

MGMT8920 SYLLABUS – Fall 2025

**Facilitated by The Mack Institute for Innovation
Management The Wharton School | University of
Pennsylvania**

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Course Load:	1 cu
Class Time and Format:	See Course Schedule Virtual
TAs:	TBD
Office Hours:	By appointment

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

MGMT8920 presents an exceptional opportunity for hands-on learning through a real-world innovation project, in partnership with the Mack Institute's industry collaborator. You'll work closely with one of the Institute's global partners to craft frameworks and strategize for navigating innovation challenges and opportunities emerging from new technologies and markets.

This course aims to:

- Deepen your understanding of innovation and managerial challenges within large corporations.
- Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Enhance your abilities in research and analysis.
- Fine-tune your communication and teamwork skills.
- Gain exposure to industry leaders and real-world innovation challenges.

B. COURSE EXPECTATIONS and PROCESSES Effective teamwork is essential in this course. Teams are required to work cohesively and maintain active communication with their project sponsor (corporate partner). Regular interactions with the sponsor throughout the semester are crucial for discussing progress and seeking further information or guidance. It's important to keep these communications frequent to ensure your work aligns with the project's direction and to avoid any end-of-semester surprises. Additionally, each team member is

This course has a 'No Drop' policy, which means you are *NOT permitted to drop* the course once you have been assigned a team and registered.

The course is divided into four main parts:

- Identifying the problem, understanding the sponsor's expectations and defining the project scope in collaboration with the client.
- Assessing the problem, envisioning the desired outcome, and determining action points and timelines.
- Conducting necessary research, interviews, and analyses, and developing recommendations or solutions. This stage includes ongoing interactions with the sponsor, the alumni network, and Wharton Faculty.
- Presenting their findings and proposed solutions to the sponsor through mid-term and final presentations.

The faculty, Mack Institute Associate Director, and TAs will assist in refining content and deliverables for the projects. Research guidance can be provided where necessary. You are encouraged to utilize the virtual office hours or email the faculty with the TAs copied for any help/concern/guidance.

C. DELIVERABLES and TIMELINES

The course has the following deliverables:

1. Scope of Work & Timeline with deliverables, action items, milestones and team liaison assignments
2. Mid-point presentation (draft and final version)
3. Final presentation (draft and final version)
4. Final paper (draft and final version)
5. Peer evaluations

Activity	Weeks	Duration
Scoping and faculty meetings; Scope of Work, Timeline and Team Liaison Member assignments due	Week 1-2	2 weeks
Project progress check-in (team meetings)	Week 3 – 7	5 weeks
Mid-point presentation	Week 8 – 9	2 weeks
Project progress check-in (team meetings)	Week 10 – 14	5 weeks
Final presentation, final paper and peer evaluations due	Week 15 – 16	2 weeks
Total Working Weeks		16 weeks

Deliverables that are due to the sponsor can be sent via email, but deliverables due to the faculty must be submitted via Canvas. **The Mack Institute and your team's TA must be copied on all correspondence and meetings with sponsors to ensure proper oversight.** Templates for deliverables are found in the 'Files' tab on Canvas. Deadlines and other dates can be found at the end of this document as well as on Canvas under the Assignments page.

Initial Meetings and Assignments

Assigning Liaison Role: Each team must appoint a 'Liaison' as the sole point of contact for sponsor interactions. This Liaison will coordinate all team meetings with the client and keep the team updated on the sponsor's perspective on the project. The Mack Institute will facilitate the initial project kick-off/scoping meeting. The Liaison should also regularly update the client on project progress, especially before the mid-point and final presentations.

Scoping Meeting: Teams should come prepared with background research and questions for the meeting. The objective is to discuss project goals and deliverables. By the end of the meeting, teams should have a clear understanding of expectations and agree with the sponsor on the project scope and final deliverables. The teams will also discuss during the call a suitable time for check-ins with the sponsor to report progress and discuss the project further.

