2019 Syllabus - Cosi 102a

Instructors | Pito Salas
Class Times | Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30 to 4:50pm
Location | TBD
On-demand office Hours | http://www.calendly.com/pitosalas/ftf
Prerequisites | None, but Sophomore standing required
Homework | Daily homework assignments; major term project; team assignments. Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.)
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Introduction

The most common trap that we all fall into when we become enamored with a new product or business idea is to assume that our own personal experience and intuition is a valid measure of the likelihood of success. At the highest level then, this course is about thinking, measuring and experimenting, before taking the leap to start implementation.

Over the semester, students will be exposed to key ideas, theories, and techniques that can be brought to bear in the earliest phase of a startup project, before funding and before implementation. The course is organized around extensive, hands-on application of these tools, where students will work in teams to drive towards a fully realized product concept, prototype, market validation and business plan.

The course takes the perspective of the ‘technical co-founder’ of a computing startup. Being a technical co-founder requires, beyond computer science and
programming chops, a diverse set of other skills and perspectives.

Course Themes

1. **The Lean Startup**: A specific set of concepts, framework, theory and methodology to be applied to sort through product-market-fit, to help the entrepreneur steer the early work on a path to commercial success. While the Lean Startup framework is not the only one around, it is at present well respected among the computing related startup community. Not all students think of themselves as Entrepreneurs. The experience of this course will allow them to get a better sense of this and experience in a way what it would be like to pursue this direction.

2. **Entrepreneurship**: While this is not a business course per se, there are a number of foundational concepts that every technical co-founder and software entrepreneur needs to be familiar with. We will cover the basics of finance, product pricing, venture capital and funding.

3. **On the ground experience**: Central to the way this course works is that all students will be applying what they learn directly to the validation of a real product. In fact they will do this twice. Once, quickly, working on a specific product idea we supply. And then we will go through the whole lean startup process a second time, more gradually, on a product or business concept of their own devising.

4. **Project and Team Work**: No matter what direction a student ends up pursuing, we believe that the great majority of worthy endeavors are the result of team's collaboration. Therefore we put a high value on being successful working on a team for a major product. Teams invariably experience challenges in setting and agreeing on goals, making and meeting mutual commitments, accepting team members’ diversity of interest, talent, motivation. These will all be occasions for learning and improving students success.

Experiential Learning

This is an experiential learning course! You will be working in teams and discovering what that’s like, and how to be effective in that kind of setting. It’s something that will definitely come up in your future work, no matter what direction you take: business, academia, non profits, government, or entrepreneurship. You can count on learning from the challenges, obstacles and successes you encounter.

You will also be asked to be very self-reliant, figuring out things on your own, having to use the web to research tools and techniques to use, sorting through the noise and finding the best solutions. Everything will not be served up on a
silver platter. You can count on developing your self confidence and perseverance and hopefully come to see the value of this in your future.

Overall you will be asked to think about what you are learning from these experiences, what you could apply in the future, and how this course may influence the way you think about what you want to do next.

Change Policy

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus and the associated curriculum web site if he deems it necessary. Any changes will either be announced in class or through e-mail. All students are responsible for finding out about such changes. Each student must be aware that not all assignments are listed in the syllabus. Students must use their common sense and not look for loopholes in the syllabus because, ultimately, the instructor has the final say in all matters. If you are confused on any assignment, ask the instructor for clarification.

By deciding to stay in this course, you are agreeing to all parts of this syllabus. In fairness to everyone, the syllabus must apply equally to all students without exception.

Grading

The final grade in this course will reflect my assessment of your performance in the course. This includes your participation; your mastery of the key learning objectives; your demonstration this both in written form and in code (if applicable); your application of what you've learned to working on a team; building an interesting product; and communicating what you achieved at the end of the semester.

Individual assignments are scored and weighted (see below), and used to determine class rank which in turn is used to determine your grade. Note that you will not get a numeric “final score”, just a final grade. I will follow the guidelines from the University Bulletin:

- A -> High Distinction
- B -> Distinction
- C -> Satisfactory
- D -> Passing, but Unsatisfactory

Marks for assignments

Throughout the semester, there will be homeworks, assigments, presentations, quizes etc., small and large. Those assignments are all given a 0-100 mark in Latte.
NOTE: You have a maximum 3 weeks after a mark has been posted to call our attention to a possible error, oversight or misunderstanding. That is your responsibility. After that, the mark as recorded in Latte will not be changed. 

NOTE: All written assignments should be in pdf format, with your name and assignment number at the top. This is to maintain the sanity of your instructors as we sort through the submissions. 20 points are deducted for non-pdf submissions, and another 20 for submissions without your name at the top.