

USC Marshall

School of Business

Course ID and Title: DSO 531 – Digital Foundations for Business Innovation

Units: 1.5 Units

Fall 2023—Mondays—2:00-4:50 PM

Location: Bridge Hall (room 202), 3670 Trousdale Pkwy, Los Angeles, CA 90089

Instructor(s): Vivek Sharma, Daniel Altobello

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Course Description

Every business has become, or is transitioning into, a digital business. Consumers today live in a world where the most valuable retailer has no inventory, the world's most popular media owner creates no content, the world's largest accommodation provider owns no real estate and the world's largest taxi company owns no vehicles. But the forces shaping this digital revolution are often difficult to understand, for both these consumers and many business leaders.

This course will largely be based on discussion and require students' active participation in every session. Its content and format stem from a successful initiative undertaken at The Walt Disney Company to provide greater context around digital innovations to thousands of its business leaders addressing current business realities.

The course examines 12 emerging digital innovations shaping consumer-oriented businesses, in order to provide a basic framework for these concepts and provide leaders a greater understanding of how to leverage these powerful capabilities to build or grow businesses. For each of these digital innovations and in each class session, the course is focused on five questions:

- What does it mean?
- Why is it an important trend?
- What is the landscape?
- What are the key metrics?
- What are the implications for users, organizations and business leaders?

Beyond knowledge gleaned from classroom teaching and insights shared from today's business world, students will put their knowledge to work, developing two individual written submissions regarding specific digital innovations, and a group business plan based on one or more of these digital innovations.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate fluency in the language framework of digital as a tool for business innovation, via creation of written material and presentations.
2. Students will engage in dialogue with one another and with executive guest speakers regarding how emerging digital tools and technologies of our time can provide opportunities for business leaders, along with potential drawbacks to be safeguarded against.
3. Students will infuse perspectives from thought leaders, business executives and entrepreneurs working to address real-world business needs into their written work.
4. Students will build a business case based on digital innovation, enhancing written, verbal communication and teamwork skills.

Prerequisites and Reading/Preparation

Each week, prior to class, course content will be sent to students in the form of a briefing presentation for the two topics to be covered in class that week. Please see the "Course Calendar/Readings/Class Sessions" for further details on these assigned reading materials.

Students will also be asked to read **WIREFRAMED: Simplifying Digital Innovation for Business Leaders**. This book was inspired by the DFBI course, and will help demystify many of the topics discussed in class. The book can be purchased on Amazon through the below link:

www.amazon.com/WIREFRAMED-Simplifying-Digital-Innovation-Business/dp/1735622311

Additional recommended readings are below:

- Why Software Is Eating The World, Marc Andreessen
- Startup = Growth, Paul Graham
- From time to time, course participants may be asked to read current events and case studies selected by the professor to help enhance the learning outcomes of each lecture

Course Notes

This course meets for six sessions, with each session consisting of a lecture-style briefing regarding two specific digital innovations, led by a subject matter expert currently working in the digital realm, followed by ample time for Q&A and open discussion around the five key questions examined in the briefing and future implications for users, organizations and business leaders. A seventh session will meet for the final group project presentations.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

(1) Individual analysis memo (20% of total course grade), due in week 2, is to be composed individually and examine the application of an emerging digital tool or technology by a traditionally non-digital company. Students should select a company that has leveraged one digital tool or technology. Some examples may include:

- Big Data
- Cybersecurity
- Artificial Intelligence
- Augmented and Virtual Reality
- Messaging, Networking & Social Commerce
- Cryptocurrency & Blockchain

The memo, which should be no longer than 2 pages, should take the form of an executive summary and cover the following questions:

- What business need was the company looking to address through the application of digital tools and technologies?
- How successful was the company in addressing this need?
- What alternatives could the company have considered?
- What future opportunities are now possible for the company following the implementation of this digital tool or technology?
- What threats or considerations are posed to the company because of the implementation of this digital tool or technology that did not exist before?

(2) The individual paper (25% of total course grade), due in week 4, is a deeper dive into how emerging technology is enabling a real world start-up. The objective of this paper is to understand and apply the concepts of digital innovation in the context of a startup, providing practical insights and strategic recommendations for its go-to-market strategy for a particular vertical/market segment (vertical/market segments will be provided by the company).

