Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies | USC Marshall School of Business

BAEP 558: Problem-Solving for Early Stage Companies
MW, 3:30-4:50 PM PT | JKP 204| 3 units | Spring 2023

Professor:	Abby Fifer Mandell	**E-mail:**	fifer@marshall.usc.edu
Office Hours:	fifermandell.as.me	**Cell**:	310.279.7491

You are welcome to text me during business hours with quick questions or urgent matters. I respond much more quickly to texts than to emails.

Student Support and Office Hours
1) **For entrepreneurial resources**: make an appointment with *USC Blackstone Launchpad* located in Bridge Hall
2) **For academic support, including writing and coaching:** *https://kortschakcenter.usc.edu/*
3) **For safe, confidential, affordable one-on-one counseling and mental health resources:** *https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/*
4) **For information regarding online/remote class accommodations due to medical-related reasons:** *https://osas.usc.edu/*
5) **For questions about assignments, requests, feedback for me, or to say "hi" one-on-one:** Please book an appointment at *fifermandell.as.me*

Course Description
This course will guide you to develop creative responses to challenges that face potential customers in Los Angeles and around the world. You will learn and apply user-centered design, a systematic approach that starts with deep user empathy and iterates toward more effective outcomes. User-centered design can provide a basic unifying framework for people from different disciplines to understand, engage with, and create approaches that respond to complex problems. You will co-create for-profit products and services with users and engage their ideas in early-stage market and rapid prototyping.

Success in this course requires a substantial investment of time outside of class, including field work.

At the end of the course, you are encouraged to continue your work with the Lloyd Grief Center for Entrepreneurial Studies and will be eligible to apply for support from the USC Incubator at the Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies, New Venture Seed Competition (NVSF) Blackstone Launchpad USC, VentureWell, the Social Venture Coaching Competition (SVCC) and NSF Innovation Node-Los Angeles.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the semester, you will be able to:
I.   Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of user-centered design, including how to frame problems and identify assets;
II. Display ability to observe consumers in-context, specific to unique culture and environment;
III. Demonstrate deep user empathy in your approach to innovation and entrepreneurship;
IV. Complete a cycle of rapid prototyping and iteration;

V.   Engage in productive collaboration with teammates from multiple disciplines; and

VI.   Co-create products and systems with the potential for sustainable, scalable, real-world implementation.

I expect our class to serve as a medium for disseminating knowledge, asking important questions, sharing different opinions, and examining ours and others' beliefs and perspectives. If issues arise that impact your learning, psychological safety, and/or sense of belonging, please let me know and I will do my very best to facilitate a way forward. I am committed to fostering a classroom environment in which every student can be safe and academically successful, one in which I model how to learn through feedback. This will likely require iterating, adapting to changing circumstances, and flexibility. I will do my very best to lead with grace and compassion. Please alert me if there are specific ways that I can support you in your learning journey.

Required Materials
- *Creative Confidence* by Tom Kelley and David Kelley (available at most libraries and online)
- Readings and assignments posted on Blackboard

Please refer to Blackboard for the most up-to-date listing of assignments. **Modifications or additions to assignments may be announced in class based on our progress that day. If you are absent, please verify with a classmate and be sure to watch the class recording**.

Participation Requirements
Your responsibilities are to:
1. Barring illness or an emergency, attend each class. This course is highly hands-on and much of our group work happens in class (i.e. it is not simply a lecture class). If you miss class, please need to get in touch with your team to find out what you missed AND watch the Panopto recording. According to the Marshall School of Business, "This is a residential class and in-person attendance is expected. Unless a student provides an accommodation letter from USC OSAS requiring remote attendance, there is no option to attend class via Zoom."
2. Engage in 50+ hours of field work.
3. Complete all readings, activities, exercises, and assignments (individually and in teams).
4. Reflect on what you've read and experienced and what you learn from your classmates; stay open.
5. Participate actively in classroom discussions and exercises.

You add unique value to our classroom community. We miss you and your perspective when you are not there. Please reach out to me if you are having difficulty with class attendance or participation so that we can find a solution together.

In order to effectively participate in class discussions and get the most out of each session, please complete all readings and assignments for the class in advance of each meeting. Thorough class participation consists of analyzing, commenting, questioning, discussing, offering constructive feedback and building on others' contributions.

Grades and Grading Policies

1) **Design critique (DUE AT ANY POINT DURING THE SEMESTER)**   **150 points**
   With a partner, submit a 3-page paper that critiques an existing product or experience that is organization- or designer-centered. What would make this product or experience user-centered? How do you know and what field methods could you undertake to gain insights about your user to test your theory? You and your partner will receive the same grade for this assignment.

