

WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

ENGR 075 – Section 010

January 23 – March 7, 2025 | 3-4:15 p.m. (EST) Thurs

Via Zoom: <https://lehigh.zoom.us/j/97249047171>

Instructor: Samantha Walravens, Adjunct Professor & Co-author, *Geek Girl Rising: Inside the Sisterhood Shaking Up Tech*. Columnist at Forbes.

Email: samwalravens@gmail.com, sap320@lehigh.edu

Additional Contact:

Dr. Samantha Dewalt, Managing Director, Lehigh@NasdaqCenter

Email: sdewalt@lehigh.edu

Description: This class looks at the transformative role women play in promoting prosperity and human progress through technology and innovation. The class will shine a light on the remarkable women who are building companies and technologies that transform the way we live and work, and who are paving new paths for female entrepreneurship and gender equality. It will also look at the challenges that women in tech continue to face, including sexism, gender discrimination, unconscious bias, impostor syndrome and more. This one credit class will explore the issues over 7 sessions, meeting once weekly. The class will feature a number of guest lectures by female tech leaders who will offer points of view on the issues, and share their experiences as a guidepost for success.

Topics explored in the course will include:

- Why diversity (gender, race, culture) matters in the workplace, especially in tech
- Entrepreneurship and the challenges/opportunities facing female founders
- Breaking the glass ceiling: the path to leadership for women in tech
- The “leaky” pipeline: how do we attract and retain more women in tech?
- The importance of coaching and mentoring young women in tech
- Venture capital’s diversity problem, and how we fix it
- Why “soft skills” matter: emotional intelligence, authenticity, communication skills
- The next “big thing”: future trends in tech

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the **role that gender and diversity play in the technology and innovation** ecosystem. (Why do diversity and inclusion matter?)
- Understand **career paths in tech**: engineer, product, business leader, entrepreneur
- Through weekly readings, discussions, and final paper, reflect on **your career aims and objectives**

Texts:

- *Geek Girl Rising: Inside the Sisterhood Shaking Up Tech*, Walravens and Cabot
- There will be weekly assigned readings/articles posted to CourseSite.

Grading:	Participation: In-class & online discussion forums	(50%)
	Final Paper	(50%)

Online Discussion Forum

The following should be posted to CourseSite the day before class (due at 11:59pm on Wednesdays):

1. Weekly reflection (one paragraph) on the reading assignment/s
AND
2. Two thoughtfully researched questions to ask the speaker(s) during class (please speak up and ask!)

Networking Exercise and 350-word Reflection

As we will see in this class, networking plays a big role in your career development, whether it's finding a job, learning about an industry, and/or making meaningful connections. Networking can come in many forms, both remote and in-person. In this exercise, you will reach out to a Lehigh alumnus/a on LinkedIn and have a thoughtful conversation about career goals, challenges and aspirations. Then, you will write a 350-word essay describing the interview and 3 main findings. Here are the steps you will take:

1. Find a Lehigh alumnus (male or female) on LinkedIn who shares your educational or career interests.
2. Reach out to this person and ask if they are willing to meet with you (over Zoom or phone call) to discuss career advice and their experience working in their industry of choice. (Use [HBR paper](#) as a reference on best practices for networking).
3. Conduct a short "interview" with this person using the questions below and other questions you wish to ask.
4. **Write a 350-word essay describing the interview and your main findings.** Questions to think about: Was anything you learned in your conversation surprising or counterintuitive? What were the top 3 pieces of advice the person gave you? How do you plan to implement these findings in your studies and/or career? What role has diversity and/or inclusion played in the alumnus' professional life?

Suggested discussion questions with your LinkedIn contact:

- Introduce yourself and ask them to share about themselves.
- How long have you been in your industry?
- Can you tell me about your current role/position?
- What career/educational path(s) did you take to achieve your current position? What would you have done differently, if anything?
- Have you faced any barriers along the way, and if so, how did you overcome those barriers?
- Do you have any advice for a college student and soon-to-be young professional starting out in this industry?

