BSN3703 Entrepreneurial Strategy
AY2025/2026 Semester 2

Instructor: Adjunct Associate Professor Shivendu Nadkarni
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Seminar Time: Mondays 0830 to 1130
Seminar Venue: BIZ1 02-05
TA: To be announced

COURSE DESCRIPTION
There is really no single algorithm that can guarantee or predict the success or failure of businesses in general or entrepreneurship in particular. In the recent couple of decades, the confluence of 3 key factors has re-ignited broad-based interest and passion in Entrepreneurship (1) increased inter-connected nature of markets including flow of information, talent, goods/services & capital; (2) the maturing of developed economies with stable levels of basic income/health/education; & (3) a burgeoning middle-class in emerging economies – majority of whom are in Asia/Africa. This course explores 2 key strategy frameworks that all Entrepreneurs will need to start & guide their business through dynamic & uncertain environments.

The 1st strategy framework introduces 3 core dimensions that Entrepreneurs need to embrace & put into everyday practice to concurrently increase their odds of success and reduce their odds of failure:
- Making Internally Consistent Choices in Strategy = Business Model = 'Thinking'
- Iterating Past Constraints in the Eco-System = Execution = 'Doing'
- Creating Magic that Pulls at Stakeholder Heart-strings = Vision & Culture = 'Feeling'.

The 2nd strategy framework lays down the 3 critical pillars that help Entrepreneurs to stay on-track as they try to establish & scale any business:
- The Short-Term Commercial Pillar that drives Demand/Revenue
- The Short-Term Technical Pillar that drives the Supply Chain/Costs/Cash
- The Long-Term Viability Pillar that drives Financial/Compliance/Innovation.

Students will leave the course with their own 'playbooks' created over the duration of this course to use beyond graduation:
- armed with both conceptual frameworks & practical knowledge for becoming successful entrepreneurs/intrapreneurs based on the seminars & case-studies,
- having put into practice this knowledge to create a real-life business plan for a start-up – with the potential to continue their journey via access to NUS-Enterprise programs (e.g. LLP/NOC/GRIP, etc),
- rich face-to-face interactions with experienced real-life entrepreneurs/intrapreneurs on their personal stories & experiences

LEARNING OUTCOMES
This course exposes students to the inter-connected & ambiguous nature of decision-making that entrepreneurs face as they operate in dynamic & uncertain competitive landscapes. Often the "correct" strategic responses are not always clear and hence 'continuous iteration' to reach 'internally consistent sweet-spots' is often critical to surviving & thriving. Students will be equipped with strategy frameworks & practical tools to evaluate and start their own business.

After completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- understand that the eco-system/context they choose to operate in often create critical tailwinds/headwinds that impact setting-up of an entrepreneurial venture
- create a robust business plan for a start-up which needs to anticipate & cover key aspects of all 3 critical business pillars – Short-Term Commercial (Demand/Revenue), Short-Term Technical (Supply Chain/Costs/Cash) & Long-Term Viability (Financial/Compliance/Innovation)
- intuitively iterate on all 3 core dimensions critical to increase odds of success/reduce odds of failure – Business Model Choices/Thinking, Executional Constraints/Doing, Vision & Culture Magic/Feeling

READINGS
Optional Reference Textbook: The Start-Up Owner's Manual, The Step-by-Step Guide for Building a Great Company **by Steve Blank & Bob Dorf**

Mandatory Cases & Readings will be shared from time to time with announcements/links uploaded onto Canvas. As such, majority of lessons learned will be through **class participation and discussion not only with your instructor (me) but also your peers & project teams + actively working on your start-up projects**.

The above reference textbook – Start-Up User's Manual - will be particularly useful for those students who are keen to learn more & deep-dive on particular topics – and should discuss directly with me & the TA for further optional readings, podcasts & industry contacts.

ASSESSMENTS

Component	Weight
Engagement – Seminars, Guest Lectures, Canvas/In-Class Tasks (Individual)	20%
Start-Up Project – Consults, Pitch, Final Plan & Peer Feedback (Group)	50%
Synthesis – Case Study & Entrepreneurship Playbook (Individual)	30%
Total	**100%**

EVALUATION COMPONENTS
Engagement (Individual). You will be exposed to frameworks, articles, examples, case studies, real-life experiences from guest speakers will require curiosity to continually engage, discuss/debate and reflect to learn and build on the week's topics. This will challenge you to creatively think beyond theories, readings and lecture materials. Participation is not only important – but critical - for learning how to internalize the topics, organize your own thinking & reacting to the ongoing discussions.

