Sociology 121: Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Spring 2011

Instructor: Szonja Ivester
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Lectures: Thursdays 5:00 – 8:00 pm
Lecture Hall: Room 159, Mulford Hall
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Course Description
The basic premise of this class is that sociology has a great deal to offer not only to the theoretical understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship, but also to entrepreneurship as a practical enterprise. This perspective, while popular in the early twentieth century, has gotten steadily lost in the entrepreneurial fervor of the 1980s as the study of entrepreneurship was passed almost exclusively into the hands of people in and around the business-school community. The objective of this class is to (re-) incorporate critical social analysis into the field. Throughout the semester, we will explore various ways in which the social sciences have provided fresh new insights into entrepreneurial behavior by placing innovation in its broader social, cultural, and cross-national contexts. Additionally, we will also look at entrepreneurship from the perspective of a much wider range of actors (classes, genders, racial and ethnic groups) than is typically done by the business community. By the end of the semester, you should have a firm grasp of what entrepreneurs do (the usual purview of modern business schools), as well as the causes of entrepreneurship and its cumulative effects.

Course Materials
The literature on innovation and entrepreneurship is vast, and it continues to grow rapidly. Not surprisingly, then, there is not a single textbook currently available that covers all the topics that I would like for us to explore in this class. For this reason, we have handpicked a broad range of articles, book chapters, and opinion pieces for you to read during the semester. From time to time, we will also use movie fragments, as well as brief contemporary videos on our way to learning about innovation and entrepreneurship. Together, these will cover a nice array of topics and should provide us with a diverse set of insights. All of the course materials will be available to you online at our bSpace website.
**Course Requirements**

You final grade in this course will be based on your performance on two in-class exams, 10 weekly commentaries, as well as on your participation in class.

**Two In-Class Exams:** There will be two in-class exams in this class. The first one of these will take place on Thursday, March 1st and it will cover materials in Weeks 1-6. The second exam will be on the last day of class, on Thursday, April 26th and it will cover materials in Weeks 8-14. In the case of each exam, we will provide you with four or five possible essay questions one week before the exam and, on the day, we will select one of these for you to answer in a closed book setting. You will need to bring your own blue/green exam book with you to these exams. (You can buy small exam books for about 35 cents at the Cal Student Store, 108 Martin Luther King Jr. Student Union #4505; telephone: 510.642.9000). The exams will start at 5 pm exactly in our usual classroom; you will be given 1 hour to write your essay. These in-class exams will jointly contribute towards 50% of your overall grade (with each exam being worth 25%).

**Weekly Commentaries:** Beginning with the third week of classes, you will be asked to answer a weekly substantive question about the readings. Your commentary should be about a paragraph long. We will not give you feedback on these commentaries, but we will grade them on the basis of effort (not correctness). In order to earn full points on these, you will need to demonstrate that you have completed the readings for the week and that you have thought about the issues at stake. There will be ten (10) such commentaries during the semester; each will be worth 3 points (or 3% of your total grade).

The purpose of this assignment is to make sure that you read the required materials before coming to class. As a result, commentaries are going to be time-sensitive. We will post the week’s question on Sunday night in your bSpace “Assignment” folder and ask that you submit your response electronically in the same folder by noon on Thursday. We will not accept late commentaries unless (1) you have a doctor’s notice that you were prevented from doing the commentary, or (2) you have secured permission from Szonja (by email) in advance of the submission deadline that a late submission would be accepted. In either case, you will earn only 1 point for you excused commentary instead of the usual 3.

**Class Participation:** This class meets once a week for 3 hours. In terms of its basic format, it will be a mixture of lectures and discussion. We will keep attendance starting in Week 3. This will be monitored through a series of one-minute papers. At some point during the lecture, we will ask you to take out a piece of binding paper, put your name (legibly!) on top, and write down a short answer to a question that relates to our class discussion. We will then collect these responses and use them to assign class participation grades. There will be ten (10) such one-minute papers during the semester, with each counting 2 points (or 2%) towards your overall grade.

We do not give credit for missed attendance unless (1) you have a doctor’s notice that you were prevented from being present, or (2) other valid excuse, for which you informed the
in advance of class. (It goes without saying that family/friends visiting you during the lecture, a birthday celebration, or a quick trip to Las Vegas will not be acceptable excuses.) In any case, excused absence will earn you only 1 point for attendance, as opposed to the full 2 points.

