

ISOM 2010 – Introduction to Information Systems
Sections L02 L03 L04
Fall 2026

 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, Linda CHAN** (imcyeung@ust.hk).

 WHO TO CONTACT

Your Question	Ask Prof. Yin (Instructor)	Ask Linda (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 problems and explain your thinking clearly in discussions, projects, and presentations.
- Build your 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!"

SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Note
1	Sept 1	Course overview	
	Sept 3	Digital economy (1)	
2	Sept 8	Digital economy (2)	
	Sept 10	Digital economy (3)	
3	Sept 15	Project Information Session	
	Sept 17	E-commerce (1)	
4	Sept 22	E-commerce (2)	
	Sept 24	E-commerce (3)	
5	Sept 29	E-commerce (4)	Project group list due at 8 am
	Oct 1	No lecture	Public holiday
6	Oct 6	No lecture	Midterm Exam
	Oct 8	Digital platform (1)	
7	Oct 13	Digital platform (2)	
	Oct 15	Digital platform (3)	
8	Oct 20	AI & big data (1)	
	Oct 22	AI & big data (2)	
9	Oct 27	AI & big data (3)	
	Oct 29	AI & big data (4)	
10	Nov 3	Industry week [No lecture]	
	Nov 5	Industry week [No lecture]	
11	Nov 10	AI & Big data (5)	Prerecorded project video due at 11 p.m.
	Nov 12	Project presentation (1)	
12	Nov 17	Project presentation (2)	
	Nov 19	Project presentation (3)	
13	Nov 24	Project presentation (4)	
	Nov 26	Emerging topic & Wrap-up	

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, and videos, all through Canvas. Think of Canvas as your “hub” for everything you need.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Meaningful participation:	10%
• Industry week	2%
• In-class participation	8%
Lab	15%
Group project	25%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%
Total	100%

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:** You are expected to contribute during in-class discussions.
- **Not attendance-based:** Simply attending class does not earn you credit.
- **Industry talks:** You are expected to attend at least two talks. Each talk you attend earns 1 participation point (max 2 points).
- **How it's graded:** Your participation score depends on both **quality** (insightful, constructive contributions that move the discussion forward) and **quantity** (regular engagement).
- **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.

Examples of meaningful in-class 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 a 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.

Lab

There's a **separate Canvas site** for all lab materials and instructions. Please make sure to check there first for the lab schedules, logistics, and updates. If you have any lab-related questions, reach out directly to our TA.

Group Project: From Problem to Prototype — Define, Build, Evaluate

You will work in teams to identify an important real-world problem, define it precisely from the perspective of the people affected, and build a testable prototype of a digital solution. You will then

evaluate whether and why the prototype addresses the defined problem using appropriate evidence, such as user feedback and performance measures, and explain the solution's limitations.

- Each group will consist of **4–5 students** from the same course session.
- The project has two assessed components: (1) a **prerecorded video** of no more than 10 minutes, submitted in MP4 format, and (2) a **live Q&A** conducted after the video is played in class. No pitch deck or written report is required.
- All members of the same group will normally 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 (0, 24 hours] = –30%, (24, 48 hours] = –60%, more than 48 hours = –100%. If you anticipate a conflict, just submit early.
- Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weight	What We're Looking For
Problem definition & importance	25%	Is the problem specific, meaningful, and appropriately identified? Does the team identify the affected users and context, distinguish root causes from symptoms, and support its importance with credible evidence?
Solution generation & prototype	25%	Does the solution respond directly to the defined problem? Does the prototype demonstrate the core user journey or essential function clearly enough?
Evaluation of effectiveness	25%	Does the team define appropriate success criteria and use a justified evaluation method? Is relevant evidence collected and interpreted honestly? Does the team explain whether, where, and for whom the solution works, and acknowledge limitations?
Application of course concepts	10%	Are relevant course concepts used accurately to explain design choices for the proposed solution and prototype?
Prerecorded video & demonstration	5%	Does the video introduce the team, communicate the work clearly and concisely, include an actual prototype demonstration, and remain within 10 minutes?
Live Q&A	10%	Can the team answer questions directly and with evidence, explain its choices and results, acknowledge limitations, and demonstrate shared understanding across members?

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.

- The exams will focus on **conceptual application** rather than memorization and will not be technical in nature.
- You may bring **one A4-sized cheat sheet**, double-sided, handwritten or printed.
- There will be **no make-up exams** for either the midterm or the final.
- No separate sample exam paper or question bank will be provided; selected in-class questions may illustrate how course concepts could be assessed.

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.
 - Write these agreements down so everyone is clear.
2. **Use milestones**
 - Break the project into smaller deadlines.
 - Check progress at each milestone so no one falls behind.
3. **Document contributions**
 - Keep a shared folder (e.g., Google Docs) 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.

CLASS POLICY

- **AI tools:** Feel free to use AI tools creatively! Use responsibly and verify information. AI will increasingly work alongside you, so start learning how to collaborate with it responsibly.
- **No cross-section activities:** You must stay within your assigned section for all course activities.
- **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 participation 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. 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!