



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

PROF. ALESSANDRO PALMARIN

Course description

The global economic crisis has threatened the accessibility of youth to easy-to-get and secure job positions in large, multinational companies. Such a rest in the labour market does constitute a major challenge in the Italian context. Within such a difficult context, entrepreneurship is emerging as one of the most powerful responses as an effective and valuable professional career alternative. The entrepreneurial process and its main output – the creation of Small and Medium Enterprises – are at the core of this course. During the course students will discuss case studies of international start-ups and firms to get familiarity with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, initiatives and deepen their understanding of possible business models alternatives. Moreover, in order to get a more intensive experience in entrepreneurship, two guests will be invited to handle webinars around business model innovation and business opportunity identification. This course leverages on great interaction, which is enhanced through in-and-out-of-class-assignments and discussion.

The learning goals of the course are:

- (a) to explore the main dimensions of entrepreneurship;
- (b) to point out the main issues related to running a business, with a specific focus on SMEs;
- (c) to get familiar with the main dimensions of a successful business model.

Course requirements

- (a) Students are expected to regularly attend class sessions and to actively take part in class debate and case discussions; Students are expected to be prepared on the assigned readings;
- (b) Students are expected to deliver one group assignments and present it to the class.

Course readings and materials

All the readings and lecturer's slides will be available

Evaluation and Grading

Class participation	25% of final grade
Individual assignment + presentation	60% of final grade
Assignment delivery in time	15 % of final grade



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Rules of conduct

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Unexcused absences will prevent students from being admitted to the final exam. In case of health issues, students will need to inform both UCSC International Office (at international.advisor@unicatt.it) and the professor and provide a medical certificate.

Should students, for Covid-related issues, be prevented from traveling to Milan and taking in-person courses, but still would like to join the program, Università Cattolica will decide on a case by case basis whether or not the student will be authorized to join virtually.

Attendance will still be mandatory for all classes (exceptions to this rule will only be made for students who find themselves in a time zone that complicates live participation and if the course allows for asynchronous access to course content). Students attending live streaming must activate microphone and camera unless otherwise specified by the instructors.

Company visits (when in-person) will be substituted with an alternative academic activity

Exam Date: The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, the student must submit a medical certificate and communicate his/her absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, the student will receive an automatic Failed.

Bio of the instructor

Alessandro Palmarin is an entrepreneur and the founder of NIO Cocktails, a company created with the aim of democratizing high mixology through premium quality pre-mixed cocktails, with in an innovative pack designed by him. Under his leadership, the company became international, selling over 2.5 million cocktails in more than 20 countries by 2023, and at the end of the same year he sold control of NIO Cocktails and its shares to one of the giants of the beverage industry, maintaining the role of Board Advisor.

Alessandro graduated in Economics at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, and worked for several international companies (such as Calzedonia Group in Italy and abroad, Levi, Vodafone and Swarovski) in management and leadership positions.

He is a speaker and lecturer at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, SDA Bocconi and USI – Università della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano.



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

SCHEDULE

Lesson 1: Course overview, introduction to entrepreneurship and opportunity recognition

Tuesday, January 7, 2025

2pm – 6pm

Topics:

- **Introduction and Course Overview:** Objectives, structure, and evaluation methods
- **Student Introductions and Presentations**
- **Entrepreneurship as a Product of Human Evolution:** Historical context and development
- **The Current Entrepreneurial Landscape:** Key environmental factors shaping entrepreneurs today
- **Defining the Modern Entrepreneur:** Characteristics, roles, and relevance in contemporary society
- **Understanding Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** Their nature and significance
- **Identifying and Categorizing Opportunities:** Sources and types of entrepreneurial opportunities
- **Industries Favorable to Startups:** Sectors with high potential for new businesses
- **The Role of Technology and Social Change:** How innovation and societal shifts create new opportunities

Recommended readings:

Cognitive mechanisms in entrepreneurship, by Baron

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, Harvill Secker, 2014

Class assignment:

Identify / select among those provided by the lecturer a business opportunity

List main changes and trends in the industry: demand, customers, technology etc

Identify how new technologies and social changes might affect these industries

Lesson 2: global trends and introduction to business model design

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

10 AM – 1.00 PM | 2.30 PM – 5.30 PM

Topics:

- **Macro-Economic and Technological Trends:** Exploring Industry 4.0 and its impact on entrepreneurship
- **The Purpose of Business:** Socio-economic integration and the role of businesses in society
- **Understanding Business Models:** Definition, components, and significance in entrepreneurial ventures
- **Using Business Models Effectively:** When, why, and how to apply business models in the entrepreneurial process
- **Introduction to the Business Model Canvas:** Overview and practical applications for designing business strategies

Recommended readings:

- Why the Lean Start-up Changes Everything, by Steve Blank

Guest Speaker:

11am - 1pm

Guest Speaker: **Marco Mottolese** – Founder Foorban Srl



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Lesson 3: Value proposition design and customer development process

Thursday, January 9, 2025

9.30 AM – 1.30 AM

Topics:

- **Value Proposition design:** create a clear and compelling value proposition by understanding customer needs, pains, and desired gains through the **Value Proposition Canvas**.
- **Customer Development Process (CDP):** Follow the four stages: **Customer Discovery**, **Customer Validation**, **Customer Creation**, and **Company Building** to systematically validate and grow a business.
- **Iteration and Experimentation:** Use customer feedback and agile methods to refine your value proposition and achieve product-market fit, pivoting when necessary
- **Practical Tools and Applications:** Utilize frameworks like the **Value Proposition Canvas**, **Business Model Canvas**, and **Lean Startup Methodology** to design and validate sustainable business ideas

Recommended readings:

- Market + Sizing + Overview, by International Finance Corporation
- Value Proposition, by A. Osterwalder and Y. Pigneur
- The Customer Centricity Playbook, by Fader and TomsGroup work

Group work:

- Design the value proposition canvas and your customer development process

Guest Speaker:

11am – 1pm

Guest Speaker: **Giulia Baroni** – Founder BOOBS Srl

Lesson 4: OFF Site Visit – Railroad Brewery & StradaFerrata Distillery

Friday, January 10, 2025

1.00 PM – 5.30 PM

Factory Visit (2.00 PM – 5.30 PM)

Railroad Brewing Company & StradaFerrata Distillery

Via Montello 43, Seregno, MB

Topic: Startup of a new business



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Lesson 5: Off-Site Visit & Lesson

Monday, January 13, 2025

10.00 AM – 1.00 PM | 2.30 PM – 5.30 PM

Store Visit (10am-12pm)

Giusti 1605 – Milan Boutique

Via Spadari 6, Milan (MM Duomo)

Topic: Acetaia Giusti, History & Business Case

Claudio Stefani, CEO Acetaia Giusti @Showroom Giusti, via Spadari Milano

2 pm – 6 pm : Debrief of the visit in the classroom

Topics:

- Activities, resources, partners, and revenue streams
- The difference between the **Product Side & the Market side**
- Identifying product value: **value proposition and competitive advantage**
- **Structure and roles of key team and operational clarity:** challenges, task delivery, roles and responsibilities
- **Cross-functional collaboration and integration** with corporate strategy
- **Measure product performance**

Lesson 6: Blue ocean strategy and competitor analysis

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

10 AM – 1.00 PM | 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM

Topics:

- **Blue ocean strategy:** Focus on creating new, uncontested market spaces rather than competing in saturated markets
- **Value Innovation:** Achieve differentiation and cost leadership by eliminating, reducing, raising, and creating unique value factors
- **Strategy Canvas:** Visualize industry competition and design strategies that stand out from competitors
- **Competitor Analysis:** Use tools like SWOT analysis and Porter's Five Forces to assess market dynamics and competitive positioning
- **Integration of Strategies:** Leverage competitor insights to identify opportunities for innovation and move from red oceans to blue oceans

Recommended readings:

- SWOT and Generic Strategies: Starting with a View from the Top, by Braun and Latham
- Blue Ocean Strategy: From Theory to Practice, by Kim & Mauborgne

Business Case Analysis

- **NIO COCKTAILS & Premixed Cocktails:** new, uncontested market by offering high-quality, pre-mixed cocktails that combine the convenience of home with the premium bar experience, differentiating itself from traditional competitors without directly competing.



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Lesson 7: Financial planning and investors overview

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

10 AM – 1.00 PM | 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM

Topics:

- **Financial Planning:** how to manage money and resources for a business
- **Key Components of Financial Planning:** Budgeting, Forecasting, Cash Flow Management
- **Types of Investors:** Angel Investors, Venture Capitalists, Crowdfunding, Institutional Actors
- **Financial analysis:** break-even point
- **What Investors Look For**

Guest Speaker (11 AM – 1 PM):

Guest Speaker: Mirko Brignani – CEO LabGo Srl

How, when, and why to raise the funds needed for growth

Guest Lecture: *Billy Roberto Andrade Garcia,*

Agile Techniques for Project Proposals, Business Model Canvas, and Presenting Business Ideas to Secure Funding

Lesson 8: From business model to business plan, building the future strategy

Thursday, January 16, 2025

10.00 AM – 1.00 PM | 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM

Topics:

- **Transitioning Business Model to a Business Plan:** Refine the Business Model, Set Clear Goals, Detail the Strategy, Include Financial Projections
- **How, when, and why** we use a business plan
- **Components of a Comprehensive Business Plan**
- **Strategic Planning and Future-Proofing:** help businesses stay competitive, resilient, and adaptable in a rapidly evolving world

Afternoon session dedicated to group work for preparing final assignments

Recommended readings:

- *Business Model Generation* by Alexander Osterwalder.
- *The Lean Startup* by Eric Ries.

Lesson 10: Presentation of groupwork and summary of the course

Friday, January 17, 2025

10 AM – 1 PM | 2.30 PM – 4.30 PM

Topics:

- Students present their Assignments
- Conclusion of the course
- Feedback from students