

TECH-UG.0070: Digital Innovation and Crowdsourcing
(Draft updated 11/05/26– Further Changes to Follow)

Spring 2026

Prof. Natalia Levina

Counts for Specializations: Computing and Data Science, Management, Global Business

Prerequisites: “IT in Business and Society” (UB.0001). The *Management core course is highly recommended*

Schedule:	Spring 2026: Tu, Th 3:30-4:45 pm
Location:	KMEC 3-90
Instructor:	Prof. Natalia Levina
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Bio:	www.boundaryspanning.org
Office Hours:	Tu 4:45-5:15 pm in KMEC 8-78 or by appointment on Zoom: https://nyu.zoom.us/j/8655748300
Office:	KMEC 8-78
TA:	TBD

This course examines how traditional firms and start-ups can drive innovation through AI and collective intelligence. It focuses on digital technologies that enhance knowledge work, creativity, and information sharing, rather than physical goods exchange. Students will engage in case studies, hands-on exercises, discussions with industry leaders, and experiential projects, including outsourcing tasks to online platforms and using GenAI tools.

TOPICS COVERED

Introduction

- Nature of digital innovation

Digital Business Models

- From Firms to Platforms
- How Digital Technologies (e.g., AI, blockchain, metaverse, robotics) Reshape Industries
- Data-driven Business Models

Innovation and AI

- AI Augmentation vs. Automation
- AI GenAI and Creativity
- AI Responsible AI
- AI and the Future of Labor

Crowdsourcing and Open Innovation

- Collective Intelligence and Open Innovation
- Types of crowd-based platforms
- Online Communities
- AI-augmented Gig Labor

Leading Digital Transformation

- Preparing for digital disruption
- Leading organizational transformation for the digital era

Innovation Methods and Digital Start-ups

- Design Thinking
- Rapid Prototyping with MVPs

This course is designed to give students a truly multidisciplinary perspective, drawing on theories and practices from **strategy, international business, and innovation management**.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING POLICY

Grading will be done on the basis of:

- Exams and Quizzes (30%)
- Individual Assignments (15%)
- In-class Attendance, Contribution, Exercises, Post-class Reflection Memos (25%)
- Group Project (25%)
- Professionalism (5%)

Re-grading requests may increase or decrease your grade, so use this option only if you are sure there was a mistake.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professional behavior is a critical component of this class. It involves **respect for others, preparedness, independence, and responsibility**. The following components help guide you in demonstrating professional behavior in class. However, they do not cover every aspect of professionalism.

1. **Respect for Others:**

Timeliness:

This course is based on a model of active learning, with class discussions and exercises playing a central role. Please come on time. Do not go in and out of the class excessively (more than once in 75 minutes is unusual). Further aspects of the attendance policy are discussed below.

Laptops, Cell Phones, Smartphones, Recorders, and Other Electronic Devices

None of these devices may be used in class unless otherwise permitted by the instructor.

Guest Speaker Sessions:

Having guest speakers in class is a unique opportunity to meet business leaders without leaving Stern. These very busy people are dedicating their time to speaking with you. It is imperative that you are particularly diligent in showing professionalism when we have guest speakers. Guest speaker lectures will not be recorded. Please ensure the speaker leaves the class with the best impression of Stern possible!

Norms and Evaluation of Participation:

The Golden Rule is a good guide here. Think of the best experiences you had in terms of students contributing to class. Usually, these include 1) students asking clarifying questions that others may be afraid to ask; 2) contributing a novel perspective on the discussion; 3) adding an interesting, succinct, and clear (e.g., without jargon) example based on experience; 4) referring to other student's statements, lecture notes, or readings; 5) not monopolizing the floor.

Your **participation grade** will be determined by how consistently you contribute and how insightful those contributions are. **Quality is more important than quantity.** Drawing on

readings in your comments is highly valued. I will keep track of your participation throughout the semester and will be glad to provide you with feedback at any time.

