

MGMT 265

Culture and Institutions of the Tech Sector: Bridging Research and Practice

Fall 2019, Quarter 1 (Aug 27 – Oct 15, TR 12-1:20, JMHH F90)

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[Course Canvas Site](#)

Office hours vary, posted on Canvas

Academics, students and practitioners alike are fascinated by the culture of the tech sector – its people, practices, and organization. In this course we explore this sector using a combination of academic research papers, popular press articles and practitioner involvement. Each class session will be devoted to discussion of one topic, during which we will be joined via teleconferencing by Wharton/Penn alumni from the tech sector with relevant expertise.

Therefore, the learning objectives of this half-credit course are to:

- Understand the managerial, organizational, and regional institutions that characterize the tech sector, with particular emphasis on the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Bridge research and practice through analysis of academic research papers and popular press articles in conjunction with practitioner input.
- Forge connections with tech sector practitioners, particularly with our west coast alumni.

Assignments:

For each guest session, you are encouraged to discuss the readings in a small group to enhance your understanding, but I require you to submit the assigned preparation materials individually via Canvas. There are two separate (but related) parts of your submission. The part that is formally graded as an assignment includes some questions about the reading/viewing for classes with guests. Your grade is calculated from the top eight of the eleven assignments, giving you three sessions of your choice free from these responsibilities if you wish. The other part of the submission plays into your class participation score. Here, you are asked to submit a question that you would like to ask our guest, but this must be submitted by 8 pm the night before our session (giving me time to curate the set). For each guest, I will choose 4-5 “warm calls” from your suggested questions. While questions not selected do not receive credit toward participation scores, you may find that you still have an opportunity to participate by asking a question after the “warm calls” are done.

TENTATIVE --- 8/20/19 --- see Canvas for updates

We will conduct a full-group online discussion to further our exploration of Silicon Valley news and trends. The discussion will be hosted on a tool called Harmonize, accessible through Canvas. By Sun Sep 15, you are required to post at least one article with a brief summary (maximum 250 words) of why you think it is relevant to our class. You are also required to comment on at least two article posts (again, maximum 250 words). Your first reply is due by Sun Sep 29, and the second is due by Sun Oct 6. In order to maintain the integrity of the discussion threads, please do not edit your post after submitting it. These dates and the method of submission are subject to change depending on the status of the Harmonize tool pilot test. Any changes will be announced through Canvas.

You will work with a group of up to five to research one of the course topics in depth. You may choose a group on Canvas by Sun Sep 8; any students who have not opted into a group by then will be assigned into a group. Please choose a more meaningful group name that suggests your general topic of interest and identify a specific question you wish to investigate.

For your final group project, your group will locate at least eight other sources that address your specific question, and then you will interview at least six other practitioners who can lend their insight to the phenomenon. Be sure to explain why this set of informants were chosen. Quality of sources and interviews is at least as important as quantity. Academic research articles can be an excellent source for research papers, but other sources can also be valuable. If you can amass other data to inform your question, this can also enrich your findings. Be sure to describe how your sources shed light on the question, as well as how they fall short.

With this information, your group will generate a report (max 2000 words - not including figures/tables) describing your findings, which is due by Sun Oct 20. Be sure that your report not only describes your findings and the approaches you used to uncover them but also future directions for this sort of inquiry (i.e., interesting follow-up questions that cannot be answered with your current data). Additional guidance and examples are available on our Canvas page. Teams are encouraged to discuss the scope of the project with the course TA at an early stage.

Your group will submit a project proposal by Sun Sep 22 in a prescribed template format. We will use our Tue Sep 24 class session as working time, where each group will have the opportunity to clarify questions and investigate data sources, recognizing that these research choices occur in an iterative fashion. This session is for your development and is not evaluated for a grade. During the session, we will be joined by a library contact, who along with the professor and the TA will be available for consultation with your group.

Please recognize that your research report will differ quite a bit from systematic research as seen in our academic journal readings, so this group project might best be classified as “pre-research”, as you will develop some hypotheses and preliminary assertions for your report which would likely be more thoroughly examined with more systematic data. Should your group be interested in furthering your work subsequent to our class, contact us about independent study possibilities.

Classroom policies:

You are expected to attend all class sessions. In case of a legitimate need to miss class, please inform us of your absence via the Course Absence Reporting (CAR) system. Misrepresentation of the reason for your absence is considered an academic integrity violation.

With the exception of our group project work day, the use of electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones) is prohibited in class. This ensures that we provide our guests and each other with full attention and respect; most students also indicate that the policy helps them focus better in class.

You will be provided with a tent card the first class session. Please mark your name on both sides and use it every class session.

Grading:

Pre-class assignments (8)	32 points (4 points each)
Discussion posts (1) and replies (2)	12 points (4 points each)
Class attendance/participation (1 st /2 nd half)	24 points (12 points 1 st half, 12 points 2 nd half)
Project presentation and report	32 points

Class schedule:

Our syllabus below depends on the ability of our prominent and busy guests to keep their commitments. I ask that you hold 6 pm on Thu Sept 26 and on Tue Oct 15 in case we need to reschedule any other visits.

Add/drop:

Since this class is only half a semester long, the add/drop period is abbreviated. No adds will be processed after the first week of class. Drops after week 3 will be issued a W for withdrawal.

