

The University of Hong Kong  
School of Business  
BBA Program  
**Creativity and Business Innovation**  
Spring 2009

*“Without changing our pattern of thought, we will not be able to solve the problems we have created with our current pattern of thought.” -- Albert Einstein*

*“In this place it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.” -- ‘Red Queen’*

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## I. Course Facilitator

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*Ali Farhoomand is Professor of Innovation and Information Management and the founding Director of Asia Case Research at School of Business. He has taught and conducted research in universities across Asia Pacific, North America, and Europe, including INSEAD and as a Visiting Scholar at MIT Sloan School of Management. A three-time winner of the Society for Information Management Paper Award, Ali has written several books, published numerous refereed articles, and developed over 100 business case studies, several hundred thousand copies of which distributed worldwide. Last year he conceived and produced the popular **FocusAsia Business Leaders Video Series** featuring prominent Asian CEOs, which was aired by many global TV networks, including the BBC World and the Public Broadcasting Service. Ali is recipient of two Faculty Teaching Awards as well as the **2008 University Outstanding Teaching Award**. For hobby, he dabbles in painting, plays drums and engages in armchair philosophy.*

## II. Course Description

Within a context-rich, student-centred learning environment, this course inspires enquiry and expression; provides a learning platform conducive to creativity, freedom of thought, and design thinking; and encourages teamwork as a way of generating creative business ideas and solutions.

Today the efficient and cost-effective provision and deployment of resources no longer guarantee sustainable advantage. Instead, competitive advantage of a firm is increasingly tied to how its workforce can think outside the box, see fleeting opportunities, and leverage these opportunities to design, innovate and market high-margin products and services. Consequently, fast moving businesses are increasingly in lookout to recruit and retain an adaptable, creative, and innovative workforce who can create something new or perceive an existing thing in a new way.

Unfortunately the majority of BBA students are not equipped with such skills because business education has traditionally emphasized specialization in functional areas at the expense of integrative thinking. Rapid technological advancements and business innovations of late, though, have shortened the half-life of many of these functional skills. Specialization has always been necessary for getting a good job, but it is no longer sufficient for maintaining a long-term career.

What makes a graduate different from another is not the degree of specialization in certain functional area, but his/her ability to think differently -- and hopefully creatively. This is in tandem with the evolutionary laws where survival is a function of a constant interplay between exploitative stopgaps and explorative opportunities (Ref. *Red Queen*).

Because today jobs go where the most skilled and cost-effective graduates are, companies look for **creative** graduates who can think freely and are able to:

- **Analyze** (separate a whole into its component parts)
- **Judge** (form an opinion or evaluate by weighing up of evidence to make a decision)
- **Synthesize** (combine often diverse conceptions into a coherent whole)
- **Design** (conceive and plan out in the mind)

### *III. Course Objectives*

BBA students are relatively good repositories of general knowledge and basic functional skills. But because in classroom analysis is usually done divorced from synthesis and in the absence of the contextual nuances surrounding the formation and implementation of managerial decisions, students are often left with a distorted impression of real-life practices. Moreover, because of the inherent shortcomings of the majority of the quantitative models and frameworks used in business, students do not learn how to deal with uncertainty and complexity effectively.

The course aims to put you in a lateral mindset where you can both leverage and challenge the conventional wisdom to think creatively to **discover new opportunities**, find the **right problems** and explore the **trade-offs** involved in your decisions to **design** elegant and well articulated **solutions**.

### *IV. Learning Outcomes*

Contrary to conventional wisdom, creativity and design thinking are not innate; rather, through concerted effort and conscious persistence, they can be learned, nourished and mastered.

The course relies on cases, simulation, role-playing and hands-on exercises to put you at the centre of learning so that you can tap into the creative part of your mind. After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of **understanding** and the principles of **epistemology** (the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge)
- Demonstrate effective skills in **communicating your thoughts**
- Apply related concepts and techniques in dealing with **complexity** and **uncertainty** inherent in decision making
- Apply the fundamental principles of **creativity**, **design thinking** and **innovation** in designing new products and services

*V. Alignment of Program and Course Outcomes*

<b>Program Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Course Learning Outcome</b>
Fundamental theories of business and economics	<i>Understanding the nature of knowledge</i>
Effective decision making and problem solving	<i>Decision making under uncertainty</i>
Innovative thinking	<i>Creative and design thinking</i>
Effective communication skills	<i>Communicating thoughts effectively</i>

*VI. Teaching and Learning Activities*

This is an unconventional course in that it doesn't have a clear structure. It encourages both individual and teamwork as a way of generating creative business ideas and solutions.

