

# USC Iovine and Young Academy

*Arts, Technology and the Business  
of Innovation*

## ACAD 406: Purpose-Driven Innovation Incubator

**Units: 2**

**Fall 2024 – Thursdays, 5-6:50 pm**

**Location: IYH 210**

**Instructor: Prof Chris Swain**

Office: HSH 111

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Info:

- Chris Swain – [cswain@usc.edu](mailto:cswain@usc.edu), 310 403 0798
- Instructor will reply to emails within 48 hours.

**IT Help:**

<https://uscedu.sharepoint.com/sites/IYAStudent/SitePages/IT-Resources.aspx>

Hours of Service: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Contact Info: [iyahelp@usc.edu](mailto:iyahelp@usc.edu)

**USC Technology Support Links**

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

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### Course Description

*Purpose-Driven Innovation Incubator* helps student entrepreneurs evolve projects into a venture ready for investment, including potentially for inclusion in the IYA Venture Showcase to investors and similar opportunities.

Students will evolve their concepts using IYA's Purpose Driven Innovation strategic framework. The framework steps students through how to establish a market beachhead using the simplest possible version of their product and then (in the future) iteratively expand their venture to achieve impact at scale. Students learn that pursuit of a greater purpose can lead to stronger, more defensible business success. For example, the [Deloitte Insights 2020 Global Marketing Trends Report](#) finds that purpose-driven companies report 30% higher levels of innovation. Likewise, this study by the [Harvard Business Review](#), demonstrates that purpose can assist ventures in “redefining the playing field” to achieve new areas for growth, and “reshape their value proposition” to better deliver benefits to customers.

Students learn the objectives above by completing three key assignments plus a selection of in-class exercises and discussions of readings. In order to complete the three key assignments students must respond to individualized feedback to generate proof points that demonstrate market interest.

Finally, *Purpose-Driven Innovation Incubator* utilizes best practices from successful startup accelerators including Y-Combinator, Techstars, and the Launch Accelerator. Students receive introductions to and feedback from leaders in the technology investing ecosystem. Example SoCal early stage connections may – depending on the needs of the team - include representatives from: [Los Angeles Venture Association](#), [TechStars LA](#), [Launchpad.LA](#), [Amplify.LA](#), [Idealab](#), [Grid 110](#), [LA Cleantech Incubator](#), [MiLA Capital](#), [Incubate USC](#), [Disney Accelerator](#), [Cedars Sinai Accelerator](#), [Net Zero Accelerator](#), [TYLT Ventures](#), [WIF AX](#), [Science, Inc.](#), [Tech Coast Angels](#), [Pasadena Angels](#), For specialized project needs connections may extend to people in SoCal from the worlds of venture capital, private equity, angel investing, and family offices as is appropriate.

Like industry accelerators the course will include ongoing feedback from investors and operators and will culminate with a submission for consideration for the IYA Venture Showcase event.

### **Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Develop product validation strategy using the Purpose-Driven Innovation framework to achieve short-term traction and long-term impact.
- Conduct guerrilla user research using principles from the Game Thinking methodology.
- Develop a Minimum Viable Product from the Lean Startup Methodology
- Build hands-on skill with Pitchbook for identifying potential investors and creating an Investor Relations database
- Generate Innovation Accounting proof points (using Lean Startup Method) on a venture hands-on
- Learn how to build ongoing relationships with investors (e.g., build lines not dots)
- Develop personal self-awareness about their own strengths and weaknesses as product leaders.
- Develop a persuasive investor presentation suitable for submission to the IYA Venture Showcase event and similar opportunities.

**Course Notes:** This is a hands-on, intensive course that requires participation during class and teamwork outside of class. Active participation in Slack channels, in-class discussions, and teamwork is required.

### **Course Notes**

Grading type: Letter. Software used in the class will be browser based.

Students use personal laptops or computers and connect to course sessions via Zoom.

Lecture slides and any supplemental course content will be posted to Blackboard for use by all students. Any and all announcements for the course will be posted to Blackboard.

## Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students must provide their own laptop. The laptop specifications take into consideration that students will be creating, streaming, and downloading audio and video; communicating using video conferencing applications; and creating and storing large multimedia files.

## USC Technology Rental Program

The university realizes that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please submit an [USC Technology Rental Program Application](#).

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

There are two required textbooks for this class as follows.