2) **30 Meaningful Conversations**   **200 points**
   Using methodology you will learn in class, you will create method cards, complete 30 "Meaningful Conversations" in the field, and document your findings and key takeaways. You will receive an individual grade for this assignment.

3) **User Insights Analysis (MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT)**   **300 points**
   What have you learned about your user? What assumptions did you have going into the field and how were those assumptions challenged by what you observed? What direction will you take next? You will receive a group grade for this assignment.

4) **Reflection paper**   **50 points**
   At the end of the semester, you will submit a 2-page reflection paper. You will receive an individual grade for this assignment.

5) **Prototype Presentation and Implementation Plan (FINAL ASSIGNMENT)**   **300 points**
   Prior to the due date, a detailed assignment description, grading rubric, and peer assessment will be posted. You will receive a group grade for this assignment. **NOTE**: If you are not present the day of the prototype showcase or your team lets me know that you did not contribute to the group's progress in the weeks leading up to the showcase, I will use my discretion to assign you an appropriate individual grade.

MAJOR GRADES	TYPE	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL GRADE
Reflection	Individual	5%
30 Meaningful Conversations	Individual	20%
User Insights Analysis (Midterm)	Group	30%
Prototype Presentation & Implementation Plan (Final)	Group	30%
Design Critique	Individual	15%

PLEASE NOTE: Marshall School of Business sets a required GPA average for this course. You should be aware that this Marshall rule requires instructors to distribute grades accordingly.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments and toolkit exercises should be turned in via Blackboard. They are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise instructed. I do not collect paper copies. Late assignments will receive a 10% grade penalty per week. Grades are posted within three weeks of assignment submission.

Teams

You will be guided to self-select teams of four or five people and will work with this team throughout the semester, beginning in the second or third week of class. You should plan to plan to meet with your team at least once per week outside of class for at 1-2 hours. It will help you tremendously if you pick a reoccurring meeting time for your team that you can count on each week. Most, but not all weeks, you will also be given team to meet with your team during class. You and your group may wish to communicate via WhatsApp,

GroupMe, Slack or similar. You may wish to use GoogleDocs, StoryBoardThat.com, Miro.com, en.linoit.com, and other communication tools of your choice to work with your team.

Course Evaluations
Your course evaluations are valuable and important. This course is continuously improved, based on feedback from students and my own observations year to year. Please complete the USC evaluation online when the opportunity arises at the end of the course.

Course Calendar
This schedule may change due to groups' progress and additional readings may be assigned during the semester. Please refer to Blackboard for the most up-to-date listing of assignments. **Modifications or additions to assignments may be announced in class based on our progress that day. If you are absent, please verify with a classmate or be sure to watch the class recording**.

DATE	CLASS TOPICS	READINGS & DELIVERABLES DUE TODAY
January 9	Course overview and community expectations	
January 11	The arc of design	*Creative Confidence*: Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1 Listen to the segment "Act One: Guerilla Marketing" of the This American Life podcast episode 575: Poetry of Propaganda
January 18	Immersive design experience	McCreary, Lew. "Kaiser Permanente's Innovation on the Front Lines." *Harvard Business Review, Sept 2010.*
January 23	Team formation Visual drawing tools	Thompson, Derek. "Google X and the Science of Radical Creativity." *The Atlantic*, Nov 2017.
January 25	Target customer selection	Deichmann, Dirk and van der Heijde, Roel. "How Design Thinking Is Improving Patient-Caregiver Conversations." Harvard Business Review, 3 Nov 2017.
January 30	Field methods and Method Cards	Strength + Strength = Superpower
February 1	Who was involved in the process? Who is harmed? Who benefits?	Martin, Courtney. "The reductive seduction of other people's problems." BRIGHT Magazine, 11 Jan 2016.
February 6	The story under the story Troubleshooting Meaningful Conversations	*Creative Confidence* : Chapters 2 and 3

