Faculty: Thomas Debass | debass@gwu.edu | @debass

3.0 Credits  JUNE 11-19, 2021
Live Pre-course introductions and context setting Online: Friday June 11 (5pm-7pm)
Live Group Projects Overview Online: Sunday June 13 (1pm-3pm)
Live Online lectures and group sessions: June 16-19 (9am-12pm)
Live Online Guest Speakers: June 16-19 (1pm-5pm)

Course Description

“Resilience is all about being able to overcome the unexpected. Sustainability is about survival. The goal of resilience is to thrive.” – Jamais Cascio, Author

Business opportunities and startups often emerge in response to specific problems, demands, crisis, or gaps in the market. During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, businesses and startups have played an outsized role for stimulating economies and sustaining societies. Some innovative startups and businesses have acted as first responders to the pandemic, and have been critical in helping many communities pivot towards fully virtual work, education, and healthcare services, as well as innovating new business models designed to speed up recovery and build resilience.

This blended course, “Business & Society: Startup Resilience,” is designed to be a condensed graduate business course in exploring the role of startups and enterprises as enablers and builders of resilience. The course will offer a set of tools and practices that enable companies, organizations, or individuals to turn crisis, risks, and foresights into actionable opportunities. The course features literature review, case studies and trend examination conducted in online lectures coupled with discussions with successful founders, business leaders, and thought leaders from various backgrounds who have designed or launched resilient products, services, or initiatives during or in response to crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, natural disaster, social justice, etc.

After completing the course, students should be able to:

- generate startup ideas from crisis, trends, and uncertainties, evaluate them, and build prototypes.
- get comfortable with pivoting and reorienting business models and approaches to react to market dynamics, evolving trends, and uncertainties.
- understand ways how public policy encourages enterprise-friendly measures and practices in order to spur resiliency.
- build strategic partnerships to withstand market shocks, gain market share, and retain customers.
- Observe success stories and get inspired by other startups and entrepreneurs.
About Faculty:
Thomas Debass currently serves as Chief Partnerships Officer/Managing Director of the Office of Global Partnerships at the U.S. Department of State. Thomas leads the Department’s private sector engagement efforts and provides thought leadership on partnerships related to economic growth, global finance, entrepreneurship, and innovation. He regularly gives lectures and talks about the intersection of foreign policy, business, and society. Prior to joining the State Department, he was Lead Economist with the Development Finance Corporation (DFC – formerly known as OPIC) and a senior technical advisor with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Thomas is also founder of SmartPhilm, a multimedia venture to discover and showcase short-form contents that are entirely produced on smartphones and mobile devices. Thomas is a graduate of Virginia Tech with MA in Applied Economics and BA in Economics. He also has an Executive Certificate in International Business Management from Georgetown, Executive Leadership certificate from UC-Berkeley, as well as a Certificate in Futures Thinking and Strategic Foresight from Institute for the Future. Thomas is a 2020 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal Finalist; and a recipient of the 2016 D&D Wood Pencil Award for Innovative Use of Mobile Technology.

Course Material and Resources
The course includes a reading list, cases, and discussions by the professor, and speakers. Time is spent with the professor debriefing each talk and speaker to connect the discussions to the theory and practice development in the first (online) portion of the course. This course requires the use of the materials below. Additional course materials will be provided via blackboard including information on each visit and speaker. I may need to make discretionary changes to the assigned readings to accommodate the schedules of the speakers/visits and in order to meet course objectives.

Required Reading:
The Next Big Thing: Resilience

The emerging resilients: Achieving ‘escape velocity’

The Secret to Building Resilience
https://hbr.org/2021/01/the-secret-to-building-resilience

Building Organizational Resilience

4 ways governments can support start-ups and save their economies
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/4-ways-governments-can-support-start-ups-and-save-their-economies/

Meeting the future: Dynamic risk management for uncertain times

Suggested Reading: Articles
Governments, Don’t Let your Startups and Scaleups Die
https://startupgenome.com/reports/well_designed_funding_policy_crisis