- Kim, Amy Jo (2019) Game Thinking: Innovate Smarter & Drive Deep Engagement with Design Techniques from Hit Games ASIN B07NF9QR2Z
- Ries, Eric (2011). The Lean Startup. Crown Business. ISBN-10 9780307887894

The following books provide important background but are not required reading. They will be used as reference material:

- Hoffman, Reid (2018) Blitzscaling: The Lightning-Fast Path to Building Massively Valuable Companies, ISBN-10 1524761419
- Horowitz, Ben (2014) The Hard Thing About Hard Things. ISBN-10 0062273205
- Olsen, Dan (2015). Lean Product Playbook. John Wiley and Sons. ISBN-10 1118960874
- Blank, Steve (2013). The Four Steps to the Epiphany. K&S Ranch; ISBN-10 0989200507
- Thiel, Peter (2014). Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future. Crown Business. ISBN-10 9780804139298

Additional reference material and online reading will be provided in class.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

- PDIE Show and Tell (individual) - each week students will be required to add to an ongoing conversation in the course Slack channel related to the course topic of the week. These posts will serve as fodder for salon conversations both in class and via Slack.
- Read, Reflect, Discuss Assignments (individual) – you will read articles and white papers provided by the instructor and summarize into a) bullet points and b) a 250 word distillation of the piece. These submissions will be used to lead rigorous in-class discussion.
- Guerrilla Prototypes (group) – you will take prompts from the instructor and create simple prototypes designed to test specific hypotheses.
- Guerrilla User Tests (group) – you will talk to target users of your prototypes using templates and techniques provided by the instructor.
- Validation Assignment (group) - you will gather formal user data to assess how the market will receive your messaging and product before incurring undue production expense.
- Personal Networking / Informational Interview (individual) - you will create a personal strategy brief describing your goals as an entrepreneur and you will then set up informational interviews with 2+ people with expertise related to your

goals. You will submit a report detailing what you learned from the interviews including personal action steps.

**Participation:**

Students are expected to actively participate in this course in person and via Slack.

Participation includes:

- Careful reading and viewing of assigned materials by the date due
- Regular, substantive contributions to discussions in person and via Slack
- On-time attendance and full attention in synchronous sessions
- Significant collaboration with classmates

Course grades may be affected for students who do not contribute to the course through active participation. Students should notify the instructor in advance if they are unable to attend class. Those unable to attend will be required to review the online recording for the session missed and submit thoughtful feedback to the instructor.

**Grading Breakdown**

	Points	% of Grade
PDIE Show and Tell posts, active discussions in class	50	5%
Read, Reflect, Discuss Assignments	200	20%
Guerrilla User Research	200	25%
Guerrilla Prototypes and Customer Development	200	15%
Validation Assignment	200	20%
Personal Networking / Informational Interviews	150	15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading Scale

Final course grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Score
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

## Grading Timeline

Grades and feedback will be posted for students within 72 hours of submission.

## Late Work

Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties.

- Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline 10% deduction
- Submission between 24 and 48 hours after the deadline 20% deduction
- Submission between 48 hours and 3 days after the deadline 50% deduction
- Submission more than 3 days after the deadline 100% deduction

Please keep copies of all your files and emails until the end of the semester.

## **Additional Policies**

**Class notes policy:** Notes or recordings made by students based on a university class or lecture may only be made for purposes of individual or group study, or for other non-commercial purposes that reasonably arise from the student's membership in the class or attendance at the university. This restriction also applies to any information distributed, disseminated, or in any way displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via e-mail or otherwise on the Internet, or via any other medium. Actions in violation of this policy constitute a violation of the Student Conduct Code, and may subject an individual or entity to university discipline and/or legal proceedings. Again, it is a violation of USC's Academic Integrity Policies to share course materials with others without permission from the instructor.