You will often feel challenged by your fellow students or me & how you respond to these situations is an essential part of learning to 'think on your feet' as well as the 'art of intellectual engagement'. Participation also helps you learn from each other another. As such, you should not worry about making mistakes or be critical of others who make mistakes as this is a key learning process in the business world where there are very few absolute right/wrong answers. Building-off each-others' points-of-view/ideas & bouncing back from mistakes builds creativity & resilience. To enable this - constructive, respectful debate between students is strongly encouraged.

Both quality and relevance of participation are more important than quantity, although quantity does matter as well. Effective class participation is based on relevant, insightful and appropriately timed comments. Every participant is a co-producer of an effective class discussion, so please listen carefully to one another and attempt to build on or constructively critique prior comments.

Start-Up Project (Group). You will be part of a project team of 4-6 members, which will be finalized by the end of Week 2. The team will build a 'real-life' start-up business plan as a key course deliverable through the

duration of the semester & apply the learnings from the seminars, materials, guest lectures, course discussions & hands-on team consults by me. The project will be evaluated on a combination of content quality, learning agility, teamwork & progress (timeliness, discipline, iterations) across all these 4 parameters throughout the semester.

The content quality will be judged based on the regular project progress reviews & the final business plan + presentation that is pitched at the end of the semester to "seek seed funding from potential investors".

Each team will make their final "pitch" as project presentations in Week 12. The team presentation will be 5-10 minutes in length followed by a 5–10-minute Q&A to defend their views to the "investor panel" of experts. The group will then have an opportunity to iterate on the feedback before final project submission.

Synthesis (Individual). The course will introduce 2 cases over the semester. These will be take-home cases, to be completed as Individuals over a 1–2-week period. Case performance evaluation will depend on your individual performance & ability to defend your views in the class discussion. Apart from the Case studies – the key synthesis will be creating your own 'Entrepreneurship Playbook' based on your cumulative learning & experiences from the entire course over 13 weeks. More details on both will be given in class.

TEACHING MODES

This course will be conducted via weekly 3-hour seminars; including ~90-minute guest lectures from practicing & experienced Entrepreneurs/Intrapreneurs/Investors included into some of the seminars.

The seminars will take place every Monday mornings 0830-1130 at Biz1/#02-05. Seminars will begin at 0835 sharp and will target to end around ~10 minutes before the scheduled ending time. Most guest lectures will likely take place during the 10-11:30 slot unless announced otherwise. There will be a ~10-minute logical break during each seminar. The 1st 2 seminars will be relatively theory-heavy after which the 1st half of the term will start becoming application-oriented while the 2nd half term will be extremely project/hands-on application/immersion-interaction experience-heavy.

PDFs of slides will be posted on Canvas after the seminar, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Cases, reference materials & announcements will also be posted to from time-to-time.

COMMUNICATION

The course design is both straight-forward & self-explanatory as outlined below. The most effective means of communication through the semester will be a combination of (a) discussion with your own classmates &/or project teams; and (b) email or face-to-face communications with me. I will usually respond to emails within a couple of days & will generally be available after the Seminar for face-to-face meet-ups ~30min after each seminar at the NUS campus. Please also feel free to contact me anytime via email or in person just before/after class, if you have any questions about the materials, project or assessments, or any other course-related matters.

SCHEDULE & OUTLINE
(Subject to change based on Guest Speaker availability)

Week	Date	Topic	Activity (preparation / cases & assignments / follow-up readings & resources)
1	12Jan	Introductions & Strategy Frameworks	
2	19Jan	Deepdive into Strategy Frameworks	Start-Up Project Team & Idea Development
3	26Jan	Start-Up Project Idea – Team Presentations	Start-Up Project Fieldwork Start
4	02Feb	Start-Up Project 1st Team Consults (Virtual)	Case Study #1 Pre-Read/Iteration from Feedback
5	09Feb	Case Study #1 & Guest Speaker #1	HBR Team Articles Allocations
6	16Feb	CNY Public Holiday – No Seminar	
Recess	23Feb		Case Study #1 Submission, HBR Presentation Prep
7	02Mar	HBR Article Presntn.#1 & Guest Speaker #2	
8	09Mar	HBR Article Presntn.#2 & Guest Speaker #3	
9	16Mar	Start-Up Project 2nd Team Consults (Virtual)	Wrap-Up Fieldwork Planning
10	23Mar	Fieldwork Completion – No Seminar	Case Study #2 Pre-Read
11	30Mar	Case Study #2 & Guest Speaker #4	Final Pitch Preparation
12	06Apr	Pitch to Investor Panel	Pitch Panel Reflections + HBR Articles Pre-Read
13	13Apr	Wrap-Up, HBR Summaries, Guest Debrief	Prepare Final Submissions – Playbook & Project
14	20Apr		Final Canvas Submissions

PROFILE OF INSTRUCTOR

Shivendu Nadkarni is Adjunct Associate Professor in Department of Strategy & Policy at NUS Business School since 2019 and his area of expertise & passion translate into various courses in 3 key evergreen focus areas: Strategy, Innovation & Internationalization – each under-pinned by relevant leadership mindsets needed to survive-thrive-transform in an ever-changing environment.

