ISOM 2010 – Introduction to Information Systems
Sections L02 L03 L04
Fall 2025

👨‍🏫 WHO'S TEACHING THIS COURSE?

Hi, I'm **Professor Zhitao YIN**, and I'll be your instructor for ISOM 2010.

- **Office:** LSK 4058
- **Office hours:** By appointment (just drop me an email and we'll set a time).
- **Email:** zhitaoyin@ust.hk →*When you email me, please put in the subject line: "ISOM 2010 Session # [Your Student Number]."*
- **Important:** Please use email only — don't message me through Canvas.

You'll also get support from our **Teaching Assistant, Chao IEONG** (imcyeung@ust.hk).

📩 WHO TO CONTACT

Your Question	Ask Prof. Yin (Instructor)	Ask Chao (TA)
Lecture	✓	
Participation	✓	
Lab		✓
Industry week		✓
Group project (content)	✓	
Group project (logistics)		✓
Exam (schedule & coverage)	✓	
Exam (grading)		✓

📘 COURSE OVERVIEW

Every time you scroll TikTok, use an AI tool, or tap your Octopus card, you're not just using technology — you're participating in the digital economy. This course is about making sense of what's really happening behind those everyday actions. We won't just list technologies like AI or blockchain as "cool new things." Instead, we'll dig into the *hidden logics* that explain why some technologies take off, why others fail, and how they reshape the way we live and work. Each week, we'll start with a fresh example — maybe an AI agent writing code, a robot on the factory floor, or a short video app competing for your attention — and then step back to ask: *what's really going on here?* By the end, you'll see that while technologies change, the underlying ideas — like network effects, bounded rationality, and transaction costs — stay surprisingly stable. Our goal is for you to leave with a toolkit for making sense of whatever "next big thing" comes after AI.

✨ EXPECTED TAKEAWAYS

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Look at a new technology and explain it using conceptual frameworks (like lemons market, network effects, or bounded rationality).
- Analyze how today's digital tools — from AI agents to robots to blockchain — reshape markets, organizations, and even society.
- Spot not only the opportunities but also the pitfalls (bias, privacy, cybersecurity, sustainability) that come with these innovations.
- Connect class concepts to real-world cases and explain your thinking clearly in discussions, projects, and presentations.
- Build the confidence to say: "I can understand the next wave of digital innovation — not because I've memorized today's buzzwords, but because I know the logics that apply!"

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SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Note
1	Sept 2	Course overview	Canvas self-introduction out at 9 pm
	Sept 4	Digital economy (1)	
2	Sept 9	Digital economy (2)	
	Sept 11	Digital economy (3)	
3	Sept 16	E-commerce (1)	
	Sept 18	E-commerce (2)	Canvas question #1 out at 9 pm
4	Sept 23	E-commerce (3)	Canvas question #1 due at 8 am
	Sept 25	E-commerce (4)	Canvas self-introduction due at 8 am
5	Sept 30	Digital platform (1)	Project group list due at 8 am
	Oct 2	No lecture	Slot used for midterm exam (date TBD)
6	Oct 7	No lecture	Public holiday
	Oct 9	Digital platform (2)	Canvas question #2 out at 9 pm
7	Oct 14	Digital platform (3)	Canvas question #2 due at 8 am
	Oct 16	Project checkpoint	
8	Oct 21	Big data (1)	
	Oct 23	Big data (2)	Canvas question #3 out at 9 pm
9	Oct 28	Industry week [No lecture]	Canvas question #3 due at 8 am
	Oct 30	Industry week [No lecture]	
10	Nov 4	Big data (3)	
	Nov 6	Big data (4)	
11	Nov 11	Big data (5)	Project slides and report due at 11 pm
	Nov 13	Project presentation (1)	
12	Nov 18	Project presentation (2)	
	Nov 20	Project presentation (3)	
13	Nov 25	Emerging topic	
	Nov 27	Wrap up and final exam review	

COURSE MATERIALS

There's *no single textbook* for this course — and that's on purpose. Technology changes so quickly that by the time a book is printed, half of it is already out of date. Instead, I'll keep things fresh by giving you up-to-date materials each week: lecture slides, articles, videos, and recordings, all through Canvas. Think of Canvas as your "hub" for everything you need.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Meaningful participation:	15%
• Self-introduction video	1%
• Industry week	2%
• In class & online participation	12%
Lab	15%
Group project	20%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%
Total	**100%**

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🎤 Meaningful Participation

Participation in this course is about engaging with ideas, not just showing up or speaking a set number of times. Here's how it works:

