

ISOM1400 Syllabus – Digital Philanthropy

Course Information

Course Title: **Digital Philanthropy: Harnessing Technology for Social Changes and Beyond**

Course Code: ISOM1400

No. of Credits: 3

Prerequisites / Corequisites: None

Instructor: Prof. MENG Zhaoli

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Course Description

This course explores how digital tools and IT systems are transforming traditional philanthropy and advancing venture philanthropy. Students will gain insights into operational dynamics, digital transformation, and best practices, as well as how commercial models can address philanthropic challenges. They will analyze ethical dilemmas and complexities introduced by digital innovation through critical thinking, debates, hands-on rule design, and case studies. Students will examine how technological transformation influences economic growth and social equity while recognizing technology's dual nature: its immense transformative potential and the risks of unintended inequities. As they navigate a world increasingly shaped by AI, students will reflect on how to harness technology responsibly and thoughtfully to ensure equitable and meaningful social impact.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

1. Analyze the principles of philanthropy and evaluate its transformation through technology.

2. Examine digital transformation across industries using real-world case studies.
3. Discuss digital governance and the core principles that sustain digital communities.
4. Evaluate how venture philanthropy and fintech address societal challenges.
5. Collaborate in teams and develop skills in project-based teamwork.
6. Communicate insights on philanthropy and present tech-driven solutions through writing and presentations.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Group Project Report	ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5, ILO6	Develop and present a debate-based argument using course knowledge and teamwork.
Group Presentation	ILO2, ILO3, ILO5, ILO6	Communicate effectively, respond to peer feedback, and integrate ethical reflection.
Midterm and Final Exam	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	Assess understanding of key concepts and ability to critically analyze case-based scenarios.

Assessment and Grading

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Grade
In-class performance	20%
Group Project Report	15%
Group Presentation	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

Grading Rubrics

Each assessed component will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Clarity and Structure:

- Ideas are clearly expressed with logical flow and coherence.
- Arguments are well-structured, with appropriate use of headings and formatting.

2. Analytical Depth:

- Demonstrates deep understanding of key concepts and theories.
- Applies critical thinking to real-world problems.
- Supports points with well-chosen examples and evidence.

3. Relevance and Application:

- Effectively connects course content to philanthropic and technological contexts.
- Solutions or perspectives proposed are realistic and grounded.

4. Originality and Creativity:

- Shows innovation in approach, analysis, or proposed solutions.
- Brings unique insight to case studies or assigned topics.

5. Ethical and Social Reflection:

- Identifies ethical issues and proposes responsible solutions.
- Demonstrates awareness of social equity and impact of digital tools.

6. Teamwork and Communication (for group work):

- Demonstrates collaborative effort.
- Presents ideas clearly in both written and oral formats.
- Engages constructively during Q&A or discussions.

Weekly Teaching Schedule (Tentative)

1. Understanding Philanthropy
2. Best Practice & Philanthropy Product Design
3. Digital Economy and Philanthropy
4. Platform and Philanthropy
5. Breaking the Growth Ceiling
6. Digital Transformation & Value Creation in Philanthropy
7. Midterm Exam+Case Study
8. Ecosystem Governance
9. Ethics, Equity, and Transparency
10. Group Presentation
11. Group Presentation
12. Inclusive Finance and Philanthropy
13. Revenue-Based Financing and Philanthropy

Course AI Policy

Use of generative AI tools is permitted for brainstorming and outlining purposes only. Finalizing assignments using AI is not allowed. Students must disclose any AI assistance used in their submissions. Final deliverables must reflect the student's own understanding and critical thinking. Any misuse or overreliance on AI that undermines academic integrity will be treated as a violation of HKUST's Academic Honor Code.

Recommended Readings:

- Banerjee, A. V., & Duflo, E. (2019). Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty. PublicAffairs.
- Shapiro, C., & Varian, H. R. (1998). Information Rules: A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy. Harvard Business Press.
- Rosling, H. (2018). Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think. Flatiron Books.
- Gates, M., & Gates, B. (2019). The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World. Flatiron Books.
- Rebhan, H. (2017). All Things Strange and Wonderful: My Adventures as a Vet in Africa. Finch Publishing.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has a zero-tolerance policy toward academic misconduct, including plagiarism, cheating, and misuse of AI tools. All submissions must be original and properly cited. For full details, refer to the Academic Integrity website: <https://acadreg.ust.hk/general/academic-integrity>