced. To this you are expected to add a dose of common sense and filter these ideas through your own experiences and “worldview”.



## ***Course Description:***

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Typically entrepreneurship courses apply concepts and techniques from the functional areas of accounting, finance, economics, marketing, etc. in the context of new venture development. This seminar breaks away from this approach and instead draws together multi-disciplinary perspectives that have contributed to the evolution of entrepreneurship as we know it today. Throughout the theoretical history of entrepreneurship scholars from multiple disciplines have grappled with a diverse set of interpretations to conceptualize this abstract idea. For students of entrepreneurship, exposure to the values, diversity and depth of experience and skills of specialists from a wide variety of disciplines offers an opportunity to formulate universal laws around which knowledge can be constructed.

This course is designed as a broad survey of major topics in the field of entrepreneurship. Students will be introduced to the best work on the subject by economists, sociologists, historians, etc. and a perspective from a different discipline will be the focus of each specific week. The themes, with details on the topics to be addressed each week, are presented in the course schedule (see *Building Blocks of the Course*). Students will gradually build on a combination of theory and analysis, judgment and experience to develop for themselves the concepts that form part of entrepreneurship.

In addition to the weekly perspectives on entrepreneurship, the course has the following underlying themes, all of which are critical components in the entrepreneur's competency set:

- *Innovative and Creative Thinking* – students will be challenged to take risks, question the status quo, develop alternative perspectives and engage in learning activities that push the boundaries of their potential through formal activities and independent study;
- *Teamwork* – the course focuses on skills to enhance students' ability to participate in team activities and engage in mutually enriching dialog, appreciate differing viewpoints, generate critically informed understanding views, and honor the team (rather than the triumphant individual) through collective entrepreneurship;
- *Ethics* – students will be required to assess decisions and solutions for writing assignments and decisions impacting peers in team situations in terms of ethical dimensions;
- *Strategic and Critical Analysis* – the course fosters strategic thinking, planning and decision-making skills through the team project that encourage the student to draw upon critical thinking principles, practices and skills. It also enables the student to become an entrepreneurial leader who is able to creatively negotiate the tension between analysis and action;
- *Global Perspectives* – students will broaden their viewpoints through increased awareness of the significance of foreign competition, the growing international focus and an understanding of cultural and economic differences affecting entrepreneurship;
- *Communication* – The course aims to develop effective oral and written communication skills that would facilitate collaborative innovation.

*“...knowledge is not a mere extrinsic or accidental advantage,  
which is ours today and another's tomorrow,  
which may be got from a book, and easily forgotten again,  
which we can command or communicate at our pleasure,  
which we can borrow for the occasion, carry about in our hand, and take into the market;  
it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment.”*

[John Henry Cardinal Newman]

## Essential Readings, Texts and Course Materials:

### Required Simulation Subscription

Purchase a personal online access code for the computer simulation package (MarketPlace). Details will be provided in class.

### Required Readings:

1. Richard Ogle. 2007. Smart World: Breakthrough Creativity and the New Science of Ideas. Harvard Business School Press.
2. Readings posted on BB. Purchase a binder to collate and organize these readings. Scholarly-type articles are balanced with managerially relevant readings in order to articulate both the theoretical content of the course and the practice of entrepreneurship.

## Requirements and Means of Evaluation:

Prerequisites: No specific requisites other than sophomore standing, accompanied by a zest for learning, an inquisitive mind and the desire to share thoughts with others.

Grades will be determined in the following percentage combination for major components of the course:

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|--|------------|
| ■ Perspectives on personal contribution(s) ( <i>participation in class &amp; on-line</i> )               | 15%        |
| ■ Perspectives on the theory of entrepreneurship ( <i>research project &amp; discussion leadership</i> ) | 15%        |
| ■ Perspectives on the practice of entrepreneurship ( <i>simulation project &amp; business plan</i> )     | 40%        |
| ■ Perspectives on the discipline of entrepreneurship ( <i>pictures at an exhibition</i> )                | 15%        |
| ■ Perspectives on self ( <i>entrepreneurial journey travel-log</i> )                                     | <u>15%</u> |

**Total: 100**

A following scale will be used to assign final course grades:

>93=A; 90-92=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-; 77-79=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72=C-; 60-69=D; <60=F.

## Teaching Strategies Employed:

The 3-hour credit course is taught as an honors seminar with both cognitive and behavioral components. The cognitive component will consist of discussion, debate and student presentation. The behavioral component will involve experiential exercises and group work on a simulation (MarketPlace).

