

Summer Venture Lab 2025 Course Syllabus

(Rev. 03/17/2025)

Course Title: Summer Venture Lab

Course Numbers: ENGIN 183C (4 units) & ENGIN 183/283 (2 units)

Total Combined Course Credit Units: 6

Academic Units Correspondence & Definition: 6 units represents 15 hours of instruction per week for six weeks. Classroom instruction includes lectures, mentoring, supervised project work, and guest speakers

Term: 2025 Summer Session A (27th May – 3rd July 2025)

Instructors: Mark Searle (msearle@berkeley.edu) & Elizabeth Saunders (esaunders@berkeley.edu).

Course Coordinator: To be determined

Class Meeting Day/Time: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10 AM - 2 PM

Class Meeting Location: SCET Class Meeting Space

Online Office Hours: Via Zoom, scheduled week-to week (subject to change)

Course Description

Are you working on a startup? Are you wondering what you should do next? Which way to jump? Then this course is for you.

Maybe you completed a Challenge Lab, and you want to build on your momentum. Maybe you just got through BMoE Bootcamp, and the team wants to stay together to see where you can take this thing. Maybe you have a prototype you love, and you think you're ready to start selling. Maybe you are generating revenue and think you're ready for a big investment, or admission to a famous accelerator. Or maybe you and some friends just crystallized "the best idea ever." Whatever stage you have reached, the annoying truth is that most teams get stuck or fall apart before they can ever deliver their full potential. Let's work to avoid that outcome for you.

You will work closely with a lead instructor who has lived both success and failure through every stage of startup creation and development. Together we will honestly address real and difficult startup challenges to seek the truth about the future for each idea, team, and market opportunity. Teams will work in a hands-on collaborative environment actively engaging their own startup's challenges while also helping their classmates, learning from the instructor, each other, and possibly outside speakers & mentors.

Course Objectives

The course is intended to help each startup team with whatever is their specific top priority. Some of you may need to focus on team dynamics and development, others on concept development and customer discovery / validation, still others on demo / prototype / product development, or scaling up sales, and more. We will work together to design and deploy real-world solutions to accelerate each team's progress, based on their specific immediate challenges. This acceleration will either increase the likelihood and speed of success or could possibly drive faster realization that the business will not work as designed, and you need to pivot or stop.

Disclaimer: Syllabus & Schedule are subject to change.

There are three acceptable outcomes:

1. Progress toward a sustainable, scalable (& scaling) business
2. Pivot into something a bit different
3. Informed decision to stop and do something else altogether

Intended Enrollees

This course is intended for undergraduate or graduate students and motivated non-student entrepreneurs who are already working on creating, launching, or scaling a startup. Enrolled students must be working in a team of at least two people. Only one team member needs to be enrolled in the course, though it is beneficial to have as many team members enrolled as possible.

Course Communication

Questions about attendance, assignment submission, communication and general course logistics should all be directed to Course Coordinator (yet to be named).

Scheduling office hours and questions about your startups should be directed to Instructors, Mark Searle (msearle@berkeley.edu) & Elizabeth Saunders (esaunders@berkeley.edu).

Allow one full academic day for a response before sending a follow-up email. To ensure that your email is not lost in our inboxes, please use “SVL-2025” in the beginning of your subject line.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, will be taken at each class session, and will be counted toward your satisfactory completion of the course requirements. In the time of COVID-19, however, to maintain in-person instruction we need cooperation across the whole community: please do not come to class if you are sick.

If you know you will need to miss a class, please inform the teaching team as soon as possible and definitely in advance of the class meeting.

Participation Policy

To get the most out of this course, it is important for every student to come to class prepared by watching or reading any assigned materials that will be posted on bCourses. Please be present, pay attention to Instructor and Course Coordinator comments and other student presentations, ask questions, and add observations.

Assignments

There will be (roughly) six required assignments for each startup team throughout the course, one each week, and every team will be required to present their assignments to the class and the instructor every week.

Teams will be assigned to one of two groups: Blue Group and Gold Group – look at bCourses Announcements for your group color and presentation dates.

