

SVENT 325 - Leading a Social Venture

Fall 2020

Brendan Wylie-Toal

Class size: 4

Used with Permission

This course is reserved for students with a demonstrated commitment to social innovation and experiential learning. SVENT 325 is a Student-Led Individually Created Course (SLICC), which is unlike most other courses at the University of Waterloo. The course instructor defines the learning outcomes. Then, each student proposes a custom plan for how they will achieve those outcomes through a set of entrepreneurial experiences and reflections. Instead of lecturing, the instructor provides mentorship and coaching as each student works through the course they have created for themselves.

The nature of the course allows students to create and define their own learning experiences and to engage in learning for learning's sake. The experiences students engage in are directly related to entrepreneurship and social innovation.

Instructor Consent Required

Instructor(s):

Brendan Wylie-Toal

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Office hours: Thursday from 10:00 am-1:00 PM (or by appointment)

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Time: By appointment	Resource Materials: Resource materials will be made available on LEARN and PebblePad
Location: Online	

Course Description

This is an experiential learning course offered by GreenHouse for students who have a demonstrated commitment to social entrepreneurship and social innovation. The course is focused on helping students develop the skills, mindsets, and competencies required to be successful in the development of social innovations. Unlike most courses, SVENT 325 is student-led. The instructor defines the learning outcomes to be achieved, but the student proposes how they will achieve them. Students are provided with guidance and coaching from the instructor and peers.

Entrepreneurship is an inherently self-directed, ambiguous, and variable process. To prepare students for this reality, there is a need to recreate some of these dimensions in the learning environment. That is one of the advantages of the way SVENT 325 is designed.

Another advantage of this course structure is that it gives you, the student, creative freedom around course design. There are no lectures, but rather coaching and mentoring. Also, you get to define what the course activities will be. This means you need to be prepared to think carefully about what you want to learn through the course, and why?

The general structure of the course is as follows:

1. Define a project to give your term some structure. The project can be anything, as long as it is related to entrepreneurship. For example, your project might be to develop and test a business model, or research a given problem to identify opportunities to create new products and services.
 - a. This project will provide the experience required to work on and achieve each of the 5 learning outcomes for the course. *Completing your project* is not the primary goal of the course. Rather, *using the project to develop knowledge, skills and mindsets* about entrepreneurship is the primary goal.
2. Develop a proposal for how you will use that experience to acquire new knowledge, develop new skills, cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, and improve your ability to manage and reflect on your development
3. Once approved by the instructor, start to execute on the proposal and self assess along the way through:
 - a. Weekly reflective blogs
 - b. Interim report
 - c. Final Reflective report

Students are required to take two introductory workshops, which will provide you with the understanding and tools required to complete the course effectively.

The five learning outcomes students need to achieve are described below, along with an example of how a student might approach each outcome based on the nature of the experience they've selected for themselves. To clarify the process, each student taking the course will propose for themselves how they will reach each of the following 5 outcomes. The proposed plan becomes the course syllabus for the student.

Learning Outcome 1: Conducting research and analysis

- What does this mean? It means you will be able to demonstrate how you have **actively developed** your understanding of social innovation and/or the topics related to the project you are working on.
- For example, a student participating in the Workplace Innovation Program will need to learn about how to manage needs-based innovation. The student could propose how their understanding of this management process will be developed, and why they are interested in learning about it.

Learning Outcome 2: Application of current skills and attributes to social innovation

- What does this mean? It means you will be able to draw on and **apply a range of relevant skills and attributes** (academic, professional and/or personal) to engage **effectively** with the project you're working on. By the end of the course, you should be able to **identify where** you need to improve and/or develop new skills and attributes
- For example, a student who is competing for funding may recognize that a proposal for funding or a start-up pitch requires the same critical thinking and communication skills that were required in some of the sales jobs the student has had. That student could then propose how those skills and experiences could be applied as part of the course to enhance the chances of getting funding.

Learning Outcome 3: Recognising and developing new skills

- What does this mean? It means that by the end of the course, you will be able to demonstrate how you have used your experiences during the term to **actively develop** a *new* skill set.
- For this outcome, you must select one skill from the University of Waterloo's Future Ready Talent Framework.
- For example, a student who is interested in creating a documentary to raise awareness about a poorly understood social issue may recognize the need to develop stronger technological agility. This student could then propose how they will go about actively developing relevant technical skills, such as video editing and digital storytelling, and why they are important to work required to create the documentary.