- Background Research: Students will be provided a short brief on the entrepreneur and their start-up. Prior to the interview, students should thoroughly research the entrepreneur's startup. They should understand its value proposition, target market, competition, and current marketing strategies. This information will help them ask insightful questions during the interview.
- Q&A Preparation: Students should prepare a list of questions for the interview. The questions should aim to uncover the entrepreneur's vision, their understanding of digital innovation, and their current challenges in developing a go-to-market strategy.
- Participate in the Q&A: Students will join the Q&A session with the entrepreneur (and potentially with other team members from the start-up), ask questions and make sure to take detailed notes. The session will be recorded and shared with the class.
- Analysis and Strategy Development: Based on the information gathered during the Q&A session and their own knowledge of digital innovation, students will develop a go-to-market strategy for the startup. This strategy will be focused on a specific vertical / market as provided by the entrepreneur.

Students will compile their findings, analysis, and recommendations into a comprehensive paper not to exceed 4 pages (3 pages for content, 1 page for citations/exhibits). The report should include a list of their questions for the Q&A session, an overview of the relevant digital technologies leveraged by the start-up and perspective on a detailed go-to-market strategy, defending it through critical thinking and analysis. For the go-to-market strategy section, the following questions should be answered:

- What: what product (existing, or innovation on existing) will be leveraged for this strategy?
- Who: define and quantify the market or segment chosen, including location (e.g. region, country, etc).
- Why: explain the competitive differentiation and positioning of the product for this market.
- How: what is the business model (current or innovative) that will be used and how will digital technology play a role?
- When: when should the start-up pursue this go-to-market strategy?

Each paper, not to exceed 4 pages (3 pages for content, 1 page for citations/exhibits), is expected to refer to relevant sources in academic or popular media, and cite appropriately. The paper is due in week 4.

(3) (4) The group project (combined 40% of course grade), due in week 7 (proposal and project team members due in week 5), requires working in self-organized teams of 5-6 to develop a plan for a company or organization to take advantage of one (or more) of the digital innovations discussed in class. You can take the position of a company currently in existence or create a business plan for a new company.

The deliverables are grouped into the following two categories:

Proposal: A project proposal, in the form of an executive summary, not exceeding one page, is to be submitted in week 5. This describes the team’s project thesis and what problem they intend to solve by leveraging digital innovation(s).

(3) Written group presentation report (15% of total course grade): A written report submitted by the team to complement their presentation. The report should include the final presentation slides as well as all citations, sources, exhibits, etc. The report should be submitted in PDF form.

(4) Live Presentation: (25% of total course grade): A live presentation, not exceeding 15 minutes including Q&A, delivered as a group to a panel of business leaders. These judges’ feedback will be incorporated into your project’s grade. This will take place during the final examination period and will be conducted live. Pre-recordings of the individuals presenting, or entire teams’ presentation will not be accepted. The content of the presentation must include at least the following sections:

- Elevator pitch to set the context of the rest of the presentation
- Clearly defined problem statement including specific data points and markets
- Map the problem to your solution and why it’s better at solving the problem than the way your target market does it today
- Size of the market, go-to-market strategy and business model
- Financial projections / Use of Funds

Participation (15% of total course grade)

- Class participation is an important component of this course. Participants will be challenged to think critically about the technologies being discussed and consider the implications in business and everyday life.
- Participants are encouraged to think about how to effectively contribute to the class and should be prepared to actively contribute to the class discussion, asking thoughtful questions and contributing value-adding insights that advance the conversation.
- It is important to recognize the quality of contributions is much more important than the quantity of contributions.
- Attendance will be noted during each session and will be factored.

Grading Breakdown

Students’ success in this course will depend on their critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills. They will be asked to thoughtfully consider concepts shared in class, trends identified in the course materials, personal experiences and emerging innovations to develop clear business plans and original perspectives. Students will be exposed to questions faced by global businesses and will be asked to examine both positive implications from emerging digital innovations as well as potential drawbacks, with the goal of developing business plans that are beneficial to customers, employees and companies as well as communities.

Written work on the analysis memo, individual paper, group paper and printed elements of the business case will be evaluated based on how thoroughly the topic is examined and the actionable insights provided. For the presentation, students will be evaluated on how effectively they demonstrate the viability and potential impact of their plan, as well as their professional delivery of the presentation itself.

The key deliverables for grading will be:

(1) Individual analysis memo	20%
(2) Individual paper	25%
(3) Written group presentation report	15%

(4) Live group presentation	25%
(5) Overall participation	15%

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments must be turned in on the due date/time electronically via Blackboard. Any assignment turned in late, even if by only a few minutes, will receive a grade deduction (for example, if your work is a B+ grade, you will be given a C+ grade). If your internet breaks down on the due date, you must deliver a hard copy at the beginning of class on that day. If you are unable to attend class on that day, make arrangements for it to be delivered to the classroom or to my box by the start of class. Late or not, however, you must complete all required assignments to pass this course.

