Preliminary Syllabus

Dates

“Incubate Your Startup: The Essentials” (WSP41) will meet from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, July 26 and July 27, 2014. (We will take short breaks during the mornings and afternoons, and we will take longer breaks for lunch at approximately 12:30 p.m. each day. If you normally eat lunch earlier, please bring snacks to eat outside the classroom during the morning breaks.)

Objectives

• To understand incubators and related entities (e.g., accelerators)
• To identify and examine successful startups launched through incubators
• To understand several key issues involved in launching a startup, including
  o Personal motivations, circumstances, and aspirations
  o Building a team
  o Developing, testing, refining, and choosing a core business concept
  o Pitching a core business concept
• To identify the kinds of information that might applicants might be asked to provide in applying to an incubator
• To appreciate
  o how incubators offer an alternative means of launching a startup
  o how incubators can help address some of the key issues involved in launching a startup
• To address fundamental questions concerning incubators and related entities:
  o What are some of the basic distinctions between them?
  o What kinds of things do they expect from participants?
  o What are the different ways in which they work?
  o What means do they use to help young companies grow?
  o What are some of the technological domains that they emphasize?
  o What are the different kinds of support that they offer?
  o What are the different ways in which they work with investors?
  o What criteria can one use in deciding whether to work with one?
  o What criteria can one use to choose a specific type to work with?
• To present diverse perspectives concerning these issues
• To encourage you to express your own viewpoints
• To use individual and class exercises to gain experience and understanding
• To have a fascinating, productive time exploring these topics
• To help you determine whether an incubator or related entity might assist you in creating a successful company
Class Format

We will use several techniques to explore these issues, including some or all of:

- Individual and group exercises
- Lectures
- Short videos
- Possible guest speakers and panel discussions
- Question and answer sessions
- Self-assessments
- Discussions
- Reviews of assigned materials
- Student presentations

We expect to have guest speakers and “round-robin” style interactions with them.

Many of the individual and group exercises will be conducted in a short, high-intensity, “TABATA” format. Be prepared to move around from place to place in the classroom quickly. Expect to engage and to interact with fellow students.

Before the first class, students will be asked to participate in an optional pre-class survey. While participation in the survey will be encouraged, such participation will be entirely optional.

On both the first day and the second day of class, there will be optional, short “office hours” (approximately 30 mins. each day) outside of instructional hours to allow for more extensive discussion of questions from individual students. Participation in such “office hours” will be entirely optional.

If there is sufficient interest, a limited number of students will have the opportunity to present practice pitches to small groups of fellow students (or possibly to the entire class or to guest speakers or panelists). Students will be asked to indicate their interest before the first day of class and to make a specific commitment before the end of the lunch break on the first day of class. If there is sufficient interest, students will be selected to present practice pitches based, in part, on their willingness to undertake additional preparation as “homework” both (a) for 30 mins. immediately after class on the first day, and (b) for at least an hour between the first day and the second day of class.

WARNING: THIS COURSE, THE CLASSES CONSTITUTING THIS COURSE, AND ALL RELATED COMMUNICATIONS ARE OPEN. NO ONE HAS BEEN OR WILL BE ASKED TO SIGN ANY NON-DISCLOSURE OR OTHER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS OF ANY KIND FOR THIS COURSE OR ANY OF ITS CLASSES, AND NONE OF THE INFORMATION ETC. DISCUSSED, PRESENTED, EXCHANGED, DISCLOSED, OR OTHERWISE COMMUNICATED BY ANYONE TO ANYONE AT ANY TIME DURING OR IN CONNECTION WITH THIS COURSE OR ANY OF ITS CLASSES WILL IN ANY WAY BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL. (SEE BELOW FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS.)
Grading

You will be able to select from two options for grading in this course:

No Grade Requested:
This will be the default grading option. (Just show up for class.)

Credit/No Credit:
To earn credit for the class, you must: (1) attend the entire class; and (2) sign in twice (once on each day).

Materials and Resources

See the website for textbook information. Links to certain materials that will constitute additional readings will be distributed before the first class.

Participation

Active student participation in the class and in class discussions is strongly encouraged.

Course Schedule

The following is the present course schedule. (The specific topics to be covered and the order in which such topics will be presented may change. In addition, possible guest speakers and panelists have not been determined. Therefore, those topics and that order may also change depending on the availability of guest speakers and panelists.)

DAY 1

Part 1: Incubator Successes, Overview, Startups, and Overall Approach

Incubator and related entity successes
TABATA basics
Introductions
Exercise: personal goals TABATA, part 1
Course overview
Exercise: startup TABATA, part 1
Statistics and other information about startups
Exercise: startup TABATA, part 2
Improvement through iteration: introductory concepts
Testing core business concepts
Exercise: startup TABATA, part 3
An overall approach to incubators and related entities
Possible class discussion/guest speaker(s)/panel

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Part 2: Incubators and Related Entities

Case study #1
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 1
Statistics and other information about incubators and related entities
Definitions and distinctions
History and development
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 2
Types and examples
Charting local incubator and related entity landscapes
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 3
Possible class discussion/guest speaker(s)/panel

DAY 2

Part 3: Applying to and Participating in Incubators and Related Entities

Day 1 review and day 2 overview
Exercise: personal goals TABATA, part 2
Case study #2
Statistics and other information about applying
Possible decision-making criteria: whether to apply
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 4
Possible decision-making criteria: where to apply
Alternative technological emphases
Different geographical concentrations
Some things that applicants should expect
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 5
Different approaches that incubators and related entities take
   Economic terms
   Kinds of support
   Working with possible investors
Some things that participants should expect
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 6
Possible class discussion/guest speaker(s)/panel

Part 4: Refining Your Approach and DIY Alternatives

Testing your approach to incubators and related entities
Improvement through iteration: additional concepts
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 7
Pitching your startup
Exercise: incubators and related entities TABATA, Part 8
DIY alternatives
Exercise: self-assessment TABATA
Possible student presentations/class discussion/guest speaker(s)/panel
Exercise: class assessment TABATA
Class discussion and Q&A
Summary and conclusions

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POSSIBLE CONSENT TO RECORDING

IF WE HAVE GUEST SPEAKERS OR PANELISTS, WE MAY MAKE AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDINGS OF THEIR PRESENTATIONS. IF WE PLAN ON DOING SO, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO CONSENT TO SUCH RECORDING.

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YOU MAY ALWAYS SUBSTITUTE “MOCK INFORMATION” FOR ANY ACTUAL INFORMATION AT ANY TIME.

ANY DECISION THAT YOU MAKE TO KEEP ANY INFORMATION ETC. CONFIDENTIAL OR ANY DECISION THAT YOU MAKE NOT TO DISCUSS, PRESENT, EXCHANGE, DISCLOSE, OR OTHERWISE COMMUNICATE ANY INFORMATION ETC. IN ANY WAY TO ANYONE AT ANY TIME DURING OR IN CONNECTION WITH THIS COURSE OR ANY OF ITS CLASSES WILL NOT HAVE ANY EFFECT ON ANY EVALUATION, GRADE, OR CREDIT THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE FOR THIS COURSE OR ANY OF ITS CLASSES.