Learning Outcome 4: Recognising and developing entrepreneurial mindsets:

- What does this mean? It means you can demonstrate how you have used your experiences during the course to **actively explore** one of three entrepreneurial mindsets. The mindsets to select from are:
 - Self-starting and proactivity: You draw on your initiative and experience to take action without being told to do so. Paired with a reflective approach, you maximize your potential by taking personal responsibility for proactively goal setting and identifying opportunities to overcome barriers.
 - Positive outlook and perseverance: You draw on the quality, depth and breadth of your experiences to maintain a positive mindset and engage with the communities and world around you. You manage risk by learning from mistakes and actively seek new insights to help you better contribute positively, ethically and respectfully.

- Lifelong learning and long-term planning: You seek personal and academic learning that makes a positive difference to you and the world around you. You have a vision that is both inspiring and workable and can plan for the long-term learning and actions that will be required to realize such a vision.
- For example, a student interested in prototyping communication software to help people recovering from stroke may recognize that testing new ideas is fraught with setbacks, roadblocks, and multiple iterations. As a result, this student might propose that they will actively explore the positive outlook and perseverance mindset as a way to reframe the difficulties being encountered as learning opportunities rather than sources of frustration.

Learning Outcome 5: Reflection and evaluation

- What does this mean? It means you can **evaluate and critically reflect upon your approach**, your learning, and your development throughout the course.
- All students are required to submit twice-weekly updates on PebblePad that document:
 - Evidence of learning
 - How you are progressing concerning the proposal submitted
 - What is holding you back from progressing towards each of the learning outcomes, or how your plans are changing
- There is also a written report at the half-way point of the term, and a final report at the end. While students are required to complete these activities, they must include in their proposal what their evidence of learning might look like, and where it might come from. For each of the outcomes, the student should give several examples of ways in which learning and achievement of that outcome could be evidenced.
- For example
 - The student participating in the Workplace Innovation Program might decide to self evaluate their understanding of needs-based innovation at different points in the course as a way to gather evidence of progress towards outcome #1.
 - The student applying for funding might decide to keep a journal that documents the moments when the student reflected on their sales skills and used them to inform their proposal or pitch writing strategy for outcome #2.
 - The student creating the documentary might propose to recap key insights from LinkedIn Learning courses on documentaries and video editing as evidence of progress towards outcome #3.
 - Lastly, the student prototyping software might keep a record of times in which they had to actively reframe what felt like a failure or a set back as learning.

Course Evaluation

The course is pass (CR)/Fail (NCR). To pass the course, all required assignments must be satisfactorily completed and submitted on time. There are several required assignments for this course:

- A learning-outcome proposal
- Twice-weekly reflections (~20 total)
- A mid-term report
- A final report

You may also be asked to self-assess your work, as well as the work of your peers.

Learning Outcome Proposal

The first assignment that is due for this course is a proposal from the student that outlines how the student plans to achieve and document progress towards each of the five learning outcomes. A full assignment description will be provided separately.

This proposal allows the student to define how the course will be structured and allows them to define how progress will be tracked and assessed. This allows for the learning experience to be more genuine and tailored to each student's needs and stage of development. The proposal will be submitted to the instructor and needs to be approved before the assignment can be considered complete.

The proposal will be assessed both by the instructor and by the student. The self-assessment will not be reviewed until after the instructor has completed their assessment. In some cases, 3rd parties or peers may also be asked to assess the proposal.

The proposal will be due Sept 20th

Mid Term and Final Reports

For both the mid-term and final reports, students will be required to reflect on their progress towards achieving each of the five learning outcomes, as defined in their initial proposal. A complete assignment description will be provided separately.

To support both the midterm and final reflections, students will be required to showcase the results of weekly blogs/posts and reflections. The frequency, format, focus, and content of these posts will be described in the student's proposal. The posts need to include both written/recorded reflections, and evidence of learning.

Like with the proposal, the reports will be both self assessed by the student and assess by the instructor. A third party or peer may also be asked to complete an assessment. ***The mid-term report will be on on Oct 19th. The final report is due Dec 15th.*** Both can be submitted to the instructor by email.

Class Format

SVENT 325 is a mostly self-directed course, with instructor support and guidance provided throughout. While there are no required classes, the student is required to meet regularly with the instructor virtually/by phone. The focus of these meetings will be to review assignments and course deliverables, and to provide coaching and feedback to improve student learning.

Students are encouraged to attend twice weekly stand-up meetings. These meetings will last approximately 15-30min, and will help you connect with other students taking the course. The meetings will also allow you to get quick and frequent feedback from the course instructor.