

USC Marshall School of Business

The Entrepreneurial CEO: the Real World of Leading Start-ups

1.5 units, the class will meet 1x per week for 15 weeks, each time for 1.5 hours

Instructor:	<i>Geraldine Martin-Coppola</i>
Office:	<i>Fertita Hall, 5th Floor</i>
Office Hours:	<i>Days, times, by appointment</i>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class brings the perspective of an experienced start-up leader, who scaled multiple businesses, and had to put to the test her traditional MBA and consulting background in the real world. It will help bridge the gap between theoretical and practical leadership in a start-up environment, aiming to give future entrepreneurial leaders practical tools for managing themselves, hiring and managing people in their organizations, and making decisions in fast-changing environments.

The class will showcase how some of the established leadership and decision-making frameworks are put to the test in start-up environments, give students a fresh perspective on key skills they should focus on developing if they want to be effective entrepreneurial leaders, and leave them with new mental models ready to be put into practice while scaling their venture.

Instructor Bio

Geraldine Martin-Coppola is an experienced executive in the direct-to-consumer space. She has scaled some of today's leading digitally native brands, having been the COO of Tastemade, the President of GOOP, and the General Manager of Fabletics, where she grew the business from 0 to \$250MM in revenue in 3 years. She also has significant board and advisory experience across a variety of consumer sectors (Spanx, Hum Vitamins, Flex, Hello Sunshine, Arcaea, Kodiak Cakes).

Geraldine spent 5 years at McKinsey&Company in their Paris, London, New York, and Los Angeles offices, focusing on media and technology. She holds a B.S. in engineering from Ecole Polytechnique, France, and an M.B.A from Harvard Business School.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Within this course, we will work on mastering a practical toolbox to sharpen your entrepreneurial leadership capabilities now and over time. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- articulate what start-up leaders need to understand about themselves in order to be effective
- identify tools for use in continuing to learn and foster one's own creativity as an entrepreneurial leader under pressure
- recognize inevitable patterns one will face and need to understand when building the team for your

- venture
- master techniques available to manage employee burnout in rapidly scaling environments
- initiate the creation of an effective and sustainable entrepreneurial culture
- assess how to optimize and scale one's decision-making process within uncertain start-up environments

COURSE MATERIALS

Required readings are listed within the Course Outline and Course Calendar, with links where needed.

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites required to take this course.

GRADING

Assignment and Grading Details:

- **Weekly individual assignments:** every week, you will be asked to read various articles or book excerpts and/or watch videos designed to provide new and thought-provoking information about entrepreneurial leadership. You will be expected to reflect on the assignment questions provided each week, and come to class ready to share your insights. On selected weeks, I will ask you to submit your responses to the reflection questions in writing to be graded as “memos” (see list below)
- **There will be 6 written memos, based on selected weekly assignments.**
- **Memo 1 (due September 16): Watch Kelly McGonigal’s [TED Talk](#), and please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions:**
 - Prior to watching the TED talk, what was your attitude towards stress? Did the TED talk change your stress mindset, and why?
 - Which tools and strategies have been effective to build resilience in your personal journey? Be as specific as possible in describing what has helped you.
 - Can you think of some strategies that may be helpful in building both individual and company resilience?
 - Please outline your personal leadership roadmap(as discussed in class 2)
- **Memo 2 (due September 23): Watch [The Art of Asking the Right Questions](#) and read excerpt from “the Ladies’ Delight” by Emile Zola. Please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions:**
 - How would you describe your learning style? Which tools or sources have been helpful in your professional or personal life to learn? Why do you think those tools are effective for you?
 - The excerpt of the Zola book discusses the origin of department stores in 19th Century France. What do you think is instrumental in allowing Roland Mouret to generate his creative ideas?
 - How do you personally cultivate your creativity? Here, think about creativity in the broadest sense of the term, including creative problem solving, and idea generation
- **Memo 3 (due October 7): Read <https://every.to/napkin-math/why-culture-eats-strategy?sid=15373> and [An Imperfect Recipe for Creating Culture](#), by Andy Dunn, CEO Bonobos. Please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions:**
 - What were positive / negative elements of cultures you have been a part of?
 - Do you agree with the thesis presented in the Makin Math article that building a winning culture is the most important objective a start-up leader can have? Why or why not?
 - What do you think of the author’s argument of tailoring your culture to your target market?
 - Andy Dunn identifies a couple of key drivers to build a great culture. Which of these drivers particularly resonates for you and why? What do you think he may be missing or underestimating that may help build a great culture?
- **Memo 4 (due October 28): Read and watch the articles and videos below. Please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions:**
 - [Why hiring is a lot like picking stocks](#), by Whitney Johnson
 - [TED Talk on Range](#), by David Epstein
 - <https://every.to/p/what-i-miss-about-working-at-stripe>
 - <https://hbr.org/2021/12/is-your-burnout-from-too-much-work-or-too-little-impact>