- **In class & online:** You are expected to contribute during in-class discussions and also through short Canvas posts.
- **Not attendance-based:** Simply attending class does not earn you credit.
- **Short reflections:** Canvas responses should be fewer than 60 words.
- **Self-Introduction video (1–3 min):** Upload a short video to Canvas to introduce yourself and help classmates get to know you for group formation. Share your name, major, what excites (or worries) you about digital tech, and a fun fact. Video quality doesn't matter — thoughtfulness does. A good intro earns 1 participation point. Examples are included below so you know what counts.
- **Industry talks:** During Industry Week, guest speakers from the field will share their experiences. You are expected to attend at least two talks. Each talk you attend earns 1 participation point (max 2 points). Attendance will be tracked by sign-in.
- **How it's graded:** Your participation score depends on both **quality** (insightful, constructive, moves discussion forward) and **quantity** (regular engagement). Canvas questions must be submitted by the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted/graded.
- **Relative grading:** There is no fixed rule like "speak X times = full marks." Instead, your grade is determined by how your overall contributions compare to those of your peers.
  👉 For example: A student who speaks fewer times but always adds sharp insights can receive a higher grade than someone who talks often without much substance.

Examples of meaningful in-class and online participation:
Question: "In online marketplaces like Taobao or Amazon, why do reputation systems (like seller ratings) matter?"

✅ **Good Initial Response (by Student A):**
"Without ratings, buyers face a 'lemons market' problem — they can't tell high-quality from low-quality sellers. That uncertainty drives good sellers away. Ratings reduce this asymmetry by signaling reliability, letting buyers trust the platform. This also helps the platform itself grow, since fewer customers are scared off by bad experiences."

👉 **Why Good?** Goes beyond the information value of ratings to highlight structural risk of lemon market, ties it to business consequences, and suggests managerial response.

✅ **Good Follow-Up Response (by Student B):**
"Building on that, ratings also create incentives for sellers. Since they know poor service will hurt their score, they compete not just on price but also on quality. However, this only works if ratings are trustworthy. Fake reviews undermine the system and can recreate the lemons problem."

👉 **Why good?** It acknowledges the first response and extends it (incentives for sellers, risk of fake reviews). It introduces a *new angle* without repeating.

❌ **Weak Response (by Student C):**
"Ratings are important because they help buyers choose good sellers. I always check ratings before buying. So I think platforms need to make sure ratings are visible."

👉 **Why Weak?** States the obvious but lacks depth and no conceptual tie.

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Sample self-introduction script

✅ **Good Example**

"Hey guys, I'm Alex Chan, a Year 2 Global Business student, but I'm also really curious about how technology shapes business and society. Lately, I've been fascinated by AI agents — I think they're powerful, but also kind of scary if misused. In group projects, I usually take the lead on research and organizing, but I also enjoy presenting. And a fun fact about me — I'm a big coffee nerd, I love trying different brewing methods. Looking forward to working with you all!"

✅ **Good Example**

"Hi everyone, I'm Sarah Wong, Year 2 in Information Systems. I've been really interested in how short video platforms like TikTok keep us hooked — it's exciting but also makes me think about side effects of such digital platforms. In group projects, I'm usually good at creating slides and keeping the team organized. Fun fact: I play the guitar, and sometimes I even write songs with friends. I'm excited to meet you all and work together!"

👉 **Why good:**

- Covers name, year, major. Mentions an interest in digital technologies.
- Shares strengths for group projects (helpful for team formation).
- Ends with a fun, personal fact that makes it memorable.

❌ **Weak Example**

"Hey, I'm Tom. Year 2. I like tech. I guess I can do slides. That's it."

👉 **Why weak:**

- Too short, lacks substance. No real connection to digital technologies.
- Doesn't help potential teammates understand what he brings.

👨‍💻 Lab

There's a **separate Canvas page** for all lab materials and instructions. Please make sure to check there first for schedules, logistics, and updates. If you have any lab-related questions, reach out directly to our TA — Chao is your main contact for labs.

🚀 Group Project: Startup Pitch Challenge

You will work in teams as if you were a startup, designing a new business that uses digital technologies to address a real problem. Think of it as preparing a pitch to investor. Your job is to identify a clear pain point, explain why it is critical (using both quantitative and qualitative evidence), propose a technology-enabled solution, and show how your idea is unique compared to existing alternatives. You should define your target customers, explain how your customer base can grow over time, outline a basic business model, and discuss key risks and how you would mitigate them. Most importantly, your analysis must apply the conceptual frameworks and technologies from this course where appropriate — but avoid adding them just for the sake of including them.

- Each group will have **4–5 members** from the same session. You can find teammates in two ways: (1) through the "Self-introduction" discussion board on Canvas, and (2) during the 10-minute team-formation activity in class on September 25.