*"If we value independence, if we are disturbed by the growing conformity of knowledge, of values, of attitudes, which our present system induces, then we may wish to set up conditions of learning which make for uniqueness, for self-direction, and for self-initiated learning."*

~ Carl Rogers (1902-87), American psychologist, founder of humanistic psychology ~

## Assignments & Description of Different Course Components

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*"Learning is not compulsory...neither is survival."*

– W. Edwards Deming –

### **I. Perspectives on personal contribution: *Participation in class and on-line (Individual)***

Students are expected to carefully read all the assigned articles or book chapters and should be prepared to discuss these in class. Reading should be at a level that enables the student to critique the article, share a perspective on the issues presented in the article and discuss the implications the article has on entrepreneurship. Students will also be expected to participate actively in the learning experience by asking questions, explaining concepts and generally contribute to interactive discussions. Class discussions will consist of a dynamic process of vigorous questioning and responding, examination and debate among students and discussion leader(s). Assigned readings and individual research projects will provide the basis for dialog. Because entrepreneurship is often characterized by ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty, the course is more about asking the right questions than it is about knowing the right answers.

Quality classroom discussion is facilitated through appropriate pre-class preparation. It is strongly recommended that students identify (and write out on paper) three questions (i.e. discussion points) associated with each reading. Below are questions that are designed to help students prepare for the seminar sessions:

- a. What are the authors concerned with describing and/or explaining in terms of (i) how entrepreneurs act i.e. what they do; (ii) what happens when entrepreneurs act i.e. what are the outcomes of their actions and (iii) why some people choose to act as entrepreneurs?
- b. Major insights revealed or contributions to an understanding of entrepreneurship: What are the key concepts in terms of what entrepreneurship is? How are these concepts connected with each other and with things already known?
- c. Controversial assertions made in the reading. What assumptions are made with respect to values, human nature, etc.? Can the student detect any tensions or dilemmas or cultural clichés?
- d. The unit of analysis: environment, company, individual, etc.?
- e. Personal thoughts and observations that build on or otherwise evolve from the reading.

Pre-class preparation for each session will not be turned in or graded. However, three or four students will be selected at random to share their responses to the questions mentioned above as a way of opening the discussion. Participation should not be viewed as an individualistic effort in which one competes for “air time” in an effort to demonstrate personal conceptual superiority. Instead the objective of participation should be to contribute to the overall quality of the classroom discussion by creating a collaborative learning environment. In an operational sense, this means:

- Being an active participant, but not a dominating participant;
- Being a good listener and demonstrating respect for others’ opinions;
- Making thoughtful, insightful comments, and not just speaking to be heard;
- Building on others’ comments;
- Asking questions, not just giving answers;
- Identifying key assumptions underlying discussion points and arguments;
- Judiciously playing the role of “devil’s advocate”;
- Being constructive and positive in one’s comments;
- Participating wholeheartedly.

Student contributions to discussion board and in-class sessions will be evaluated at the end of the semester. The participation grade will be based on instructor, peer (for simulation team) and personal assessment of the quality and quantity of individual contributions to class discussions. Verbal contributions should demonstrate the student's outside class preparation and/or apply the course material to a situation from his/her own personal experience. Each student must show that s/he has read and seriously thought about assigned reading material. *Please note: Classroom attendance is required in order for a student to participate.*

## 2. Perspectives on the Theory of Entrepreneurship: *Research and Discussion Leader Project (Duo)*

Academia socializes students well in the art of criticism, but does not do a good job of socializing students in the art of discovering insight in others' work. For this reason, we will emphasize the identification of personal insight in the works that have been selected. Pairs of students will serve as discussion leaders for one of the class sessions during which they will be considered the "topic experts". Discussion leaders will help us integrate a perspective from a particular discipline into our understanding of entrepreneurship and promote our understanding of the particular article. Rather than present a summary of the reading, the leaders should prepare discussion points and expect to act as facilitators/moderators of our discussion.

The student pair that is responsible for organizing and leading one seminar discussion session during the semester will choose a particular discipline to research. The discussion leaders will be expected to review information from at least five sources (in addition to the assigned readings) in preparation of their discussion session. Summary information from each source should be submitted in a report (typed, max 5 pages single spacing). The report should include a bibliography of the articles/books consulted and copies of the PowerPoint presentation (or other presentation format) on the day of his/her presentation. The discussion leaders will present information about their discipline jointly in a 30 minute oral presentation in class on the scheduled date and answer questions from peers for 5-10 minutes after the presentation. Thereafter the discussion leaders will also "*represent their discipline*" for the remainder of the course i.e. (s)he will be expected to add value to discussions through the lens of the particular discipline assigned to him/her. Articles used in this research project should be from scholarly sources such as academic journals (e.g. Harvard Business Review, etc.), popular or business press (e.g. Fortune, Forbes, NY Times, etc.) or books. Students should refrain from using sources found on the Internet.