February 8	NO CLASS – USE THE TIME FOR MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS	
February 13	NO CLASS – USE THE TIME FOR MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS	
February 15	Analyzing user needs	
February 22	Empathy mapping	Meaningful Conversations Due
February 27	Identifying opportunities for innovation	Listen to the episode "Invisible Women" on the 99% Invisible podcast
March 1	Mindmapping	Nikolov, Anton. "Design principle: Root of the problem." 11 Mar 2017.
March 6	MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS	User Insights Analysis
March 8	What if? 50 ideas	*Creative Confidence*: Chapter 6
March 20	Speaker: Careers that integrate user-centered design	
March 22	Convergence and divergence: narrowing and developing ideas that respond to your user's needs	Listen to the episode "Hallelujah" on the Revisionist History podcast Watch "Customer Discovery: What do you ask?" by Justin Wilcox
March 27	Iteration: all-class crits with peer feedback	Bring your top 2-3 ideas to class
March 29	Iteration: all-class crits with peer feedback	Bring your top 2-3 ideas to class
April 3	Reviewing feedback	Ongoing customer testing; bring in one slide with customer feedback updates
April 5	Matrix benchmarking	Planning to Pivot/Refine
April 10	Storyboarding	*Creative Confidence* : Chapter 4 and 7
April 12	Products vs. companies Features vs. benefits	*Creative Confidence* : Chapter 5 and 8
April 17	Pricing	Ongoing customer testing; bring in one slide with customer feedback updates
April 19	Review Final Presentation assignment and Implementation Plan assignment	
April 24	Review presentation decks Course debrief and evaluations	Draft deck

April 26	PROTOTYPE PRESENTATION SHOWCASE	Prototype Presentation & Implementation Plan
May 1	ALL ASSIGNMENTS DUE	Reflection 2, Design Critique, Peer Feedback Form

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Add/Drop Process
Marshall can drop you from the class if you don't attend the first meeting of a class that meets once per week. Please visit www.usc.edu/soc and note the final deadlines to add/drop.

Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies Confidentiality Policy
Throughout The Entrepreneur Program's classes and events, students will be exposed to proprietary information from other students, guest lecturers, and faculty. It is the policy of The Entrepreneur Program that all such information be treated as confidential.

By enrolling in and taking part in The Entrepreneur Program's classes and activities, students agree not to disclose this information to any third parties without specific written permission from students, guest lecturers or faculty, as applicable. Students further agree not to use any such proprietary information for their own personal commercial advantage or for the commercial advantage of any third party.

In addition, students agree that any legal or consulting advice provided without direct fee and in an academic setting will not be relied upon without the enlisted opinion of an outside attorney or consultant without affiliation to The Program. Any breach of this policy may subject a student to academic integrity proceedings as described in the University of Southern California "University Governance Policies and Procedures" as outlined in *SCampus* and to any remedies that may be available at law.

The Entrepreneur Program, the Marshall School of Business and the University of Southern California disclaim any responsibility for the protection of intellectual property of students, guest lecturers or faculty who are involved in The Entrepreneur Program classes or events. Receipt of this policy and registration in our classes is evidence that you understand this policy and will abide by it.

Retention of Graded Coursework
Graded work which affected the course grade will be retained for one year after the end of the course if the graded work has not been returned to you.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity
In case of a declared emergency, the *USC Emergency Information* web site (*http://emergency.usc.edu/)* will provide safety and other information. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu.

USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Students and Disability Accommodations:
USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:
Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
eeotix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776
osas.usc.edu
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.
USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

*Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-33*40 or otfp@med.usc.edu
chan.usc.edu/otfp
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

APPENDIX

Learning Goals

In this class, emphasis will be placed on the USC Marshall School of Business learning goals as follows:

Description	Course Emphasis
Our graduates will understand types of markets and key business areas and their interaction *to effectively manage different types of enterprises*	Low
Our graduates will develop a global business perspective. They will understand how local, regional, and international markets, and economic, social and cultural issues impact business decisions *so as to anticipate new opportunities in any marketplace*	High
Our graduates will demonstrate critical thinking skills *so as to become future-oriented decision makers, problem solvers and innovators*	High
Our graduates will develop people and leadership skills to promote their effectiveness as *business managers and leaders.*	High
Our graduates will demonstrate ethical reasoning skills, understand social, civic, and professional responsibilities and aspire to add value to society	High
Our graduates will be effective communicators *to facilitate information flow in organizational, social, and intercultural contexts.*	High