- **Scope of Work Document, Timeline with Actionables and Milestones:** Teams must email the sponsor, Mack Institute, and Teaching Assistant the following:
 - Scope of Work: Team's understanding of project requirements, tentative project plan, and proposed approach
 - Timeline (draft): Includes actionable items and milestones leading to the final deliverables.
 - Examples of these documents can be found on Canvas.

The sponsor and the faculty/TA will offer comments and feedback on the documents. The teams will then integrate these comments from both the sponsor and faculty/TA into the documents. The finalized version of these documents will be submitted on Canvas and shared with the sponsor.

Project Progress

Team meetings with the sponsor: Hold meetings with the sponsor at least once every two weeks to discuss project progress and receive feedback. All team members must attend these meetings. The team Liaison should send calendar invites to sponsors and Mack Institute/faculty/TA.

- **Meeting summary and actionable items:** Share a summary of each meeting and actionable items with all stakeholders (sponsor, faculty, TA and Mack Institute). This ensures alignment with the sponsor's expectations.

Check-in meetings with the TA: At least two times over the duration of the course. Ideally, these meetings will occur before key meetings with faculty and/or sponsors.

Mid-point and Final Presentations

Mid-point presentation: Present progress and plans for completion to the sponsor. Include key questions, identified issues, hypotheses, research methods, and preliminary findings. Share a draft of the presentation with faculty and TA by the end of week 7 for feedback. Get prepared to share the insights from your mid- point presentation with the class during the class time in Week 7. **Share the final version of the presentation with the sponsor, Mack Institute, faculty and team's TA at least a day before your mid- point presentation.**

Final presentation: Present the project's final output to the sponsor. Some sponsors may require additional files such as a memo or executive brief. Understand the sponsor's requirements early on. Share a draft of the presentation with faculty and TA by the end of week 14 for feedback. Get prepared to provide an elevator pitch and share your takeaways with the class during the class time in Week 14. **Share**

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the final version of the presentation with the sponsor, Mack Institute, faculty and team's TA at least a day before your final presentation.

Final Paper: Write a short paper (1000-1500 words) reporting key lessons and insights learned from the project. You could begin working on the paper after the mid-point presentation and seek agreement from the client on the content. The paper should focus on industry trends rather than being firm-specific. The intention is to publish these reports through the Mack Institute's media channels, targeting other managers as the primary audience (e.g., insights from previous teams are [here](#)).

D. GRADING

Your grade is comprised of the following:

1. Class attendance and participation: 10%
2. Scope of Work & Timeline document(s): 5%
3. Mid-point presentation/analysis: 10%
4. Final presentation/analysis: 20%
5. Client evaluation of process and final presentation: 30%
6. Final paper: 10%
7. Peer evaluations: 15%

While the grading components are team submissions, we reserve our right to make adjustments at the individual level given the feedback we receive from clients and your peers as well as our observations.

E. NOTES

Course Readings: The faculty may recommend relevant reading material after the first meeting with teams to discuss their scope of work.

Submissions: All submissions due to the sponsor are to be sent via email to your sponsor contact with a copy to Mack Institute and the team's TA. Group assignments such as sponsor meeting and presentation invites are due on email/calendar. All other submissions are due on Canvas.

Submission Deadlines: Project sponsors are sometimes unavailable during the scheduled time, or may bring in other executives to hear what the students have to say. Dates for final presentations that are changed by the sponsor will have no bearing on due dates for course materials. Even if the sponsor delays the final presentation, the slide decks **must be** turned in on Canvas by the deadline noted.

Mack Institute and TA must be included in ALL communications and meetings with the sponsors.

Confidentiality: Some projects may need to be undertaken under Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements as a requirement by the sponsor, and all information received by the team from the sponsor is electronically stored on Canvas (unless otherwise determined with the sponsor and Mack Institute). While the Mack Institute team will support and advise each team, the students take ownership and primary responsibility for the successful delivery of the project.

References/Citation: All submissions to the sponsor and on Canvas should have appropriate references and sources cited. Students are required to follow Wharton's Reference/Citation policies.