Use these leadership strategies to prepare for a smart recovery post-pandemic
https://www.fastcompany.com/90598367/use-these-leadership-strategies-to-prepare-for-a-smart-recovery-post-pandemic

Focus on 5 areas for post-pandemic recovery

The Rise of Innovation Districts: A New Geography of Innovation in America
https://c24215cec6c97b637db6-9c0895f07c3474f6636f95b6bf3db172.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/content/metro-innovation-districts/~/media/programs/metro/images/innovation/innovationdistricts1.pdf

COVID-19 Reminds Us Why Innovation Is Often A Public Good

State governments as financiers of technology startups: Evidence from Michigan's R&D loan program

Taking Stock of the Benefit Corporation
https://scholarship.law.tamu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1184&context=lawreview

Strategies for the Development of Science, Technology and Innovation as a Public and Social Good

Grading Criteria & Requirements
The Faculty of the School of Business decided to implement a rigorous grade distribution format with limited numbers of students receiving high grades. The MBA Faculty Task Force recommends that the grade distribution of the class has an average of 3.2 and 3.4 and no more than 20% of the class receives a grade of A.

Grades for this course will be curved. That is, the points that you obtain for the course will be added up and sorted from high to low. Students who accumulated the most points will get an A. The cut-off points for A-, B+, B, B-, etc., will be determined in accordance with the MBA Faculty Task Force recommendations. In particular, no more than 20% of the class will receive an A, and the average grade of the class will range between 3.2 and 3.4.

There is no extra credit in this course. Late work will not be accepted.

Course Assignments and Due Dates
1) Participation - 20% grade - Due Date: Each class
Active participation during site visits, guest speakers, and class discussion is mandatory and will provide much of the learning in this course. It will be important to prepare for the discussions as well as the guest speakers in order to ask insightful questions. In order to get the most out of a case discussion, everyone must be ready, attentive, and participating.

Class participation will be based on the professor’s perceptions of your contribution to the course. It is a non-negotiable grade. It is the student’s responsibility to do their best to manage impressions of fellow class members. The student is free to query the professor at any time about his/her class participation quality and request suggestions/feedback for improvement.

Each class will assume that you have done all the readings, are prepared to discuss with your peers, and apply the materials during class learning activities. In order to receive a better grade, you must participate. Participation is graded based on attendance, your willingness to participate, demonstration of having prepared for class, and thoughtfulness of class participation. Participation grades are undercut by unprofessional behavior such as arriving late, doing other work in class, using a computer or phone to conduct personal business, etc.

2) Reflection Essays (individual) 30% grade - Due Date: Each Class
Students will submit a short reflection essay following each site visit and guest speaker (one per day). Each essay should demonstrate your insights gained from the site visit and speaker and should include a reference to the readings and cases we have covered in class. The essay will be graded based on the following:

• What surprised you about the speaker or the topic?
• How did the speaker link back to any of the cases or readings we have already covered?
• How did the speaker connect to any of the other speakers we have had?
• What questions did today open up for you around resiliency and venture building?

3) Peer Review (from your team mates)- 5% of grade - Due Date: Last Day
All students are responsible for being responsive to fellow team members’ communication, participating in group activities, contributing to the research and writing or designing of the group deliverables, and for turning in group assignments to Blackboard. The Peer Grade reflects a student’s participation in group assignments.

4) Group Startup Case Study – 45% of grade - Due Date: Last Day
The final project will be to write a case study on the resilience of a startup or company. The project can be performed with 3-5 students. The report will be 3-4 pages long accompanied by a multimedia rendering of the product or service. Students’ ability to apply course content to the case study will be tested and they must fully understand the startup, industry, risks and forces within the industry that can affect its survivability or future trajectory. All data must be sourced and cited.

