

**\*\*\*THIS SYLLABUS IS ALWAYS A WORK IN PROGRESS\*\*\***

**Startup Incubator: The Art and Science of Launching Your Idea**

**Fall 2018**

**Mondays 1:20-4:10**

The Startup Incubator is a one-semester, experiential learning program designed to teach and enable student entrepreneurs to develop sustainable business models from their ideas. Students are an ambitious, committed, and diverse group of individuals from all classes and majors who are passionate about developing successful solutions to challenges; identify as entrepreneurs, disruptors and thought leaders; and have the tenacity, work ethic and ability to succeed. All participating students will have a promising business idea and will take the course with the intention of launching or running their own venture.

**Instructor**

Jeremy Szechenyi

[jszechenyi@resetco.org](mailto:jszechenyi@resetco.org)

Office hours: Mondays [by appointment](#)

**Mentors**

Additional advising for Incubator students will be provided by the Patricelli Center:

Makaela Kingsley, Director of the Patricelli Center for Social Entrepreneurship and Visiting Instructor of Public Policy

[mjkingsley@wesleyan.edu](mailto:mjkingsley@wesleyan.edu), 860-685-3836, Allbritton 021

Office hours: [by appointment](#), Allbritton 021

Anthony Price '20, Patricelli Center Fellow, Allbritton Fellow, and founder of Be The Change Venture

[adprice@wesleyan.edu](mailto:adprice@wesleyan.edu)

Office hours: Fridays 12-2PM in Allbritton 022 and [by appointment](#)

**Learning Objectives**

This course will feel like a combination of a Wesleyan class and a rigorous startup incubator program. Success is a student using theories learned in class to validate their ideas by developing and accurately testing business assumptions, identifying and researching their target market, and pivoting to develop a sustainable business model.

Students will learn core competencies of entrepreneurship, including but not limited to:

- Lean Methodology

- Product Market Fit
- Market Validation
- Competitive Evaluation
- Value Proposition
- Customer Acquisition
- Financial Modeling
- Distribution Strategies
- Marketing Strategies
- Pitching and Presenting
- Measuring and Understanding Impact
- Sustainable Business Models
- Target Market Research
- Testing Business Assumptions
- Idea Validation

## **Software**

In this course, software will be used as an important tool or vehicle for developing skills and behaviors. Examples include:

- Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides

## **Expectations and Grading**

Students will be expected to demonstrate a high standard of professionalism and engagement, and to complete weekly assignments and self-directed project-based work.

Students will be expected to actively participate in one cohort meeting a week: most are “classes” that take the form of lectures or workshops, and some are “practice days” that provide time to practice theories and methods necessary for success.

Students will be expected to dedicate 10+ additional hours per week to assignments, self-directed work, customer discovery, networking and mentoring sessions.

Students must not miss more than 2 classes during the semester. Absences can be for any reason (illness, work for other classes, vacation, etc.) but you are required to submit any missed course worksheets upon return.

Grading is pass/fail and will be based on:

- Attendance
- Class participation
- Worksheet completion
- Completing final pitch
- Professionalism

## **Students with Disabilities**

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Accessibility Services, located in North College, rooms 021/022, or call 860-685-5581 to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

## **Readings**

Each student should be familiar with the following books for this course. Lean Startup Methodology should be reviewed prior to the September 10th class and Traction reviewed prior to the October 29th class. Additional readings will be assigned throughout fall semester.

- *Lean Startup Methodology* by Eric Ries
- *Traction: How Any Startup Can Achieve Explosive Customer Growth* by Gabriel Weinberg and Justin Mares

## **MEWS+ Membership**

All students in the Startup Incubator will receive free membership to the [MEWS+](#) (Middletown Entrepreneurs Workspace Plus) located at the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, 393 Main Street, Middletown. Benefits include: co-working space with ID card access, opportunities to connect with Middletown residents and business owners, and free professional services (accounting, legal, etc.) from Middletown Chamber members and mentors.

## Course Outline: Fall Semester

Each week we will meet once: most are “classes” that take the form of lectures or workshops, and some are “practice days” that provide time to practice theories and methods necessary for success.

| Date         | Class                                              |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| September 3  | Intro Day                                          |
| September 10 | Lean Methodology                                   |
| September 17 | Product Market Fit + Competition + Value           |
| September 24 | Business Models + Cost of Customer Acquisition     |
| October 1    | Partnerships + Resources                           |
| October 8    | Distribution Strategies                            |
| October 15   | Fundamentals of Pitching                           |
| October 22   | No Classes - Fall Break                            |
| October 29   | Mentoring Day                                      |
| November 5   | Customer Acquisition + STEPPS                      |
| November 12  | Practical Marketing Strategies                     |
| November 19  | Pitch Practice 1                                   |
| November 26  | Presentation Workshop by The Bolder Company        |
| December 3   | Pitch Practice 2 and Feedback (last regular class) |
| December 10  | Pitch Day                                          |