Classroom norms

Respect

- Listen actively and attentively (comments you make should reflect that you are paying attention)
- Challenge one another, but do so respectfully
- Make eye contact with other students and refer to classmates by name

Constructiveness

- Build on one another's comments; work toward shared understanding
- Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand a point raised
- Speak from your own experience, without generalizing

Inclusivity

- Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion
- Let other people speak. Once you are done speaking, let at least two other people talk before you speak again
- If you think something is missing from the conversation, don't wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself

Procedure

- Wait to be recognized by the instructor or discussion leader before speaking
- State your name before making your statement and respond to others by their name when responding to a comment
- Start your statement with a short one-sentence summary of the point you are making

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Policy for the use of AI Generators in this course

I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.]

Please ask me if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

- Collaboration. In this class, you are expected to submit work that demonstrates your individual mastery of the course concepts.
- Group work. Unless specifically designated as a 'group project,' all assignments are expected to be completed individually.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an "F" grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to

students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Schedule

The course schedule will be as follows (order and/or topics subject to change):

Week	Topics	Deliverables
Week 1 (8/21)	Course Introduction & Key Drivers for Digital Innovation Physical-Digital Convergence	
Week 2 (8/28)	Artificial Intelligence Augmented & Virtual Reality	(1) Individual analysis memo due by start of class
No Class Labor Day (9/4)		
Week 3 (9/11)	Messaging, Networking & Social Commerce Digital Advertising	(2) Entrepreneur Q&A session for the individual paper (9/11 @ 8-10 AM via zoom)
Week 4 (9/18)	Digital Transformation in Practice Next Generation Software Development	(2) The individual paper due by start of class
Week 5 (9/25)	Computing & Connectivity Data as an Asset	(3) Group Project proposal due by start of class
Week 6 (10/2)	Cybersecurity & Privacy Cryptocurrency & Blockchain	
Week 7 (10/9)	Final group project presentations (Any date or time changes to this date will be communicated to the class) [2-5pm]	(4) Written group presentation due at the start of class (5) Live group presentation

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit

work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity’s website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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 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) 740-0411

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

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

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) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Appendix I. MARSHALL GRADUATE PROGRAMS LEARNING GOALS

How DSO 531 Contributes to Marshall Graduate Program Learning Goals

Marshall Graduate Program Learning Goals	DSO 531 Objectives that support this goal	Assessment Method*
<i>Learning Goal #1: Develop Personal Strengths.</i> Our graduates will develop a global and entrepreneurial mindset, lead with integrity, purpose and ethical perspective, and draw value from diversity and inclusion.		
1.1 Possess personal integrity and a commitment to an organization’s purpose and core values.		
1.2 Expand awareness with a global and entrepreneurial mindset, drawing value from diversity and inclusion.	Learning Objective 1	Class Participation, Individual Papers
1.3 Exhibit awareness of ethical dimensions and professional standards in decision making.		

<p><i>Learning Goal #2: Gain Knowledge and Skills.</i> Our graduates will develop a deep understanding of the key functions of business enterprises and will be able to identify and take advantage of opportunities in a complex, uncertain and dynamic business environment using critical and analytical thinking skills.</p>		
<p>2.1 Gain knowledge of the key functions of business enterprises.</p>	<p>Learning Objective 3</p>	<p>Papers and Group project</p>
<p>2.2 Acquire advanced skills to understand and analyze significant business opportunities, which can be complex, uncertain and dynamic.</p>	<p>Learning Objective 1</p>	<p>Papers and Group project</p>
<p>2.3 Use critical and analytical thinking to identify viable options that can create short-term and long-term value for organizations and their stakeholders.</p>	<p>Learning Objective 2</p>	<p>All graded assignments</p>
<p><i>Learning Goal #3: Motivate and Build High Performing Teams.</i> Our graduates will achieve results by fostering collaboration, communication and adaptability on individual, team, and organization levels.</p>		
<p>3.1 Motivate and work with colleagues, partners, and other stakeholders to achieve organizational purposes.</p>	<p>Learning Objective 4</p>	<p>Group project</p>
<p>3.2 Help build and sustain high-performing teams by infusing teams with a variety of perspectives, talents, and skills and aligning individual success with team success and with overall organizational success.</p>	<p>Learning Objective 4</p>	<p>Group project</p>
<p>3.3 Foster collaboration, communication and adaptability in helping organizations excel in a changing business landscape.</p>	<p>Learning Objective 4</p>	<p>Group project</p>