Questions:

- What do you think makes it challenging to hire and retain people in the start-up space?
- Which parts of the Johnson and Epstein arguments do you agree and disagree with, and why?
- Do you agree or disagree with the thesis presented in the HBS and Stripe article and why?

- What do you think are other strategies you may employ to combat burnout?

- **Memo 5 (due November 18:)** Read <https://hbr.org/2015/05/outsmart-your-own-biases> and [The Business Case Against Gut Decisions](#), by Olivier Sibony. **Please upload your answers to the following questions on Brightspace**

- The author of the HBR article mentions a couple of biases. Which of these biases do you think come into play most in start-ups, and at what moments in the life of a start-up?
- Do you think decision making biases can be fought, and what are some tools (mentioned in the article or from your own experience) that you may use effectively in a start-up environment to combat biases?
- Do you agree or disagree with Olivier on when to use intuition in decision making? Why?
- How else may you leverage emotions, intuition, or gut instinct in a constructive way in decision making?

- **Memo 6 (Due December 2):** [Read 10 Lessons from Extreme Ownership](#), and please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions (Memo 6)

- Reflect on your previous work, or extra-curricular experiences: did you have a lot of true decision making power? How did it impact your performance / company performance?
- What do you think about the trade-off between decision-making and control in a start-up?
- Now that we have discussed the different elements of decision making, please outline a personal decision making framework.

- **Final Paper – Individual** assignment: On the scheduled date of your Final, you will be expected to submit a final paper. Details of the final paper are as follows. Students will reflect on how their thinking has shifted around the various aspects of entrepreneurial leadership covered in this class, including personal management, people management, and decision-making. Final paper should cover specific changes students will make to their entrepreneurial leadership style, and which tools and mental models they have found the most insightful and why. Students should also outline a section on the non-negotiable elements of the entrepreneurial culture they intend to build.

- **Participation – Individual** grade component: Class participation is an extremely important part of the learning experience in this course as the richness of the learning experience will be largely dependent upon the degree of preparation and the degree of engagement by *all* students prior to and during each class session. My expectation and that of your classmates are that you are prepared for all classes and will actively participate in and meaningfully contribute to class discussions.

In-class participation is also a critical part of the course learning experience. Cold calling may take place to encourage active participation and to gain multiple perspectives and points of view, thus lending itself to the richness of the learning experience. In-class participation grading will be based on students' demonstrated willingness to participate and the quality, rather the quantity, of the comments expressed. While some students are far more comfortable than others with class participation, all students should make an effort to contribute meaningfully.

Students will offer their opinions in group settings many times in their careers; thus, class participation serves to prepare students for this business experience. Evaluation of in-class participation is based on the following:

- *Relevance* – Does the comment or question meaningfully bear on the subject at hand? Irrelevant or inappropriate comments can detract from the learning experience.
- *Responsiveness* – Does the comment or question connect to what someone else has said?
- *Analysis* – Is the reasoning employed consistent and logical? Has data from course materials, personal experience, or general knowledge been employed to support the assertions/findings?
- *Value* – Does the contribution further the understanding of the issues at hand?
- *Clarity* – Is the comment concise and understandable?

During class sessions, I frequently assume the role of a facilitator to encourage a discussion that includes perspectives from a variety of viewpoints and, secondly, to help pull together prevailing analyses and thoughts. The direction and quality of a discussion is the *collective responsibility of the class*.

For each in-class session up to twenty five (25) points will be awarded to a student for relevant and meaningful participation, and zero (0) points for no participation or absence.

ASSIGNMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	% OF GRADE	POINTS*
Participation	Individual	15%	150
Memos (Memo1 to 6)	Individual	10%*6 = 60%	600
Final Paper	Individual	25%	250
**	TOTAL	100%	1000

**If you don't inform me of missing or incorrect grades within two weeks of those grades being posted, the grades will be assumed correct. Do NOT wait until the semester's end to check or appeal any grades.

Assignment Submission:

All assignments must be uploaded to Canvas by **11:59 PM Pacific Time** on the night prior to the class session in which that Deliverable is listed as due in the Course Calendar. Any assignment turned in late, even if by only a few minutes, will receive a grade deduction (see below for deduction schedule).

- Upload only one file per assignment.
- Deliverables that exceed maximum page or time length requirements (when they are provided) will only be assessed up to (and not beyond) that limit.
- Deliverables should be single-spaced, using 11-point font, and 1-inch margins.
- Read and heed any supplementary Assignment Details carefully.

Except in extraordinary cases, all assignments, no matter how late, must be completed to pass this class.
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Late Policy

Assignments will be accepted after the deadline with the following grade penalties. Do not ask for extensions; the below *are* extensions.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| ● Submission in the 24 hours after the deadline | 1 grade deduction |
| ● Submission between 1 and 7 days after the deadline | 2 grades deduction |
| ● Submission more than 7 days after the deadline | Automatic C |

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

Attendance and Lateness Policy:

Attendance at each class session is expected. If you miss more than one class (regardless of the reason), you can expect this to have a negative effect on your class participation grade. Excessive lateness, or leaving early, will also have a negative effect on your contribution grade.

Class Organization:

Class sessions will include discussion of assigned readings, students' analysis of reading materials, and additional exercises on an assigned and *ad hoc* basis. Guest speakers with expertise in specific topics will be featured in some of the class sessions (contingent on availability). This class will be highly personal, interactive, and will push you to challenge preconceived assumptions you may have about what it takes to be an effective start-up leader.

Requirements and Assignments / Final Paper:

Since class discussion is a critical component of this course, students are expected to come to each class prepared, which means that they will have gone through the assigned materials and are prepared to discuss the assignment questions.

Course Communication:

Course communication will take place through announcements in class, emails, and Blackboard (blackboard.usc.edu). Many of the emails I send will go through Blackboard; therefore, it is imperative that you have a fully operational Blackboard account. By default, Blackboard uses your USC email address (username@usc.edu) for sending emails; if this is not your primary email account, please make sure to forward your USC email to the account you use. (Note: It's not uncommon for some students' USC email quota to fill by the end of each semester. It is your responsibility to manage your account to ensure receipt of all emailed communication.)

Marshall Learning Environment:

An important goal of the educational experience at USC Marshall is to be exposed to and discuss diverse, thought-provoking, and sometimes controversial ideas that challenge one's beliefs. This is an important part of the training business students must receive to address and solve major issues that confront businesses in a critical and thoughtful manner. These values are reflected in the USC Marshall statement on open communication.

Marshall Learning Environment: Open Expression and Respect for All

The USC Marshall School of Business shares the University's **Unifying Values**:

- We act with integrity in the pursuit of excellence.
- We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion to promote well-being.
- We engage in open communication and are accountable for living our values.

We value each person's humanity and voice and strive to ensure that every member of our community feels that they belong and are respected.

We support the **USC Statement** protecting free speech and the academic freedom of faculty and students. Certain limited categories of speech are not protected by the law, such as expression that is defamatory, incites violence, constitutes a true threat or unlawful harassment, or violates privacy, confidentiality, or intellectual property rights. But other than the limited categories of legally unprotected speech, we are committed to fostering a learning environment where free inquiry and expression are encouraged and celebrated and for which all members of the Marshall community share responsibility. We

recognize that speech that is deeply offensive may nevertheless be legally protected and seek to restrain ourselves from responding with censorship or reprisal.

The classroom is an environment in which students and faculty should not feel they will be punished, ostracized, or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, or concerns, or for making mistakes. As part of the educational process, students and faculty will discuss topics that may make some people uncomfortable, unhappy, distressed, or even offended. Sometimes there will be strong disagreements about these topics, and the care with which they are discussed is paramount. It is the shared responsibility of members of our community: to treat each other with courtesy, dignity and respect; to appreciate the spectrum of viewpoints on an issue; and, to be actively involved in working through contentious issues together.

