

## **EE P 581: Entrepreneurship for Electrical and Computer Engineers: From Idea to Startup (4cr)**

**Instructor:** Gokul Nathan

**Email:** Gokuln@uw.edu

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Main Communication Platform:** Slack (Highly Encouraged)

**Lecture Time:** MW 4:30–6:20 PM

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### **Welcome Note**

This course welcomes all students, regardless of background or prior business experience. Entrepreneurship can be exciting, empowering, and sometimes a little overwhelming. Along the way, you will face ambiguity, celebrate wins, and make mistakes, all of which are part of the process. I am here to support you as you grow through both the challenges and the successes. Please feel free to reach out whenever you need help.

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### **Course Overview**

This course introduces technical students to the core principles of startup formation, product development, project management, and business strategy. Whether your goal is to found a technology venture, contribute to a rapidly growing startup, or lead technical teams, this course will help you develop the skills needed to move from idea to execution.

Topics include:

- Project management frameworks, including Agile, Lean, and Scrum
- Customer discovery and product-market fit
- Business model design and market validation
- Financial projections and funding strategies
- Startup equity and term sheets
- Team management and leadership
- Startup legal and operational logistics
- Pitching and investor communication

You will engage in case study discussions, simulation-based exercises, and a startup pitch project.

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## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Conduct market research and validate startup ideas
  - Build and test a minimum viable product (MVP)
  - Create a complete business model canvas
  - Plan and execute technical projects using Agile/Scrum
  - Develop financial projections and pitch materials
  - Understand startup equity, term sheets, and fundraising paths
  - Communicate effectively with teams, advisors, and investors
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## Grading Breakdown

- Homework & Project Deliverables: 40%
  - In-Class Team Exercises (ICTEs): 20%
  - Final Project & Startup Pitch: 40%
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## Assignments & Deadlines

- Homework Assignments: Submit all homework as PDFs through Canvas. Homework is due on **Friday at 11:59 PM**. On-time submissions receive up to a 5% bonus.
- Automatic Grace Period: Each assignment includes a built-in 24-hour grace period, allowing submission until **Saturday at 11:59 PM** with no penalty.
- No Additional Extensions: Any further extension requests will be automatically denied unless accompanied by a doctor's note or other formal documentation verifying a legitimate emergency.

Final project and pitch deadlines are strict. Please manage your time and your team accordingly.

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## Class Format

This course is conducted in person, and regular attendance is important for full participation in class exercises, startup workshops, and team-based collaboration. Zoom access will be provided for students who are unable to attend in person. However, this is not designed as a fully hybrid course, and opportunities for engagement over Zoom will be limited.

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## **Growth Mindset Reminder**

Entrepreneurship is about learning through experimentation. One assignment does not determine your intelligence, your ability, or your future potential. Mistakes are a normal part of growth. What matters most is how you reflect, adapt, and continue improving. Feedback is one of the most valuable tools for that process.

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## **Learning Groups**

You will work in teams for both the ICTEs and the final startup project. Collaboration with your peers is an essential part of the learning experience, and it is often where the most meaningful ideas take shape. Meet regularly, communicate clearly, and support one another as you work through challenges together.

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## **AI policy**

I encourage the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini, among others. These tools can be valuable for brainstorming, editing, research support, and refining your ideas. However, I do not want to see low effort AI generated work submitted as your own. I am evaluating your learning, your judgment, and your critical thinking, not the raw output of an AI system.

You are expected to work with AI as a tool, not rely on AI to do the work for you. Therefore, your submissions must still reflect your own thinking, decision making, and understanding of the material. For all homework, assignments, and major submissions, you must include an AI use statement describing how AI was used in your work. You should also be prepared to provide your chat history or interaction record if requested for audit purposes.

Failure to submit an AI use statement, or failure to provide supporting chat records when requested, will result in the assignment being capped at 25% for the first offense. Repeated violations may be referred to the academic discipline process.

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## **Mid-Quarter Feedback**

You will have an opportunity to complete a mid-quarter feedback form during the term. I will review and summarize what is working well, what may need attention, and any adjustments I plan to make. This process helps us co-create a stronger and more effective learning experience.

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## Weekly Topics Overview

- **Week 1:** Lean startup methodology and agile thinking
  - **Week 2:** Problem validation and market research
  - **Week 3:** Customer discovery and the business model canvas
  - **Week 4:** MVP design and product market fit
  - **Week 5:** Financials, budgeting, and revenue models
  - **Week 6:** Fundraising strategy and startup financing
  - **Week 7:** Startup equity and term sheets
  - **Week 8:** Pitch preparation and final presentation
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## Communication Guidelines

All course communication will take place through Slack. Canvas will be used for course materials and assignment submissions. If you have a question, please ask it in Slack, since others may have the same question as well. When appropriate, individual email questions will be redirected to Slack.

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## Inclusion, Access, and Support

This classroom is intended to be a space where all students feel welcome, safe, and valued. If you have accommodations through DRS, please notify me as early as possible so that we can support your needs effectively. If you are dealing with personal, financial, or mental health concerns, please let me know. I am happy to help connect you with available resources.

If you need a religious accommodation, please submit a request within the first two weeks using this [form](#).

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## Academic Integrity & Safety

- **SafeCampus:** 206-685-7233 for 24/7 safety and support
- **Academic Honesty:** We follow the University of Washington's Student Code of Conduct. Plagiarism, falsification, cheating, or other forms of academic misconduct will result in a zero on the assignment and formal reporting.