If you are concerned that difficulty with English or some other situation will interfere with your ability to participate, please discuss this with me during the first two weeks of the course. I recognize that expressing viewpoints in a group may be difficult, but it is an important skill to develop while at Stern.

Group projects will include a peer evaluation component.

2. Preparedness:

All readings and take-home assignments must be done before the class.

3. Independence

Professionals take pride in their independence and resist micromanagement. Instructions for the project and assignments will only prescribe some details. Not being able to find an assignment or due date is not an excuse for not doing it or submitting it late. The info is either on the syllabus, on Brightspace, or both.

4. Responsibility & Ethics

Professionals take full responsibility for their work and do not misrepresent the work of others as theirs. Many professional associations require that professionals within their field adhere to the code of ethics. How you deal with internet sources and AI tools should become of your professional ethics.

Our undergraduate [Academics Pillar](#) states that *we take pride in our well-rounded education and approach our academics with honesty and integrity*. Indeed, integrity is critical to all that we do here at NYU Stern. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the [NYU Academic Integrity Policies](#) as well as the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work, including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers, and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.

Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the NYU Stern community.

The Stern Code of Conduct and Judiciary Process applies to all students enrolled at Stern (<https://www.stern.nyu.edu/portal-partners/current-students/undergraduate/community/community-expectations>)

This Class AI use Policy¹:

I expect you to use AI tools, including ChatGPT or similar AI tools (based on Large Language Models), on some assignments in this class. Here are some rules:

1. **You cannot upload copyrighted materials from the class or reading assignments into the AI tool** (this includes slides, handouts, readings from coursepack, etc.). ChatGPT and other tools should not have access to proprietary materials. If they seem to know the details from an HBS case, it is because somebody before you violated the publisher's copyright. If you end up uploading proprietary materials into ChatGPT, you are violating the law.
2. **Some assignments would indicate that the use of AI tools like ChatGPT is not allowed.** Others will tell you to use it proactively. You should abide by these policies.
3. If you use AI tools to help your writing (beyond grammar correction), **you need to acknowledge using them.** Please include a short paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining what you used the AI for and what prompts you used to get the results. Please do so in compliance with academic honesty policies. Be thoughtful about when this tool is useful. Only use it if it is appropriate for the case or circumstance. **Remember that for any assignment, the graders can use AI tools (and their own experience) to check if other AI tools were used.**
4. **No AI-enabled tech tools can be used for in-class work** (generally, there is no tech in the classroom policy as stated above).
5. You are **fully responsible for checking the accuracy of AI-generated** work as spelled out below

GENERAL CONDUCT & BEHAVIOR

Students are also expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards of professional conduct and behavior. Please familiarize yourself with NYU Student Conduct Policy

(<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-student-conduct-policy.html>).

CLASS ATTENDANCE & MISSED CLASS ACCOMMODATION

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. You must notify me in advance of religious holidays or observances that might coincide with exams, assignments, or class times to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives. Students may also contact religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu for assistance.

Except for religious observances or other absences that may be required in compliance with nondiscrimination law, this **class otherwise requires attendance and participation and cannot accommodate conflicts.** Please review all class dates at the start of the semester and review all course requirements to identify any foreseeable conflicts with exams, course assignments, projects, or other items required for participation and attendance. If you are aware of a potential conflict, it is strongly recommended that you do not take this class.

¹ Inspired by Prof. Mollick's AI use policy <https://twitter.com/emollick/status/1615562253683548160>

Unfortunately, sicknesses and family emergencies may occur during the term. Specifically, if you plan to miss a class, you need to 1) email me at least one hour before the session; 2) submit all pre-class work on time; 3) watch the recording of the class posted online; 4) submit a reflection summarizing the class and your own thoughts on the discussion forum before the next class (to get **partial attendance** credit rather than zero). For any missed class, you **do not receive any participation credit**.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY

If you require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980, mosescsa@nyu.edu) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. If you need to take an exam at the Moses Center for Student Accessibility, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form to them at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation. For more information, visit the CSA website:

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html>

STUDENT WELLNESS

Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can and to help them overcome any impediments to that. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (see also the Student Accessibility section of this syllabus) at 212-998-4980 to discuss academic accommodations. If mental health assistance is needed, call NYU's 26/7 Wellness Exchange hotline at 212-443-9999. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide relevant resources or referrals. There are also drop-in hours and appointments. Find out more at

<http://www.nyu.edu/students/health-and-wellness/counseling-services.html>..