Appendix VI

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<tr>
<td colspan="3" align="center">How BAEP 558 Contributes to Student Achievement of USC Marshall's Six Graduate Programs Learning Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshall Graduate Programs Learning Goals</td>
<td>Degree of Emphasis (1=Low, 2=Moderate, 3=High)</td>
<td>BAEP 558 Objectives that support this goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning goal #1: Our graduates will develop a strategic level of understanding of the key functions of business and be able to comprehend the relationships between the core business disciplines in order to <i>make holistic judgments and decisions in analyzing business situations.</i></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Students will demonstrate foundational knowledge of core business disciplines, including their interrelationships.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.2 Students will analyze business scenarios, such as cases, with a firm grounding of how each of the core fields play into decisions made.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Students will apply theories, models, and frameworks to analyze relevant markets (e.g. product, capital, commodity, factor and labor markets).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Students will show the ability to utilize technologies (e.g., spreadsheets, databases, software) relevant to contemporary business practices in a variety of disciplines and industries.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 Students will demonstrate the ability to utilize interdisciplinary business skills in case analyses, exams, presentations and projects, including capstone projects.</td>
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<td>Learning goal # 2: Our graduates will develop a global mindset and a competitive edge in this interdependent, fast-changing, diverse and volatile world through structured educational opportunities. They will acquire knowledge, both theoretical and practical as well as experiential, about America and the rest of the world, and the economic/financial interdependencies that signify current geopolitical, economic and financial relationships that impact business decisions <i>so as to make a difference in the world.</i></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 Students will understand how local, regional and global markets interact and are impacted by economic, social and cultural factors.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Students will understand that stakeholders, stakeholder interests, business environments (legal, regulatory, competitor) and business practices vary across regions of the world.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate global business challenges and opportunities through experiential learning, immersion international trips, case studies, international business consulting projects and exams.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>II, III</td>
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Learning goal 3: Our graduates will demonstrate critical thinking skills by making the intellectual connection between quantitative and qualitative tools, theories and context to provide the basis *for proper and effective problem solving and decision making as well as the development of new and innovative business opportunities to strategically navigate the complex demands of the current and dynamic national and international business environments.*		
3.1 Students will understand the concepts of critical thinking, entrepreneurial thinking and creative thinking as drivers of innovative ideas.	5	I, IV
3.2 Students will critically analyze concepts, theories and processes by stating them in their own words, understanding key components, identifying assumptions, indicating how they are similar to and different from others and translating them to the real world.	4	I
3.3 Students will be effective at gathering, storing, and using qualitative and quantitative data and at using analytical tools and frameworks to understand and solve business problems.	4	IV
3.4 Students will demonstrate the ability to anticipate, identify and solve business problems. They will be able to identify and assess central problems, identify and evaluate potential solutions, and translate a chosen solution to an implementation plan that considers future contingencies.	4	I
3.5 Students will demonstrate the ability to be accurate, clear, expansive (thorough, detailed) and fair-minded in their thinking.	4	III
3.6 Students will demonstrate their ability to apply critical thinking tools and the USC-CT Framework in designated exercises, cases, projects and exams.	3	I, II, IV, VI
Learning Goal 4: Our graduates will develop people and leadership skills by demonstrating self-awareness, emotional intelligence, curiosity, visionary and strategic thinking, teamwork, refection and knowledge transfer skills to promote their effectiveness as *business managers and leaders.*		
4.1 Students will recognize, understand, and analyze the motivations and behaviors of stakeholders inside and outside organizations (e.g., teams, departments, consumers, investors, auditors).	2	II
4.2 Students will be able to demonstrate various emotional intelligences and leadership skills such as self-awareness, self-management, teamwork and collaboration to better understand the potential complexities in organizations in papers, exercises, cases, exams and projects.	4	III, V
4.2 Students will recognize, understand and analyze the roles, responsibilities and behaviors of effective managers and leaders in diverse business contexts (e.g., marketing, finance, accounting, etc.)	1	
4.3 Students will be able to demonstrate the understanding of visions and values of world-class companies and the impact it has had on financial results.	1	
4.4 Students will understand factors that contribute to effective teamwork.	4	V

Learning goal 5: Our graduates will demonstrate ethical reasoning skills, understand social, civic, and professional responsibilities *and aspire to add value to society*		
5.1 Students will understand professional codes of conduct.	2	II
5.2 Students will recognize ethical challenges in business situations and assess appropriate courses of action.	2	II
5.3 Students will be able to apply ethical principles and professional standards in analyzing situations and making informed decisions.	4	I, VI
5.4 Students will demonstrate an understanding of and consistently apply the ethical principles and professional standards related to the business world and show the ability to express and follow results of independence and the highest sense of professional ethics.	3	I, VI
5.5 Students will demonstrate the ability to research, critically analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, including professional standards for decision making, in the local, regional and global business environment.	3	I, II, III, IV, VI
5.6 Students will enhance their appreciation of values of social responsibility, legal and ethical principles and corporate governance through the analysis and discussion of pertinent articles and real business cases, seminars and summits.	3	II, IV, VI
Learning Goal #6: Our graduates will be effective communicators *to facilitate information flow in organizational, social, and intercultural contexts*		
6.1 Students will identify and assess diverse personal and organizational communication goals and audience information needs.	3	II
6.2 Students will understand individual and group communications patterns and dynamics in organizations and other professional contexts.	3	V
6.3 Students will demonstrate an ability to gather and disseminate information and communicate it clearly, logically, and persuasively in professional contexts.	3	IV
6.4 Students will be able to clearly communicate in oral and written formats the solutions to business issues and problems accurately and effectively.	2	VI