



## 20243 ACAD 406 Purpose Driven Innovation Incubator - Swain - Syllabus

Units: 2

### Location:

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### Instructor: Chris Swain

Office: HSH 111 or via Zoom

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/IYASStudent/SitePages/IT-Resources.aspx>

**Hours of Service:** 8:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

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

### 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 and the [IYA Venture Pyramid](#). 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 the 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 (or iterate upon) a Minimum Viable Product using Lean Startup Methodology
- 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.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

### Course Notes

- This is a hands-on, intensive course that requires participation during class and teamwork outside of class. Active participation in-class discussions and digital messaging is required.
- Grading type: Letter.
- Lecture slides and any supplemental course content will be posted to Brightspace for use by all students. Course announcements will be posted to Brightspace.

### Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students use personal laptops in each class session. 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 digital tools; and creating and storing large files.

### HOW TO PURCHASE SOFTWARE AT THE DISCOUNTED ACADEMY RATE

The following software are available for purchase online at the Iovine and Young Academy discounted rate:

Software	IYA Short-Term License at USC Bookstore
Adobe Creative Cloud	\$75 2024–2025 annual license (active through July 2025)
Apple Logic Pro	\$35 semester licenses
SolidWorks	\$35 semester license
Apple Final Cut Pro	\$35 semester license

To purchase:

- Visit: <https://commerce.cashnet.com/IOVINE>

- Select the software license(s) you would like to purchase by clicking “View Details” or the software title, and make your purchase.
- You will receive an order confirmation receipt at the email address you provided.
- You will be notified by email when the software license has been activated.

If you have any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to contact Academy IT Support at [iyahelp@usc.edu](mailto:iyahelp@usc.edu).

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Assigned readings will be provided by instructors via links in the course slides posted to Brightspace. Students can always look to the latest slide presentation for assignment specs.

## Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

1. Kim, Amy Jo (2019) Game Thinking: Innovate Smarter & Drive Deep Engagement with Design Techniques from Hit Games ASIN B07NF9QR2Z
2. Ries, Eric (2011). The Lean Startup. Crown Business. ISBN-10 9780307887894
3. Hoffman, Reid (2018) Blitzscaling: The Lightning-Fast Path to Building Massively Valuable Companies, ISBN-10 1524761419
4. Horowitz, Ben (2014) The Hard Thing About Hard Things. IBSN-10 0062273205
5. Olsen, Dan (2015). Lean Product Playbook. John Wiley and Sons. ISBN-10 1118960874
6. Blank, Steve (2013). The Four Steps to the Epiphany. K&S Ranch; ISBN-10 0989200507
7. Thiel, Peter (2014). Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future. Crown Business. ISBN-10 9780804139298

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

- IYA Venture Pyramid (group) - each week your project team will work together to create or iterate upon components from the [IYA Venture Pyramid](#). The goal will be to ascend the pyramid as efficiently as possible on a path toward customer traction. Importantly, teams will decide internally which components to focus on in a given week based on the needs of the project. The general rule of thumb will be to complete the components sequentially by stage – e.g. Stage 1 then Stage 2 – up to Stage 6.
- Read, Reflect, Discuss Assignments (individual) – you will read articles and white papers provided by the instructor and summarize into takeaways. These submissions will be used to lead in-class discussion.
- 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

**Table 1 Grading Breakdown**

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
IYA Venture Pyramid (group)	600	60%
Read, Reflect, Discuss Assignments (individual)	50	5%
Guerrilla User Tests (group)	75	7.5%
Validation Assignment (group)	150	15%
Personal Networking / Informational Interview (individual)	25	2.5%
Participation	100	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grading Scale

**Table 2 Course Grading Scale**

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	100-95
A-	94-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-73
C-	72-70
D+	69-67
D	66-64
F	63 or below

## Assignment Submission Policy

Instructors will specify how to submit each assignment as part of the assignment specifications. Nearly all assignments will require you to post a link to the course Master Spreadsheet.

Special Note: When students post files to the course Master Spreadsheet they must be set to “anyone with link can view” so the instructor can access. If a file is not set to allow access, then it will be considered late. See Late Policy below. Students are encouraged to create one Google Folder for all assignments in this course and set the folder to “anyone with link can view”.

## Late Policy

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 2 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.

## **Grading Timeline**

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

## **Course Specific Policies: Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools**

We expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is a skill, and we 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 statement at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining that you did so. 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.]

## **Attendance**

The Academy maintains rigorous academic standards for its students and on-time attendance at all class meetings is expected. Each student will be allowed one absence over the course of the semester for which no explanation is required. Students are admonished to not waste excused absences on non-critical issues, and to use them carefully for illness or other issues that may arise unexpectedly. Except in the case of prolonged illness or other serious issue (see below), no additional absences will be excused. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a grade (e.g., an A will be lowered to A-, and A- will be lowered to a B+, etc.). In addition, being tardy to class will count as one-third of an absence. Three tardies will equal a full course absence.

Students remain responsible for any missed work from excused or unexcused absences. Immediately following an absence, students should contact the instructor to obtain missed assignments or lecture notes and to confirm new deadlines or due dates. Extensions or other accommodations are at the discretion of the instructor.

Automatically excused absences normally may not be used for quiz, exam or presentation days. Using an excused absence for a quiz, exam or presentation, such as in the case of sudden illness or other emergency, is at the discretion of the instructor.

In the case of prolonged illness, family emergencies, or other unforeseen serious issues, the student should contact the instructor to arrange accommodation. Accommodation may also be made for essential professional or career-related events or opportunities. Additionally, students who need accommodations for religious observations should provide advanced notice to instructors and student athletes should

provide Travel Request Letters. All accommodations remain at the discretion of the instructor, and appropriate documentation may be required.

Unless students provide an accommodation letter from USC's Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) or a letter from IYA Student Services detailing visa or travel restrictions, attendance and active participation is expected in the classroom. Any student with such accommodations should submit their accommodation document to the instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Students who are experiencing illness should not attend class in person. Please inform the instructor in advance of any class sessions that you can't attend for medical reasons, and accommodations will be arranged to view recorded lectures and submit alternatives to any missed class participation. Students will not be penalized for not attending class in person under these circumstances.

### **Irvine and Young Hall Cleanout**

The Academy is unable to store student projects and materials beyond the end of the semester. Students must remove all projects and personal materials from the Creators Studio, lockers/locker room, and other classrooms by the end of each semester. **All projects and materials left in Irvine and Young Hall will be discarded the day after final exams end. No exceptions.**

### **Zoom Etiquette**

The class will be conducted in hybrid format – e.g. simultaneously in-person and via Zoom. Students enrolled in Section 10256D should attend in person to maximize the effectiveness of the team collaboration. Students enrolled in Section 10257D may attend via Zoom and are welcome to attend in person if they are able.

Each course session will be recorded via Zoom.

### **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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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.

### **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 relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

### **Course Evaluations**

Students will be asked to complete a course evaluation via the university course eval system at the end of the semester.

### **Course Schedule**

**Table 3 Course schedule**

**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 Superfan Screening**

	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: Blitzscaling 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 Forms <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 University Academic and Support Systems

### 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](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate-](#) and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

### 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 consists 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) 740-2500

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](mailto: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.