Shiv is a seasoned FMCG industry veteran with nearly 3 decades of hands-on experience across Asia-Pacific, Middle-East & Africa and a successful track record of multiple business leadership roles & organizational transformations in a wide variety of contexts, categories & markets across multiple cultures & stakeholder models. As an experienced business leader, Shiv brings rich practitioner insights & learnings across breadth and depth of business strategy & operations, financial value creation & results delivery as well as multi-cultural effectiveness for organization leadership & stakeholder influence.

Shiv is now well into his 'second career' as a 'human-capital catalyst' – as educator to students & executives, as Advisor-mentor to small business leaders & founders, as author-researcher & practitioner of Ikigai journeys. Shiv is passionate about whole-heartedly 'giving back' with a conscious focus on nurturing human capital to inspire & catalyse transformations & paradigm shifts for sustained human, social & economic impact across generations. Shiv's mission on Ikigai365 is to help every human keep (re)discovering their own personal sources of 'feeling alive & fulfilled'. He believes that everyone can shape their own life journeys every day and leave impactful legacies for future generations.

Shiv graduated from the Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences (BITS), Pilani in India with an MSc (Tech.) degree; after which he completed his MBA from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Calcutta with specialization in Strategy & Marketing. After spending about a decade in Japan, Shiv & his family have made Singapore 'home' for almost 15 years. Shiv speaks fluent Japanese along with 3 other Indian languages (Hindi, Tamil & Marathi) and is now learning Mandarin.

Shiv has lived & worked in very diverse global environments – growing up in multiple regions of India before working a decade in Japan and then leading regional businesses based out of Singapore for a decade. Shiv enjoys travelling in nature and exploring the history & origins of 'everything'. His perspectives on all things human, societal, and business evolves everyday as he observes life stories and learns from interactions with many different people from all corners of the world and various walks of life.

LinkedIn profile is below

Shivendu Nadkarni
Advisor | Professor | Author || Ikigai365

ACADEMIC HONESTY & PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity and honesty is essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold academic integrity & honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, or failure to acknowledge the source, or falsification of information, or inaccuracy of statements, or cheating at examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is 'the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own' (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School will not condone plagiarism.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT do not require specialist knowledge to use. Many of these AI tools are commonly used in social media, for example, to create content and disguise and refine content created from programmes like ChatGPT. We understand that students will be drawn to using these AI Tools, as they would for any other electronic aid.

However, to be clear, normal academic rules still apply. As noted in the Code of Student Conduct:
> "*The University takes a strict view of cheating in any form, deceptive fabrication, plagiarism and violation of intellectual property and copyright laws. Any student who is found to have engaged in such misconduct is subject to disciplinary action by the University.*"

With respect to AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools), your instructor will clarify whether the use of these tools as inputs into your assignment development process is acceptable. AI is a technology that requires skill to use, and knowledge about when and how to use it. If you use ChatGPT or any other such AI tool in your work, you must provide a proper representation of how you used the tool and what prompts you used to generate output. Failure to cite its use constitutes academic misconduct.

Further, as with any information source, be aware that minimal efforts yield low quality results. You will need to refine your work and fact check the output, as you would double-check information from any source. Further, you should be selective in how and when you use such tools instead of using it for each and every assignment you create.

To summarise:
1. Always check with your instructors on what are the permitted uses of AI tools.
2. Have a discussion at the start of a course about the use of AI.

3. Where permitted, acknowledge your use of AI.
4. You remain responsible for the quality of your work and its appropriate representation.
5. Failure to follow the above steps can lead to a concern about plagiarism (academic dishonesty).

As always, you have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which is your own work, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard.

Additional guidance can be found at:
Admission Condition: http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/administrative-policies-procedures/acceptance-record#NUSCodeofStudentConduct
NUS Code of Student Conduct: http://nus.edu.sg/osa/resources/code-of-student-conduct
Academic Integrity Essentials: https://libguides.nus.edu.sg/new2nus/acadintegrity#s-lib-ctab-22144949-4
Guidelines on the Use of AI Tools For Academic Work: https://libguides.nus.edu.sg/new2nus/acadintegrity#s-lib-ctab-22144949-3