UNIVERSITY AND MARSHALL GUIDELINES

Lloyd 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 is to 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 utilize 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 Entrepreneur Program classes or events. Receipt of this policy and registration in our classes are evidence that you understand this policy and will abide by it.

Technology Policy:

Web-enabled devices are not permitted during academic or professional sessions unless otherwise stated by the professor. Use of other personal communication devices such as mobile phones is considered unprofessional and is not permitted during academic or professional sessions. Web-enabled devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) are permitted during class ONLY if approved by the professor. Videotaping of faculty lectures is not permitted due to copyright infringement regulations. Audiotaping may be permitted ONLY if approved by the professor.

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.symplcity.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) 442-3340 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.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity:

Please activate your course in Blackboard. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu. Instructors should be prepared to assign students a "Plan B" project that can be completed at a distance. For additional information about maintaining your classes in an emergency please access cst.usc.edu/services/emergencyprep.html.

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, the *USC Emergency Information* web site (<http://emergency.usc.edu/>) will provide safety and other information, including electronic means by which instructors will conduct class using a combination of USC's Blackboard learning management system (blackboard.usc.edu), teleconferencing, and other technologies.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

MODULE I: MANAGING YOURSELF

Most traditional leadership approaches give you many tools for managing others, but very few for managing yourself. This is critical in a start-up environment, as your role as a leader, and what the business requires from you changes at breakneck speed as your venture grows. Therefore, you will need to be armed with self-knowledge, and the right mindset and tools to keep learning and creating while under pressure.

Class 1 (August 26) - Understanding course objectives and the key pillars of effective entrepreneurial leadership

ASSIGNMENT: please read the syllabus

IN CLASS – We will discuss the following questions:

- What are the key pillars of excellence in entrepreneurial leadership?
- Is there more than one type of entrepreneurial leader that can be effective?
- How do leadership awareness, management excellence, and effective decision making interact during key strategic moments for start-ups?

Class 2 (September 9)- Mastering self-awareness as an entrepreneurial leader

ASSIGNMENT: Take Enneagram <https://www.truity.com/test/enneagram-personality-test> and free Myers Brigg <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test> (if not taken previously). Be prepared to discuss what you learned about yourself, and how you may apply these learnings in a start-up work environment

IN CLASS – We will discuss the following questions:

- What do you need to know about yourself in order to become an effective start-up leader?
- In addition to your leadership personality, how can you enhance your emotional management, daily habits, and understanding of your inner needs to increase your leadership potential?
- How should you leverage/use this self-knowledge to become a better entrepreneurial leader?
- Which levers can you use to make progress on your personal leadership roadmap?

Class 3 (September 16) - Building Resilience as an Entrepreneurial Leader

ASSIGNMENT: Watch Kelly McGonigal's [TED Talk](#), and please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions (Memo 1):

- Prior to watching the TED talk, what was your attitude towards stress? Did the TED talk change your stress mindset, and why?
- Which tools and strategies have been effective to build resilience in your personal journey? Be as specific as possible in describing what has helped you.
- Can you think of some strategies that may be helpful in building both individual and company resilience?
- Please outline your personal leadership roadmap(as discussed in class 2)

IN CLASS – We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- How will stress & pressure affect your leadership journey?
- Which strategies are effective to turn pressure / stress into an advantage?
- Are there different types of stress, and how may you tailor your approach to stress management as an entrepreneurial leader?
- How does personal leadership resilience pave the way for corporate resilience?

Class 4 (September 23) - Cultivating Your Learning and Creativity Muscle

ASSIGNMENT:

Watch [The Art of Asking the Right Questions](#) and read excerpt from “the Ladies’ Delight” by Emile Zola. Please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions (Memo 2):

- How would you describe your learning style? Which tools or sources have been helpful in your professional or personal life to learn? Why do you think those tools are effective for you?
- The excerpt of the Zola book discusses the origin of department stores in 19th Century France. What do you think is instrumental in allowing Roland Mouret to generate his creative ideas?
- How do you personally cultivate your creativity? Here, think about creativity in the broadest sense of the term, including creative problem solving, and idea generation

Extra Credit: Submit to the Curiosity discussion board on BB one article, podcast or video you recently discovered that you found interesting; submit one question you have about a topic you are interested to learn more about; comment on one of your classmates’ posts.