**Proposed Course Structure**
Readings and assignments can be found on Blackboard. Please refer to Blackboard for the most
up-to-date schedule. Business casual attire required unless otherwise noted. Class and meeting attendance is required; final meetings to be determined once schedules are confirmed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to Course</td>
<td>To start, please complete the following tasks as soon as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. <strong>Post</strong> your bio and photo on the discussion tab</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Read</strong> the assigned readings before coming to class in June</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Participate</strong> - Log into our <em>Live Session on Friday, June 11, 2021 at 5:00pm-7:00 pm</em> to be introduced to the course. I will outline expectations, take questions, etc.</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Participate</strong> - Please log into our <em>Live Session on Sunday, June 13, 2021 at 1:00-3:30 pm</em> to be introduced to the group project. I will give a masterclass on the intersection of design and resilient thinking.</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Prepare</strong> your mind to be challenged and nudged to think differently.</td>
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<td>Online Course Dates</td>
<td>Please refer to the separate class itinerary for the 6/16-6/19, 2021 schedule (Forthcoming).</td>
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<td>Assume a full day of classes or meetings each day. Evenings should be reserved for group work. You must be on time for all meetings and classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 19, 2021</td>
<td><strong>Wrap up and FINAL GROUP Project Presentations</strong></td>
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**Course Policies**

*Portable Electronic Devices in the Classroom*
Many use laptops to help them take notes or reference the Internet as it relates to in-class discussion. However, no student is expected to be surfing the web, checking email, sending text messages, or working on other class assignments. Out of respect for the instructor and fellow classmates it is expected that you will use your laptops and other electronics judiciously. Bear in mind that cold-calling is fair game at any point during class. Participation grades will be impacted for any student who is unable to respond or who provides a far less than satisfactory response.

*Professional Conduct*
All students enrolled in Business and Society programs are representing the George Washington University and are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Students who fail to do so will receive a written warning and be subject to removal from class sessions and/or the project team.

*Academic Integrity*
The professor will strictly abide by the academic integrity policies as stated at [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html#definition](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html#definition). Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. **ANY ASSIGNMENT INCLUDING PLAGIARIZED MATERIAL (see Academic Integrity Code for definition) WILL RECEIVE AN F.** NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE.

*Late Assignments*
No late assignments will be accepted. Note that 5 minutes late constitutes a late assignment. Students are expected to make arrangements to hand in assignments prior to the deadline. If
you anticipate a course absence the day an assignment is due, you should plan to complete the
work ahead of time, turning in the assignment early via email. Alternative methods of
assignment submission should be sought prior to the class period. Failure to turn in assignments
before class will result in a zero for the assignment.

**Final Grades**
Final grades will reflect the student’s total points earned in the course. Students will be able to
track progress in the Blackboard gradebook. All grades are final. There will be no extra credit
offered in this course.

**Grading Disputes**
If a mistake occurs in grading, students are requested to submit a written request for a grade
change outlining what is believed to be the error in grading. I will respond back to you as soon as
possible in writing.

**Attendance**
Attendance and participation in both formal class meetings and required co-curricular
programming in Washington, DC are mandatory and will be evaluated strictly on an individual
basis. To receive a high grade in participation, you must come to class prepared and must
contribute frequently and with high-quality, substantive comments.

**Student Support**

**Disability Support Services**
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability
should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202.994.8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite
242 to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional
information please refer to: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss)

**Classroom Emergency Preparedness and Response Information**
Please consult the following link for GWU emergency procedures at
[http://gwired.gwu.edu/upd/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/upd/) as well as reference the important numbers below.

- GW Campus Police (Emergency) – 202.994.6111
- GW Campus Police (Non-Emergency) – Foggy Bottom – 202.994.6110

**Communication from the University**
GW Campus Advisories is the University’s primary method used for communicating incident-
related information, including class cancellations, to the GW community. Visit
[www.CampusAdvisories.gwu.edu](http://www.CampusAdvisories.gwu.edu) to sign up for Alert DC (text message alerts) and download GW
Alert (desktop notifications). In addition, the University posts recorded messages on the GW
Info line 202.994.5050.

**Modifications to the Syllabus**
This syllabus represents the best possible plan at this time. The instructor reserves the right to
make revisions to any item on this syllabus, including, but not limited to, any class policy, the
course outline and schedule, examination schedule, grading policy, required assessments, etc.
Changes will be announced on Blackboard.