INCLUSION STATEMENT

This course strives to support and cultivate diversity of thought, perspectives, and experiences. The intent is to present materials and activities that will challenge your current perspectives with the goal of understanding how others might see situations differently. By participating in this course, it is expected that everyone commits to making this an inclusive learning environment for all.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- **Online Coursepack** with HBR Digital Coursepack is linked through NYU Brightspace (**under \$30**)
- **BreakoutLearning account fee (up to \$20)**
- **Additional required articles and cases** are in the *Resources* folder of NYU Brightspace (**free**)
- **The Upwork project requires that you spend (up to \$25.00)**

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- On Collective Intelligence, “*Superminds: The Surprising Power of People and Computers Thinking Together*,” **Tom Malone**, 2019
- On AI: “*Competing in the age of AI: strategy and leadership when algorithms and networks run the world*,” **Marco Iansiti and Karim Lakhani**, 2020.
- *On platform strategy*, “The Platform Revolution” by **Geoff Parker, Marshall van Alstyne, and Paul Choudary**

BRIGHTSPACE SITE

This course is hosted on NYU Brightspace. Students are expected to check the site regularly (at least once a week). **Please turn on notifications for postings.**

Abbreviations: HBR – Harvard Business Review, SMR – Sloan Management Review, CMR – California Management Review

Date	D. of Week	Session Topic
Introduction and Big Themes		
Jan 20	Tuesday	Course Introduction & Nature of Digital Innovation
Jan 22	Thursday	From Firms to Platforms
Jan 27	Tuesday	How Digital Technologies Reshape Industries (AI, Blockchain, Metaverse, Robotics)
Jan 29	Thursday	Data-driven Business Models
The AI Revolution		
Feb 3	Tuesday	AI Augmentation vs. Automation
Feb 5	Thursday	GenAI and Creativity
Feb 10	Tuesday	<i>Guest Speaker:</i> Responsible AI
Feb 12	Thursday	AI and the Future of Labor
Crowdsourcing and Open Innovation		
Feb 17	Tuesday	Collective Intelligence and Open Innovation
Feb 19	Thursday	Types of Crowd-based Platforms
Feb 24	Tuesday	Online Communities
Feb 26	Thursday	AI-augmented Crowds
Mar 3	Tuesday	<i>Guest Speaker</i>
Leading through Digital Disruption		
Mar 5	Thursday	Leading Organizational Transformation for the Digital Era – Part I

Date	D. of Week	Session Topic
Mar 10	Tuesday	Midterm Exam
Mar 12	Thursday	Leading Organizational Transformation for the Digital Era – Part II
Mar 17–22	Spring Break	No Class
Innovation Methods and Digital Start-ups		
Mar 24	Tuesday	Design Thinking – Foundations
Mar 26	Thursday	Rapid Prototyping with MVPs
Mar 31	Tuesday	Integration Workshop: From Ideas to Implementation
Apr 2	Thursday	<i>Guest Speaker: Digital Start-up</i>
Project Work and Future Trends		
Apr 7	Tuesday	<i>(Asynchronous)</i> Group Project Check-Ins
Apr 9	Thursday	<i>Guest Speaker</i>
Apr 14	Tuesday	Future Trends: Human-AI Collaboration and Collective Creativity
Apr 16	Thursday	Governance in the Digital Era
Apr 21	Tuesday	<i>(Asynchronous)</i> Project Workday
Apr 23	Thursday	Final Project Presentations – Session 1
Apr 28	Tuesday	Final Project Presentations – Session 2
May 1st	Thursday	Final Project Presentations – Session 3
May 5	Tuesday	Course Debrief and Final Discussion