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- The project has two deliverables: (1) **a pitch deck** (8–10 slides) for a 10-minute in-class presentation, and (2) **a written report** (max 1500 words) that develops your arguments in more detail.
- All members of the same group will receive the same score. It is your team's responsibility to make sure everyone contributes meaningfully and to handle any free-rider issues within your group. Guidelines for group work are provided at the end of this syllabus.
- I know things happen — but fairness matters. To keep things fair to everyone, late submissions lose marks: within 1 day = –30%, within 2 days = –60%, more than 2 days = –100%. If you anticipate a conflict, just submit early.

- Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weight	What We're Looking For
Problem clarity & importance	20%	Have you clearly identified a real, meaningful problem? Did you explain why it is critical with both qualitative and quantitative evidence?
Solution uniqueness	20%	Is your digital solution well thought out, realistic, and different from what already exists?
Application of course content	20%	Did you apply relevant course content appropriately — not just name-drop them?
Customer & scaling logic	10%	Have you defined your target customers and explained convincingly how your customer base could grow over time?
Business model & risks	10%	Do you outline how the business will make money and anticipate key risks, with sensible mitigation strategies?
Evidence & support	10%	Do you use both qualitative and quantitative evidence to back up your points?
Presentation & communication	10%	Is your pitch deck/report clear, well-organized, visually effective, and persuasive?

📝 Midterm and Final Exams

The midterm and final are the two big checkpoints to make sure you're really understanding the ideas we cover in this course.

- Exams will focus on **conceptual application** rather than memorization and not technical in nature. Question types may include multiple-choice and short-answer questions. You'll be asked to apply course frameworks to analyze new situations, not just repeat definitions.
- You may bring **one A4-sized cheat sheet**, double-sided, handwritten or printed — your choice.
- There will be **no make-up exams** for either the midterm or the final.
- There will be **no sample questions** provided — instead, focus on understanding the concepts and applying them to new situations.

👥 WORKING IN GROUPS & AVOIDING FREE-RIDERS

To make sure that the group project credit reflects **teamwork** and not just the effort of a few, please follow these guidelines:

1. **Set expectations early**
    - At your first meeting, agree on how you will divide tasks (research, writing, slides, presenting, editing, etc.).
    - Write these agreements down so everyone is clear.

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2. **Use milestones**
    - Break the project into smaller deadlines (e.g., problem definition, draft slides, draft report).
    - Check progress at each milestone so no one falls behind.
3. **Document contributions**
    - Keep a shared folder (Google Docs, OneDrive, Notion, etc.) so everyone's work is visible.
    - This makes it easy to see who has contributed what.
4. **Communicate openly**
    - If a teammate is not contributing, raise the issue directly (and early) in a respectful way.
    - Don't wait until the final week to discover problems.
5. **Peer accountability**
    - In extreme cases where a student consistently does not contribute, the instructor reserves the right to adjust that individual's grade.

Rule of thumb: Treat this like a workplace project — plan, share the workload, and communicate. Teams that manage themselves well never have free-rider issues.

🤝 ACCESSIBILITY & SUPPORT

If you have a documented learning need or personal circumstance, please reach out early so we can support you. I also welcome your feedback at any point during the semester. Whether it's a question, suggestion, concern, or simply advice you're seeking, don't hesitate to contact me or our TA. Your input matters — it helps us make the class better and ensures you get the most out of it.

📌 CLASS POLICY

- **No cross-section activities:** You must stay within your assigned section for all course activities (attendance, projects, exams, etc.).
- **Respectful learning environment:** Please avoid disruptive behavior during lectures (e.g., side chatting outside of group discussions, leaving in the middle of class, phone ringing, gaming, etc.). Such actions count as **negative participation** and can reduce your discussion contribution grade, depending on how often and how severe the behavior is.
- **Course materials:** All slides and course content are copyright-protected. Do **not** upload them to external sites (e.g., CourseHero). These sites are monitored, and the instructor may take action if violations occur.
- **Academic integrity:** HKUST has zero tolerance for cheating or plagiarism. Any student found violating academic integrity rules will face serious penalties, including possible termination of study. Please review the university's policies here: https://acadreg.ust.hk/generalreg.html

🌱 FINAL NOTE

This course is not about memorizing buzzwords — it's about learning to think. If you stay engaged, contribute your ideas, and connect frameworks to real-world examples, you'll do great. Remember: technologies change, but the logics stay. Once you've mastered the logics, you'll be ready for whatever comes next. Stay curious, question the hype, and connect the dots. If you can do that, you'll not just survive the digital future — you'll help shape it!

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