- (Other questions you deem appropriate based on the organic flow of the conversation)

Use this article as reference on networking "best practices":

<https://hbr.org/2020/11/what-to-say-when-youre-reaching-out-to-someone-on-linkedin>

Final Paper

Each student in the course must submit a final paper due by 11:59pm ET pm on Friday, March 8. **The purpose of the paper is to reflect on 1-3 key takeaways that you have gleaned from class discussions, reading assignments, and/or your networking interview. This is a personal reflection and should include your own personal experience with one or more of the topics we have discussed– ex. diversity, inclusion, mentorship, microaggressions, Allyship, etc.** The paper should be **3 to 5 pages** (Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced). Quality is more important than quantity. We expect your write-up to follow the style of a high-quality and thoughtful paper, including proper use of citations. Your final paper will account for 50% of your grade in the course. We cannot stop you from using GenAI in your writing, but since this is a personal reflection, your use of ChatGPT and other GenAI platforms should be limited.

Note on sources: References to outside sources are optional but not required. For example, if you wanted to cite some of the class readings or quote/paraphrase speakers that were relevant to your paper, that would be appropriate. However, it is not a research assignment, so references/citations are not required. For different citation styles this is a good resource (you can use whichever citation format you are most comfortable with (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).

Weekly Schedule

January 23: Why Diversity Matters in Technology & Innovation

Readings:

- Chapter 1 in *Geek Girl Rising*
- [McKinsey Report: Women in the Workplace 2024](#)
- ["Is DEI Going Away? Here's What Experts Say."](#) Stephanie Creary, Knowledge at Wharton (June 11, 2024)

Speakers:

- [Jossie Haines](#), Executive Coach for engineering leaders; former VP of Engineering at Tile
- [Bari Williams](#), Diversity Advocate and Author, *Diversity in the Workplace: Eye-Opening Interviews to Jumpstart Conversations about Identity, Privilege, and Bias*

January 30: Success Strategies of Female Founders

Readings:

- Chapter 2 in *Geek Girl Rising*
- ["2023: A Strange, Tumultuous Year in Sustainability."](#) by Andrew Winston, Harvard Business Review (December 28, 2023)

Speaker: [Kathleen Egan](#), Co-Founder, CEO, ecomedes

February 6: The Path to the C-Suite (COO)

Readings:

- Chapter 4 in *Geek Girl Rising*
- [“Women are poised to reshape financial markets —as investors and financial decision-makers,”](#) World Economic Forum (Jun 7, 2024)

Speaker: Lynn Atkinson, COO, MainSail Partners, Venture Capital/Private Equity

February 13: The Path to the C-Suite (CTO)

Readings:

- [“Why Aren’t More Women Chief Technology Officers?”](#) It’s time to break up the boys’ club,” Stephanie Olsen, In Her Sight (2024)
- [“The C-Suite Skills That Matter Most,”](#) by Raffaella Sadun, Joseph Fuller, Stephen Hansen, and PJ Neal, Harvard Business Review (July–August 2022)

Speaker: [Siobhan McFeeney](#), CTO, Kohl’s Department Stores; Mt. Everest Climber

February 20: The Path to the C-Suite (CFO)

Readings:

- Chapter 6 in *Geek Girl Rising*
- [“Finance Functions Need More Women Leaders. Here’s Why,”](#) by Anna Oberauer, Juliet Grabowski, and Alexander Roos, Bain Consulting Group (November 17, 2022)

Speaker:: [Amy Weaver](#), Former President and CFO, Salesforce

February 27: Women Defining AI

Readings:

- [“Gender Bias in AI: Challenges and Solutions,”](#) CWI Labs (March 14, 2024)
- [“Is AI Coming For Your Job? How To Future-Proof Your Career,”](#) Samantha Walravens, Forbes (December 6, 2024)

Speaker: [Kene Anoliefo](#), Co-founder, HEARD; Product Manager at Spotify, Netflix

March 6: Young Alumni Panel

Readings:

- [“6 Leaders Share Advice to the Next Generation of Women in Tech.”](#) Lucas Dean, Built in NYC, March 6, 2023

Speakers:

- ?

- [Manasi Vitthanala](#) (Lehigh '22), Business & Integration Arch Analyst, Accenture