After a short introduction about the importance of creativity as a major economic lever, you are put in the centre learning using different methods and techniques, including:

- **In-class discussions:** Most of the learning happens in the classroom in form of your participation in different exercises and your contribution to case and class discussions.
- **Reflection and thinking exercises:** In the beginning of each class you will be asked to clear your mind by focusing and reflecting on a particular thinking task. In some classes you will be given a puzzle, paradox, or thought experiment to "solve". The objective of these exercises is to introduce you to different sets of problems whose solution entails creative, lateral thinking.
- **Creativity exercises:** You will be asked to perform specific tasks in your daily life and report back to the class as to how these tasks help you to see the world around you in a more creative light.
- **Using the Six-Hat method:** This method represents six modes of thinking, and promotes thinking outside the box, taking into account many different modes of thinking.
- **Right side of the brain exercises:** You will be given drawing and other exercises that help you suppress the left-side of your brain and flow to the right-side in order to tap into the creative part of your brain.

- **Listening to Jazz:** You will learn how to use jazz as a metaphor in approaching and solving business problems. More specifically, by listening to jazz you learn how to use improvisation as a way for creative expression, while at the same time, work harmoniously in groups.
- **Using the case method.** The case method will be used as a vehicle not only to solve problems but more importantly to find the right problem, ask the right questions and see the unseen.
- **Watching videos.** Majority of cases used in the course are accompanied by professionally produced videos of the corresponding companies and executives.
- **Using the course Blog:** The learning outside the classroom is in form of a free discussion blog, where you will be required to contribute to different topics under discussion. The course facilitator monitors this online forum to ensure wide and useful contribution.

*VII. Assessment*

<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Teaching and Learning Activity</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<i>Understanding the nature of knowledge</i>	Lectures, in-class exercises, in-class discussions, online discussions	Attendance, participation in class and online discussions
<i>Decision making under uncertainty</i>	Lectures, in-class exercises and discussions, online discussions, case assignments	Attendance, participation in class and online discussions
<i>Creative and design thinking</i>	Lectures, videos, in-class exercises and discussions, online discussions, case assignments, filed projects, term projects	Attendance, participation in class and online discussions, case assignments, term projects
<i>Communicating thoughts effectively</i>	Videos, in-class exercises and discussions, online discussions, case assignments, term projects	Attendance, participation in class and online discussions, case assignments, term projects

**VII. Standards For Assessment**

1. Case, Class and Blog Discussion	40%
2. Individual Written Case Assignment	30%
3. Term Project	30%

**Notes on Assessment:**

1. Success of this course depends on your active participation in case, class and blog discussion. **Attendance is mandatory** and you are expected to have prepared **all** the cases and read all the assigned articles before you come to class. You are also required to continuously keep track of and contribute to the course's Blog. **No late arrival** is permitted. **Missing three** or more classes would automatically lead to failure in the course. Please see the following **Guidelines for Assessing Contribution to the Learning Process in the Case Method:**

<b>1. Facts</b>	Am I sticking to the case facts?
<b>2. Analysis</b>	Have I distinguished the critical and relevant from incidental and irrelevant?
<b>3. Synthesis</b>	Have I organized the conclusions of my analysis into an intelligible whole?
<b>4. Presentation</b>	Is my presentation clear and to the point? Does it follow the flow of the discussion, or is it an isolated comment?
<b>5. Learning</b>	Am I listening to what others are saying, reassessing my own analysis and conclusions accordingly?
<b>6. Consistency</b>	Do I do this consistently and as a rule?

2. Each individual student should submit written analysis of three assigned cases. Your report (4-5 pages) should highlight the major issue(s)/problem(s) in the case, provide an analysis of the situation under study, and present a well thought-out course of action, and a doable implementation plan. Please include an executive summary in the beginning of the report and submit it electronically *before* the start of the class. You need to pay attention to the following issues:

- Are all major issues and problems in the case identified?
- Are your analysis and interpretation of the case accurate, valid and appropriate?
- Are your recommendations based on a synthesis of your analysis?
- Is your implementation plan credible?
- Have you made a compelling and credible "case"?
- Is your Executive Summary accurate and complete?
- Is your presentation clear, appropriate and organized?

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Please see the following **Guidelines on Preparing the Case Assignments**:

This guide is designed to help you prepare for the written assignments for this course, and contains additional guidelines that are crucial and helpful to you. Please read carefully and do not hesitate to ask questions.

**Submission**

All written assignments should be submitted online before the deadline. Late submissions are NOT allowed. Approval for any alternative arrangements due to bona fide work or personal reasons must be obtained from Professor Farhoomand in advance.

