Business Opportunities in Climate Tech

Boulder Climate Ventures | 1.5 Credit Hours | Leeds School of Business

SYLLABUS

Course Number:	MBAX 6570 | 1.5 Credit Hours
Term:	Fall 2026, A Term (August 21- October 9)
Meeting Time:	Fridays, 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM
Location:	Leeds School of Business — Room 100
Format:	In-Person
Instructor:	Alice Havill

Course Description

As society remakes itself in response to rapid technological advances, there is an extraordinary opportunity to build a world that is cleaner, more efficient and adaptable to a changing climate. Meeting these pressing challenges will require the creation and successful scale-up of hundreds of cleantech ventures.

This course brings together an interdisciplinary community to explore the commercial viability of new ventures in climate technology. Through a market-driven curriculum and a strong focus on network and ecosystem building, students will interact with industry leaders, investors, and founders to discuss next generation technologies and areas ripe for innovation.

Students will also gain hands-on experience with the first steps in entrepreneurship—problem exploration, market research, and customer discovery — while building practical knowledge of the cleantech investment landscape. This course is the credit-bearing evolution of the highly successful Boulder Climate Ventures (BCV) seminar series, which is funded by Breakthrough Energy and managed through a collaboration of faculty and staff at the Leeds School of Business and College of Applied Science and Engineering.

This course is open to all graduate students and is designed especially for students interested in launching or working for a cleantech startup. No prerequisites required. Interested undergraduate students may apply.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the major sectors of the cleantech economy
- Identify a climate problem that needs solving
- Conduct primary market research through interviews to assess the size of the market and the true needs of customers
- Evaluate possible solutions and identify what skills and talents are needed to execute on these solutions
- Collaborate in an interdisciplinary environment

- Apply entrepreneurial thinking to real climate challenges, drawing on CU Boulder's unique research assets and the Colorado cleantech ecosystem.

Assignments & Grading

This is a 1.5-credit seminar course emphasizing active engagement and applied learning. There are no exams.

Assignment	Weight	Due
Attendance & Participation (weekly sessions + guest engagement)	**40%**	Ongoing
Reading Reflections (4 short reflections, ~~250 words each)	**10%**	Selected weeks
Market Research Memo (sector analysis)	**15%**	Week 3
Customer / Stakeholder Interviews (minimum 3, written summary)	**15%**	Week 5
Venture Concept Paper (problem, solution, market, model)	**20%**	Week 7

Assignment Descriptions

Attendance & Participation: Given the seminar format and distinguished guest speakers, full attendance and active engagement are expected. Please notify the instructor in advance if you must miss a session. One excused absence is permitted; a second requires a make-up reflection. Students are expected to engage respectfully with speakers and peers.

Reading Reflections: Short (approximately 250 word) written responses to assigned readings or guest sessions. Prompts will be posted on Canvas. Graded on thoughtfulness and engagement, not length. Four reflections due across the semester.

Market Research Memo: An analysis of a cleantech sector of your choosing. Should identify key players, market size, technology readiness, regulatory environment, and one or more venture opportunities.

Customer / Stakeholder Interviews: Conduct at least three structured interviews with domain experts, potential customers, investors, or other stakeholders relevant to your venture concept. Submit a 1–2 page written summary of findings and how they shaped your thinking.

Venture Concept Paper: A structured analysis of a cleantech venture opportunity, including the problem statement, proposed solution, target customer, business model, competitive landscape, and funding pathway.

Weekly Calendar:

Date	Session Topic	Entrepreneurial Focus
Session 1: Friday August 21	Overview of Climate Imperatives	Problem Identification
Session 2: Friday August 28	The Future of Energy Generation	Customer discovery + Primary Market
Session 3: Friday September 4	The Future of Energy Use & Distribution	Solution evaluation- Matching to my Problem
Session 4: Friday September 11	Closing the Loop on Materials	Customer discovery + entrepreneurship journey
Session 5: Friday September 18	Data, Sensors & Climate Solutions	Cost modeling- the basics to assess my solutions
Session 6: Friday September 25	Buildings of the Future	Customer discovery + business models
Session 7: Friday October 2	Resource Security - Food & Water	Team formation
Session 8: Friday October 9th	SRI Summit: Lab to Commercialization Session	My Journey- What's next?