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW – see Canvas for full details

***** please note that our guests sometimes update articles shortly before their class sessions. Accordingly, new materials and assignments may be posted to canvas up to one week in advance of any class session or deadline *****

Session 1. Introduction

Prepare: self-intro slide

Session 2. Accelerators

Guests: Yash Kothari W15; Founder, Prayas Analytics; New Initiatives,
Drip Capital
Pranshu Maheshwari W15 C15; Founder, Prayas Analytics; Product
Manager, Second Measure
Alex Sands W17 ENG17; Founder, Plasticity

Read: Hathaway, Ian. "What startup accelerators really do." *Harvard Business Review* 7 (2016).

Streebin, Jarrett. "Was Y-Combinator Worth It?" *Tech Crunch* (2014).

Optional: [Seed Accelerator Rankings Program](#)

Session 3. Business Model Innovation

Guest: [Jesse Pujji](#) W06 C06; CEO and Co-Founder, Ampush

Read: Ovans, Andrea. "What is a business model?" *Harvard Business Review blog* (2015).

Optional: Girotra, Karan, and Serguei Netessine. "Four paths to business model innovation." *Harvard Business Review* 92.7 (2014): 96-103.

Session 4. Business Experimentation

Guest: [Amy Errett](#) WG85; CEO and Founder, Madison Reed

Read: Thomke, Stefan, and Jim Manzi. "The Discipline of Business Experimentation." *Harvard Business Review* 92.12 (2014): 70–79.

Session 5. Serial Entrepreneurship

Guest: [Joseph Ansanelli](#) W92; CEO, Gladly; Partner, Greylock Partners

Read: Gompers, P., A. Kovner, J. Lerner and D. Scharfstein. "Performance Persistence in Entrepreneurship." *Journal of Financial Economics* 96 (2010) pp. 18-32. (**Note:** Read Sections 1 and 2 carefully to understand the authors' arguments and the data they use to test them. Skim the remainder to see the variety of analyses the authors perform to test alternative hypotheses.)

Session 6. Entrepreneurial Strategy

Guest: Ravi Viswanathan ENG90 WG98; Founder and Managing Partner, NewView Capital

Read: Gans, Joshua, Erin L. Scott, and Scott Stern. "Strategy for start-ups." *Harvard Business Review* 96.3 (2018): 44-51.

Session 7. Deals

Guest: Ryan Limaye W93 ENG93 WG93; Managing Director and Co-Head, Global Technology Investment Banking

Read: McBride, Sarah, and Liana Baker. "Wall Street Giants Battle a Secret Deal Whisperer on Tech IPOs." Bloomberg, 10 June 2019.

Jamie McGurk. "All about direct listings." A16z blog, 2 July 2019.

Gurdus, Lizzy. "Here's why traders are watching Spotify ahead of Slack's direct listing." CNBC, 20 June 2019.

Session 8. Regional Advantages

- Guest: [Aydin Senkut](#) G96 WG96
Founder and Managing Director, Felicis Ventures
- Read: “Explaining Silicon Valley’s Success” (interview with AnnaLee Saxenian)
Founder Collective. “Startup success outside Silicon Valley: Data from over 200 exits in 17 cities.” Medium, 13 August 2019.
- View: Interview with Fred Wilson

Session 9. In-Class Working Time for Group Projects

Session 10. Venture Development

- Guest: Andrew Dudum W12; CEO, Hims; Partner, Atomic Labs
- Read: Blank, Steve. "Why the lean start-up changes everything." *Harvard Business Review* 91.5 (2013): 63-72.
Konrad, Alex. “Silicon Valley's 'Pixar': Why The Startup Studio Behind Hims' Breakout Success Just Raised \$150M.” Forbes, 10 October 2018.
- Optional: Felin, Teppo et al. “Lean startup and the business model: Experimentation revisited,” *Long Range Planning*, online 29 June 2019.
Gambardella, Alfonso et al. “A Scientific Approach to Entrepreneurial Decision Making: Evidence From a Randomized Control Trial.” Forthcoming in *Management Science*; online SSRN 16 October 2018. .

Session 11. Product-Market Fit and Value Creation

- Guest: [Jackie Reses](#) W92; Capital Lead and People Lead, Square
- Read: University of Chicago Booth School of Business. "Entrepreneurs fare better if they resist the temptation to follow the crowd." *ScienceDaily*, 8 September 2016.
- Optional: E. G. Pontikes, W. P. Barnett. The Non-consensus Entrepreneur: Organizational Responses to Vital Events. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2016.

Session 12. Talent Management

- Guest: [Beth Axelrod](#) W85; VP of Employee Experience, Airbnb
- Read: Netflix. "Netflix Culture."

Airbnb. "Our diverse global community makes Airbnb possible" and "Belonging is at our core."
- Optional: Hannan, M. and J. Baron. Organizational Blueprints for Success in High-Tech Start-Ups: Lessons from the Stanford Project on Emerging Companies (2002). *California Management Review* 44 (2002) pp 8-36.

Session 13. Impact Investing

- Guest: Vivian Wu C94 W94; Managing Director of Ventures, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
- Read: Morgan Stanley. "Impact Investing." 2013.
- View: [Bridge International Academies](#), [Andela](#), [Newsela](#), [BYJU's](#)

Session 14. Conclusion

- Prepare: Executive summary template of group project learnings