IN CLASS – We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- What are some practical tools to manage your learning journey as a startup leader?
 - How should you balance intentionality with serendipity, and how can you keep learning while preserving your attention span and focus?
 - How should one think about creativity as an entrepreneurial leader, especially if one is not the creative founder type?
 - What are some tools to enhance your creativity?
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Class 5 (September 30) - Real world reflections on Module 1 (Guest Speaker)

ASSIGNMENT:

Come ready with some questions for our guest speaker

MODULE II: BUILDING CULTURE, SELECTING & MANAGING PEOPLE

No class can truly prepare you for the roller coaster of a growing start-up, how you will be constantly strained to find people to join you along the ride, and the unique challenges you will face to manage people and maintain culture in a pressure cooker environment. This module will aim to give you practical tools when applicable, and an ability to recognize patterns that you will inevitably face.

Class 6 (October 7) - Understanding the pillars of a great entrepreneurial culture

ASSIGNMENT: Read <https://every.to/napkin-math/why-culture-eats-strategy?sid=15373> and [An Imperfect Recipe for Creating Culture](#), by Andy Dunn, CEO Bonobos. Please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions (Memo 3)

- What were positive / negative elements of cultures you have been a part of?
- Do you agree with the thesis presented in the Makin Math article that building a winning culture is the most important objective a start-up leader can have? Why or why not?
- What do you think of the author's argument of tailoring your culture to your target market?
- Andy Dunn identifies a couple of key drivers to build a great culture. Which of these drivers particularly resonates for you and why? What do you think he may be missing or underestimating that may help build a great culture?

IN CLASS – We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- What is the role of the entrepreneurial leader in building a great start-up culture?
 - Are there non-negotiable / common elements to any entrepreneurial culture?
 - How much should a company culture be linked to the company strategy and/or vision?
 - What makes a culture "good" or "bad"? How critical is culture in the success of a start-up?
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Class 7 (October 14) - Operationalizing culture: implementation tools and their limitations

ASSIGNMENT: None this week. We will continue to discuss last week's assignment

IN CLASS – We will discuss the assignment and the following questions:

- How do you operationalize start-up culture in practice?
 - How do these drivers change as the company grows?
 - How can you measure culture, and should you?
-

Class 8 (October 21) - Deep dive: how to select people for your entrepreneurial journey

ASSIGNMENT: Read and watch the articles and videos below. Please come to class ready to discuss the following questions:

- [Why hiring is a lot like picking stocks](#), by Whitney Johnson
- [TED Talk on Range](#), by David Epstein

Questions for discussion

- What do you think makes it challenging to hire and retain people in the start-up space?
- Which parts of the Johnson and Epstein arguments do you agree and disagree with, and why?

IN CLASS: We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- Why is hiring the most important job you will have as a start-up CEO?
 - How should you think about the balance of generalists vs. specialists in your team, at different stages of your venture?
 - How should you think about the tension between diversity and culture fit when hiring? How do you look beyond superficial attributes of diversity?
 - When should you level up, and what are some things you should know about the process of leveling up?
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Class 9 (October 28) - Deep dive: how to manage people in your entrepreneurial journey (part 1 - focus on goal setting and prioritization)

ASSIGNMENT: Read the articles below. Please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions, as well as the answers to last class assignment (Memo 4)

- <https://every.to/p/what-i-miss-about-working-at-stripe>
- <https://hbr.org/2021/12/is-your-burnout-from-too-much-work-or-too-little-impact>

Questions for discussion

- Do you agree or disagree with the thesis presented in the HBS and Stripe article and why?
- What do you think are other strategies you may employ to combat burnout?