**Course Grades:** Your final grade in this class will be based on your performance on the two in-class exams (25% each), your weekly commentaries (30%), and the weekly one-minute papers to monitor class participation (20%). In assigning final grades, we do not “curve” the class. It is, therefore, entirely possible for everyone to get an A. Needless to say, it is also possible (although quite unlikely) for everyone to fail. In assigning final grades, we will use the following basic scheme:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 99%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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In this grade-inflated world of ours we are not opposed to the idea of awarding students an A+ for exceptional work. However, in order to earn such a grade, you will have to earn 100 points in this class. There will be no extra credit work assigned in Sociology 121, so your only way to secure these points is to turn in superior work throughout the semester.

**Class Website**

We have set up a bSpace website for the class. You can find here a copy of the syllabus, an electronic version of our class schedule, PDF files for all the readings (under “Resources”), handouts and lecture notes (also under “Resources”), as well as a place for you to submit your weekly commentaries (under “Assignments”). This is also where you will find announcements from us, and your grades. It is essential that you gain access to our class website as soon as possible because (1) all of our required readings reside at our class website and (2) your first assignment is an online assignment and it is due during the third week of classes.

How do you log in to bSpace? Log in to http://bspace.berkeley.edu with your CalNet ID and Passphrase. If you are enrolled through Telebears, you should see a tab at the top of the screen for our course when you log in. If you are enrolled in more than one course using bSpace you will, of course, see a tab for each course.

If you are a concurrent enrollment student you cannot be assigned bSpace access until the status of your application is “Approval Completed.” It is your responsibility to make sure that your application is reviewed and approved in a timely fashion. If you have questions about this, please email concurrent@unex.berkeley.edu.
**Course Timeline**

Thursday, January 19  
Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Introduction & Overview

Thursday, January 26  
A Rogue Sociologist Explores the Hidden Side of Capitalism

Thursday, February 2  
What is Innovation and Why Does it Matter? *We begin taking class attendance. First commentary is due by noon.*

Thursday, February 9  
The Social and Cultural Contexts of Innovation. *Second commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, February 16  
The Role of Social Networks in the Process of Innovation. *Third commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, February 23  

Thursday, March 1  
First In-Class Exam (covering Weeks 1 – 6)  
*Exam begins at 5 pm in our usual classroom. You will have one hour to complete your work. Don’t forget to bring your own blue/green exam book with you.*

Thursday, March 8  
Who is an Entrepreneur? *Fifth commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, March 15  
Class, Entrepreneurship, and the Underground Economy. *Sixth commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, March 22  
The Role of Gender in Entrepreneurship. *Seventh commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, March 29  
No Class: Spring Break

Thursday, April 5  
Race, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship. *Eighth commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, April 12  
Social Entrepreneurship. *Ninth commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, April 19  
Radical Innovation and Creative Destruction: Can Capitalism Survive? *Tenth commentary is due at noon.*

Thursday, April 26  
Second In-Class Exam (covering Weeks 8 – 14)  
*Exam begins at 5 pm in our usual classroom. You will have one hour to complete your work. Don’t forget to bring your own blue/green exam book with you.*
**Course Schedule and Weekly Readings**

In order to obtain the greatest benefit from classroom discussions, we strongly encourage you to complete the reading assignments before our class meets and definitely before the in-class exams.

**Week 01: Introduction and Overview**


**Week 02: Innovation and Entrepreneurship: A Rogue Sociologist’s Guide to the Hidden Side of Capitalism**


**Week 03: What is Innovation and Why Does It Matter?**


Week 04: The Social and Cultural Contexts of Innovation


Week 05: The Role of Social Networks in the Process of Innovation


Week 06: Innovation Cycles, National Innovation Systems & the Global Innovation Divide


**Week 07: First In-Class Exam**

**Week 08: Who Is an Entrepreneur?**


**Week 09: Class, Entrepreneurship, and the Underground Economy**


**Week 10: The Role of Gender in Entrepreneurship**


**Week 11: No Class – Spring Break**

**Week 12: Race, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship**


**Week 13: Social Entrepreneurship**

James Austin. 2009. “Social and Commercial Entrepreneurship: Same, Different, or Both?” Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice 30 (10); 1-22


**Week 14: Radical Innovation and Creative Destruction: Can Capitalism Survive?**


**Week 15: Second In-Class Examination**