**No recording and copyright notice:** No student may record any lecture, class discussion or meeting with the instructor without his/her prior express written permission. The word "record" or the act of recording includes, but is not limited to, any and all means by which sound or visual images can be stored, duplicated, or retransmitted whether by an electro-mechanical, analog, digital, wire, electronic or other device or any other means of signal encoding. The instructor reserves all rights, including copyright, to his/her lectures, course syllabi and related materials, including summaries, slides (e.g., Keynote, PowerPoint), prior exams, answer keys, and all supplementary course materials available to the students enrolled in the class whether posted to the LMS or otherwise. They may not be reproduced, distributed, copied, or disseminated in any media or in any form, including but not limited to all course note-sharing websites. Exceptions are made for students who have made prior arrangements with The USC Office of Disability Services and Programs and the instructor.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

**I. Ideate on Project Purpose and Define Total Addressable Market. Articulate Business Model Innovation. ID tech and other key strategic and talent resources needed to execute as a v1.**

**KEY DELIVERABLES: Purpose Driven Innovation Canvas and Market Validation System docs**

	Topics	Assignment	Reading
<b>Week 1</b>	Overview of Course + Purpose Driven Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual introductions</li> <li>• In-Class Exercise: Personal Leadership 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment: Purpose Driven Innovation Canvas</li> <li>• Assignment: Game Thinking, Superfan Screener</li> </ul>	Game Thinking – Chapters 1-3
<b>Week 2</b>	Product Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation Assignment</li> </ul>	Game Thinking – Chapters 4-5
<b>Week 3</b>	Game Thinking: Superfans and How to Create a Beachhead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Class Exercise: Personal Leadership 2</li> </ul>		

**II. Map out roadmap to MVP and beyond. Articulate path to monetization. Generate prelim innovation accounting data. Begin or ongoing recruitment of resources needed.**

**KEY DELIVERABLE:**

**Roadmap and tested alpha V1 to MVP which validates potential product market fit.**

	Topics	Assignment	Reading
<b>Week 4</b>	Lean Startup: Validated Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-Class Presentations: Superfan Screener</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignment: MVP + Innovation Accounting</li> </ul>	Lean Startup, Chapters 1-2
<b>Week 5</b>	Lean Startup: Innovation Accounting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Exercise: Innovation Accounting</li> </ul>		Lean Startup: Chapters 3-4
<b>Week 6</b>	Lean Startup: Achieving Product Market Fit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Exercise: Personal Leadership 3</li> </ul>		<a href="#">Playbook for Achieving Product Market Fit</a>
<b>Week 7</b>	Blitzscaling: To Scale Build Things the Don't Scale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-Class Work Session: Blitzcaling Case Study</li> </ul>		
<b>Week 8</b>	The Matrix of MVP Tests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-Class Exercise: MVP Tests</li> </ul>		The Matrix of MVP Tests
<b>Week 9</b>	Fundamentals of Staged Investing + Financial Pro Formas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Work Session: Guerrilla Pro Forma</li> </ul>		
<b>Week 10</b>	Competitive Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Presentations: MVP Progress</li> </ul>		
<b>Week 11</b>	Startup Ecosystem 1 / Meet the Investors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Work Session: Asking for Advice vs Asking for Monday (Investor Conversations 1)</li> <li>In Class Work Session: Investor Relations Spreadsheet</li> </ul>		<a href="#">The Most Comprehensive Guide to the LA Ecosystem</a>
<b>Week 12</b>	Fundamentals of Corporate Formation, Capitalization Tables, and Working with Legal Counsel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-Class Presentation: Innovation Accounting Progress</li> </ul>		<a href="#">On Startup Launches</a>



**III. Define and articulate team and purpose informed culture and stakeholders. Hone brand and development investor and stakeholder decks. Prepare for briefs and showcases.**

**KEY DELIVERABLE:  
IYA Showcase Pitch Deck**

	Topics	Assignment	Reading
<b>Week 13</b>	Investor Pitch Decks 101 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Work Session: Investor Conversations 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assignment: IYA Venture Showcase Pitch Deck</li> </ul>	<a href="#">TechStars Presentation Format</a>
<b>Week 14</b>	LA Startup Ecosystem 2 / Meet the Investors		
<b>Week 15</b>	Startup Economics Deep Dive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Class Work Session: Rehearsals</li> </ul>		
<b>Finals Week</b>	Final Presentations / In-Class Demo Day		

## 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](https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://engemannshc.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](https://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)

<https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services provides immediate therapy services for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking).

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086*  
[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

*USC Policy Reporting to Title IX (213) 740-5086*

<https://policy.usc.edu/reporting-to-title-ix-student-misconduct/>

The university encourages individuals to report prohibited conduct to the *Title IX Office*. Individuals can report to the university’s *Title IX Coordinator* in the *Office of Equity and Diversity*.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421*  
[studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.