IN CLASS: We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- What are effective ways to manage employee burnout in start-ups?
 - How should you think about goal setting, and project prioritization?
 - What other lever may come into play: the role of expectation settings, performance reviews and training/coaching
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Class 10 (November 4) -Deep dive: how to manage people in your entrepreneurial journey (part 2 - focus on communication, expectation setting and coaching)

ASSIGNMENT: Read the PDF about the Shoedazzle case study and come ready to deliver a speech to the class as if you were the Shoedazzle CEO. Two people will be called on to deliver their speech. You may submit your speech on Brightspace as an Extra-credit assignment

IN CLASS: We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- How to balance storytelling and transparency in communicating with employees?
- How to think about expectation setting, and performance assessments?
- How to recognize when you are part of the problem? How should you coach, and when is it appropriate?
- How to adjust your management style based on the type of people you are managing: the art of debate, emotional cues, and managing the business vs. creative conflict

MODULE III: PRACTICAL DECISION MAKING IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENT

The high level of uncertainty, the scarce availability of relevant data, and the speed and quantity of decision making required in start-up environments make traditional decision-making frameworks insufficient. In order to be a successful entrepreneurial leader, you need to master the art of balancing emotions with analytics, and acquire the knowledge of when and how to fight your decision-making biases. You will also need to learn how to scale your decision-making frameworks, and push the boundaries of how far you should decentralize decision-making to ensure success.

Class 11 (November 18) - Balancing intuition and analytical thinking - how to build the right environment for effective decision-making

Assignment:

Read <https://hbr.org/2015/05/outsmart-your-own-biases> and [The Business Case Against Gut Decisions](#), by Olivier Sibony.

Please upload your answers to the following questions on Brightspace (Memo 5)

- The author of the HBR article mentions a couple of biases. Which of these biases do you think come into play most in start-ups, and at what moments in the life of a start-up?
- Do you think decision making biases can be fought, and what are some tools (mentioned in the article or from your own experience) that you may use effectively in a start-up environment to combat biases?
- Do you agree or disagree with Olivier on when to use intuition in decision making? Why?
- How else may you leverage emotions, intuition, or gut instinct in a constructive way in decision making?

IN CLASS – We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- What type of biases will you be most susceptible to in a start-up environment?
- How do you build the best environment for effective decision making?
- Which frameworks and tools are effective to support decision making in a start-up environment?
- In which situations is it most appropriate to leverage intuition for decision making?
- Are intuition and analytical thinking at odds, or is there a way to leverage your intuition without leaving your critical thinking brain out of the door?
- What is the connection between intuition and vision, and intuition and creativity?
- How should you balance doing scalable vs. unscalable things?

Class 12 (November 25) - Mental models: how they can make entrepreneurial decision-making more efficient

Assignment: Read <https://fs.blog/charlie-munger-mental-toolbox/> . Come ready to discuss the following questions in class

- Which mental models do you personally use in decision-making? You may borrow ideas from any discipline, from sports to finance.
- Why do you think mental models would be helpful in the highly uncertain start-up environment?

IN CLASS – We will discuss the assignment, and the following questions:

- What are mental models?
 - Which mental models may best serve the entrepreneurial leader?
 - How do you balance quality and speed in the start-up decision making process?
 - How do you make decisions when the impact of these decisions may not be obviously quantifiable?
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Class 13 (December 2) - Delegating decision-making in start-ups: the key to extreme ownership and fast scaling

Assignment: [Read 10 Lessons from Extreme Ownership](#), and please upload to Brightspace the answers to the following questions (Memo 6)

- Reflect on your previous work, or extra-curricular experiences: did you have a lot of true decision making power? How did it impact your performance / company performance?
- What do you think about the trade-off between decision-making and control in a start-up?
- Now that we have discussed the different elements of decision making, please outline a personal decision making framework.

IN CLASS – In addition to the assignment questions, we will discuss the following questions:

- What is the start-up CEO decision making syndrome? Why is it important to address?
 - Which decisions should you make / which decisions should you let go of?
 - What are some tools to train your team in decision making?
 - How do you control the quality of the decision making while delegating?
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Final Exam Date: FINAL PAPER DUE

Students will reflect on how their thinking has shifted around the various aspects of entrepreneurial leadership covered in this class, including personal management, people management, and decision-making. Final paper should cover specific changes students will make to their entrepreneurial leadership style, and which tools and mental models they have found the most insightful and why. Students should also outline a section on the non-negotiable elements of the entrepreneurial culture they intend to build.

[Format: Answers should be provided in a 4-6 page paper, single-spaced, with 1" margins, and a font size ≥11