## 3. Perspectives on the practice of entrepreneurship: *Simulation Project (Group)*

*"Chess masters improve their chess game by playing more chess [rather than reading books about it]."*

- Jeff Sandefer -

Students will be encouraged to proactively apply their knowledge and thought processes to actual business situations as this will in turn reinforce pattern-recognition abilities for future application. In addition, the student will be challenged to shift from being a receiver of facts, ideas, concepts and techniques, to a style of identifying problems, generating ideas, analyzing and evaluating alternatives and implementing an action plan. Students will be organized into teams consisting of 4 members each. The teams will compete against each other in a simulation of a start-up venture with the objective of being the highest performing venture by the end of the semester. A management report will be due at the end of each stage of the simulation project (see weekly schedule). Students will encounter several problems looking for solutions and will have to define and prioritize a maze of entangled problems to determine which one to attack within the limited time available, and above all to take action instead of just reporting findings.

#### 4. Perspectives on the Discipline of Entrepreneurship: “Pictures at an Exhibition” (Individual)

Entrepreneurship conjures up images of creativity and innovation. It has captured the mainstream’s attention with “hero” stories of charismatic leaders who develop new ideas and overcome adversity on their way toward revolutionizing the world. In this course, students will question the validity of this commonly held perception by collecting photographic “evidence” in pursuit of an answer to the central question in the course: What is entrepreneurship? Attempts to answer this question should be accompanied by a clear argument and the photographic “evidence” should support this argument.

Towards this end, each student will receive a disposable camera with which to capture the spirit of entrepreneurship on film during the semester. The camera will serve as a personal lens i.e. “*My Eye*” on the world with a view towards exploring *why, where, when and how* entrepreneurship occurs, *who* is involved in doing entrepreneurship and *what* this thing called “entrepreneurship” really is. These photos/pictures/images can be combined with press clippings about current affairs or other materials that might be appropriate to enhance the visual impact of the composition. Students will share their collection of “perspectives on entrepreneurship” in “Pictures at the Exhibition” during class in the second last session of the semester. The visual composition will be accompanied by an explanation/interpretation in a one page description that will become part of a brochure for the exhibition. Students’ individual perspectives will form an integral part of peer tutoring and mutual scaffolding of cognitive processes in pursuit of understanding and learning.

#### 5. Perspectives on Self: Self-assessment and Reflection (Individual)

Each student will keep a “travel log” in which to record awareness of encounters and insights from these encounters as they occur during the “entrepreneurial journey”. Various prompts will be provided to encourage exploration of unfamiliar territories during the journey’s map-making process. One such prompt can be found in the assigned readings. A second prompt can be found during class sessions. The third prompt will come from guidelines about activities to be completed before each class – these are posted on BB in the form of “spaces” of various kinds that should be explored e.g. Mind-space, Idea-space, Experience-space, etc. Regular entries in the “travel-log” will give students several opportunities to reflect upon personal sense-making and meaning-making processes in response to the many diverse stimuli as the semester unfolds.

The format of the “travel log” is entirely up to the student. However, the student should minimally explain how concepts and activities from the course have led to personal insights. It is important to note that the purpose here is not to summarize or restate contents from the course. The focus is on *personal insights* – on self, others or the world – through the lenses of the different disciplines and course activities.

*[Hint: Be creative. For example, Lillian Galbraith’s entries were written as a story of some famous person having tea with Lillian as the two discussed new revelations from the week’s learning.]*

Each student will write a final reflection paper (3 typed pages; 1200 words maximum) that will serve three important functions in one: i) it acts as an executive summary of the travel-log; ii) it provides linkages between the travel log and the “Pictures at an Exhibition” project, and iii) it answers the central question of the course i.e. “what is entrepreneurship?” The “travel log” together with the final reflection paper is due on the scheduled date for the final examination.

*[Note: There is no formal written mid-term examination or final examination. Every class session is a mini-exam; every simulation decision is a mini-exam; every course activity is a mini-exam. Therefore every travel-log entry should document the learning that has occurred (or not). The student’s personal integration of course content across all these “mini-exams” will culminate in the reflection paper that should explain what has been learned and why it matters.]*