**Formatting Standards**

Assignments should be in Microsoft Word. Please include in the filename your last name, first name, and assignment title, e.g., *chan\_john\_assignment1.doc*. For the group assignment you may use your group number or name instead, e.g., *group\_2.doc*. The main body of your report should be double-spaced using Times New Roman, Pt 12 (except for headings, exhibits, tables, etc.). The page size should be A4, with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right).

**Structure and Content of Written Assignment**

Your individual assignment shall consist of a cover page, a one-page executive summary, the report itself, references (if any), and exhibits/appendices (if any).

Please include on the cover page: assignment title, course title, instructor name, student name, student ID, and submission date.

The one-page executive summary should be single-spaced and no more than one page in length. It is a summary of your entire report and should allow the reader to grasp the major issues, the pro and cons, and the recommendation without having to read the report itself. Do not confuse the executive summary with the introduction in the report. The executive summary is NOT the introduction and they are NOT substitutes of each other.

It is recommended that the report itself include the following major sections: introduction, analysis of the issues, analysis of options, recommendation, and conclusion (depending on the assignment itself, you may have to make your own adjustments). The report is graded on the quality of the analysis, logic and coherence of the arguments, as well as its readability, and overall organization and presentation. Please follow the 1500-word guideline and include a word count at the end of your report. The word count should include only the report itself, i.e., it should exclude cover page, executive summary, references, exhibits, etc.

Plagiarism, or using other people's words or ideas as if they were your own, is a serious academic offense. When using other people's work, you must properly cite and reference the source. Please use a consistent referencing style throughout your report. Even though you may use exhibits to supplement your written report, please bear in mind that exhibits should not replace written analysis.

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3. Groups of 5 students should work throughout the course to come up with a creative idea for a new product or service, or redesign of an existing product or service. All members of the groups would present their ideas in the end of the course. A written report related to these project should be submitted a week after the last session of the course.

*VIII. Academic and Class Conduct*

- The use of all electronic devices, including computers, mobile phones and games is strictly prohibited.
- Plagiarism and copying of copyright materials are serious offences and may lead to disciplinary actions. You should read the chapters on and “Plagiarism” and “Copyright” in the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Handbook for details. A booklet entitled “Plagiarism and How to Avoid it” is available from the Main Library.
- You are required to attend all the classes on time. In case you cannot attend a class you should inform the instructor beforehand.

*Session 1 – January 12*  
**Today's Economic Landscape**

Forces shaping network economy  
Creativity and economic development  
What is creativity? Can it be learned?  
What is wrong with business education?

*Session 2 – January 22*  
**Creativity Versus Conventional Thinking**

Integrative thinking vs. conventional wisdom  
Linear versus lateral thinking  
Impediments to creativity and integrative thinking  
Using lateral thinking to sharpen argumentation  
*Case 1: Adm@rt: If You Build It, Will They Come?*  
*Read: The Weird Rules of Creativity*

*Session 3 – February 5*  
**Creativity and Business Judgment**

Differentiating between major and minor issues  
Analysis as a way to organize thoughts  
*Case 2: Phoenix Satellite Television*  
*Read: How to Kill Creativity*

*Session 4 – February 12*  
**Thinking Hats**

How to think outside the box  
How to brainstorm and create new ideas  
How to use empathy as a tool to see different perspectives  
*Case 3: HK Jockey Club*

*Session 5 - February 26*  
**Epistemology + Creativity and Culture**

Knowledge and anti-knowledge  
Problems of induction and deduction  
*Case 4: Seiko Watch Corporation: Moving Upmarket*  
*Read: Putting Your Company's Whole Brain to Work*

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***Session 6 – March 12***  
***Awakening the Right Side of the Brain***

How the brain works  
Cognitive & information processing biases  
***Case 5: Opera Hong Kong***  
***Read: From Creative Industries to Creative Economy***

***Session 7 – March 19***  
***Creativity in Decision Making***

Trade-off identification and analysis  
Synthesis and thought integration  
***Case 6: Samsung***

***Session 8 - March 26***  
***All That Jazz***

Use of Jazz as a business metaphor  
Business design and Jazz composition (role playing exercise)  
Business functions and Jazz (role playing exercise)  
***Case 7: We Worldwide Partners***  
***Read: How Pixar Fosters Collective Creativity***

***Session 9 – April 2***  
***Service Design***

Connection between creativity, design, and innovation  
Turning a creative idea into viable product or service  
***Case 8: Alibaba.com***  
***Read: Managing Creativity in Small Worlds***

***Session 10 – April 9***  
***Product Design***

Drawing exercises

***Sessions 11 & 12 - April 16 & April 23***  
***Project Presentations***