

## SI 480 Project Overview

Your team will design a business addressing a problem or seizing an opportunity created by evolving challenges in one of the two following extrapolation/fundamental shift areas:

- **Climate Change effects**
- **COVID-19: Post-pandemic world**

Besides this specific assignment details, this note provides basic guidelines for delivering your project and includes the rubric that will be used to grade your team's work.

### 1. The categories and choosing a project idea

By design, the categories from which you may draw are deliberately broad. Part of the assignment challenge is for your team to select an area and then narrow down your project topic choice from the enormous array of possibilities. In some ways, this is a tiny taste of the approach many entrepreneurs take when starting new businesses by asking, "Where can I make a difference?"

There are a few "ideas" that are not acceptable for this project. These can loosely be categorized as "products without businesses" and/or "short-term, temporary solutions." Examples of the former include APPS that monitor your electricity usage or count the number of times you cough in a day. In fact, ANY kind of "APP" is unacceptable for this assignment. Examples of the inappropriate short-term solution project ideas include "designer face-masks" or "home hair-cutting kits."

You're being asked to think critically about these important areas, and to find a project worthy of your time and effort. You are specifically NOT being asked to design a business you could start in a dorm room or to imagine a project you could build yourselves. Rather, you are being challenged to think deeply enough about the world to explore business ideas that might make the world a bit better.

"PICKING" is the probably hardest part of this assignment, although be assured no teams have ever found completing this project, well, particularly "easy."

### 2. The project requirements

SI480 is a "survey course" – that is, it covers a range of basic concepts that apply to technology businesses. Were you working toward a business degree, many of the 1-week SI480 topics would be an entire semester-long course. Still, the assigned readings and weekly lectures aim to provide enough of a foundation to answer many of the key questions any new business faces.

The SI480 project requires you to define a business, describe what it does, explain why (and to whom) it matters, how it will operate successfully, and how it will fit into the existing and ever-evolving world. I will be evaluating the project against the following characteristics:

- Thesis Statement - Problem/opportunity

- Approach and Solution
- Business Model
- Market Issues - Size & Adoption
- Ecosystem - Where it fits
- Basic numbers - Finance 101
- Presentation Content
- Presentation Style

So - even if you do not feel ready to address all of these business elements today, you are in SI480, so you will be getting exposure to all of them over the next few weeks. The point is that while TECHNOLOGY is all well and good, it is the construction of a BUSINESS (based around some technology) that matters here in SI480.

Your final project will need you to think about the following questions:

- What problem are we trying to solve? Who cares if we solve it?
- How does our approach match the problem and our target customers?
- Is this a “product” or a “business” that can offer enduring and evolving value?
- What is the operating model for this business?
- Market issues and what to do about them:
  - What is the target market & what is its size?
  - How will we reach our target customers through marketing and sales?
  - What are the challenges to adoption?
  - What is the competitive environment?
  - What are the key market ecosystem elements?
- Financial model and issues:
  - What are the key financial parameters for this business?
  - How will these evolve over time?
  - What will it take to get the business up and running?

As you can see, these are “business” rather than product or technology questions.

The specific business idea you choose (and your definition of the environment in which it will have to operate) will help clarify the questions most critical for that particular business’s success.

**Your final project deliverables will include these things:**

- In-class pitch presentation of the business
- A written plan for the business that addresses the topics and those questions essential to understanding how the business will operate and how it can succeed.
- Basic financials for the business that reflect and support the plan
- Individually written team-member contribution assessments