Faculty/TA availability: The faculty and TA will hold office hours by appointment. Appointments with the faculty can be made by email or virtual sign-up link on Canvas. TAs are available by email.

Class sessions take place Wednesdays at 7:00 PM ET via Zoom

Week	Date	Topic	Description	Assignment
Week 0	27-Aug	Course Intro/Expectations	Course Goals and Structure, Project Scoping, Framing; Team Roles/Meeting Cadence	
Week 1	9/1-9/5	Project Work	Scoping meetings with sponsor and faculty	Submit via Email/Canvas Reading: Goliath's Revenge Introduction
Week 2	10-Sep	Lecture: Consulting Frameworks and Market Research	Defining the Problem; Problem Disaggregation and Prioritization Ch. 2 & 3	Reading: Bullet Proof Problem Solving, Ch. 1,2,3
Week 3	16-Sep	Project Work	Finalize Scope and Timeline with Sponsor/Faculty	Submit via Email/Canvas
Week 4	17-Sep	Lecture: Practical AI	Guest Speaker: Yulia Barnakova, Go-to-Market AI Innovation Lead, LearnVantage NA	Reading: Your AI Life, Chapters 1,2,8
Week 5	24-Sep	Lecture: Design Thinking	Guest speaker: Mike Welsh (CCO Bridgenext)	Read HBR Design Thinking Article
Week 6	1-Oct	Lecture: Internal Venturing/Corporate Pitches	Guest Speaker: Tim White (Chief Digital Officer GSK)	Read WEF Top 10 Emerging Technologies Doc, AI article (TBD),
Week 7	8-Oct	Lecture: Internal Venturing	Guest Lecture: Bernardo Sichel (CRO Shutterfly, Former Partner McKinsey)	Reading: Lean Start-up (HBR) , BCG Business Model Innovation
Week 8	15-Oct	Lecture: Building Your Pitch	Best Practices and Examples on Corporate Innovation Pitches	Mid-point presentation Draft due; Reading: Bullet Proof Problem Solving, Ch. 7
Week 9	15-Oct – 29-Oct	Project Work	Mid-point presentation/review with sponsors/faculty	Midpoint Peer Evaluations Due; Email/Submit Peer Evaluation via Canvas
Week 10	5-Nov	Workshop: Project updates and frameworks	Innovation Frameworks – Scenario Planning, Blue Ocean, etc.	Scenario Planning and Blue Ocean Articles
Week 11	12-Nov	Project Work	Draft of final paper	Submit via Email/Canvas
Week 12	19-Nov	Lecture: Corporate Innovation Challenges	Strategic Initiatives, new business opportunities, new technologies, new partnerships	Reading: Goliath's Revenge, Ch. 3, 4, 6, 7
Week 13	26-Nov onward	Project Work	Final presentation review meeting with Faculty	Submit via Email/Canvas
Week 14	3-Dec	Project Work	Final Presentations and Submission to Sponsors	Submit via Email/Canvas
Week 15	10-Dec	Review and Reflect	Final Paper and Peer Evaluation Due	Submit via Email/Canvas

Required Course Readings (May be updated)

Blank, Steve. "*Why the Lean Start-up Changes Everything*." Harvard Business Review. [Available Here](#)

Brown, Tim. "*Design Thinking*." Harvard Business Review, June 2008. [Available here](#)

Conn, Linda, and McLean, Tom. *Bulletproof Problem Solving: The One Skill That Changes Everything*. Wiley, 2018. "Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7". [Available here](#)

Day, George S. "*Is It Real? Can We Win? Is It Worth Doing? Managing Risk and Reward in An Innovation Portfolio*." Harvard Business Review, December 2007. [Available here](#)

Hewlin, Todd, and Snyder, Scott. *Goliath's Revenge: How Established Companies Turn the Tables on Digital Disruptors*. Wiley, 2019. "Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7." [Available here](#)

World Economic Forum. *Top Ten Emerging Technologies*. 2023. [Available here](#)

Young, David, and Gerard, Marine. "*Four Steps to Sustainable Business Model Innovation*." BCG, April 2021. [Available here](#)