The assignments are constructed to help you and your team progress in your startup.

Remember: these presentations are NOT “pitches” to the class.

Instead, your primary presentation focus will be:

- What we did and why
- What we learned
- What we plan to do next and why

When it is your Group’s day to present, you will need to submit your slides via upload to bCourses on time, and late submission will affect your grade for that assignment.

Grading

Grade breakdown:

- Weekly Presentation Assignments 60%
- Class Attendance 20%
- Class Participation 20%

Class Sessions Structure & Schedule

Class sessions will follow the same basic structure and flow, except in the cases when they don’t.

In the anticipated “base case” each class session will be divided into multiple components:

- Lecture / Discussion on a topic relevant to creating and building startups.
- Student presentations on progress over the prior week.
- Guest speakers & panels on relevant topics [NOTE: these are not yet scheduled and will be added into the course plan below based on speaker schedules and availability].

Class Session	Date	Expected Topics (<i>likely to change</i>)
Class 1	Tuesday 27-May	1. Introduction to the course & guiding principles 2. All teams introduce & discuss their startups without slides 3. Lecture/Discussion: Receiving Input & Feedback 4. First Day Reception and social event (short walk from class)
Class 2	Wednesday 28-May	1. Lecture/Discussion: Defining Customer Segments through Customer Discovery 2. Blue Group Teams present 3. One-on-one meetings for Blue Group teams 4. Quick pitch practice

Class 3	Thursday 29-May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Customer Interviewing Basics 2. Gold Group Teams present 3. One-on-one meetings for Gold Group teams 4. Tips for getting customer interviews & discussion of Customer Discovery plans
Class 4	Tuesday 03-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Thinking About Value Propositions 2. Discussion topic: interdependence between Customer Segments and Value Propositions 3. Individual Team Exercise (& sharing by volunteers): Value Proposition mapping
Class 5	Wednesday 04-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Solutions Design & Testing 2. Blue Group Teams present 3. Discussion of challenges and group solution seeking
Class 6	Thursday 05-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Understanding Customer Decision Making 2. Gold Group Teams present 3. Discussion of challenges and group solution seeking
Class 7	Tuesday 10-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflections on reading assignment “What is Success for You?” 2. Presenting challenge. 3. Student-Entrepreneur Panel – (How) Can You Do/Be Both?
Class 8	Wednesday 11-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Working with Partners 2. Blue Group Teams present 3. Discussion of challenges and group solution seeking
Class 9	Thursday 12-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Pivots & Go / No-Go Decisions. 2. Gold Group Teams present 3. Discussion of challenges and group solution seeking
Class 10	Tuesday 17-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: Making the Money Work 2. Blue Group Teams present 3. Discussion of challenges and group solution seeking (Possible team product demo & discussion if someone volunteers.)
Class 11	Wednesday 14-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Metrics that Matter (Now) 2. Gold Group Teams present 3. Discussion of challenges and group solution seeking (Possible team product demo & discussion if someone volunteers.)
NO CLASS	Thursday 19-June	NO CLASS MEETING – JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY

Class 12	Tuesday 24-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: subject to be decided 2. Gold Group Teams present (Possible team product demo if someone volunteers.)
Class 13	Wednesday 25-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture/Discussion: subject to be decided 2. Gold Group Teams present (Possible team product demo if someone volunteers.)
Class 14	Thursday 26-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guest Speaker – Colette Sandstedt, multiple startup CMO & Academy Award nominated documentary film maker – Startup Marketing + The Importance & Elements of Storytelling 2. 1-1 mentoring with Colette
Class 15	Tuesday 01-July	Practice “pitches” and discussion, advising for all teams
Class 16	Wednesday 02-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Product Demos for all teams with a demo ready to show 2. Discussion of next-step priorities.
Class 17	Thursday 03-June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All teams make final presentations 2. Reflections on the summer journey and what’s ahead 3. End of course celebration and socializing

Course Evaluations

At the end of the term, students will be asked to fill out an evaluation to give feedback about the course. SCET values and appreciates student responses, which are used to better understand and improve our courses. Students are strongly encouraged to submit the evaluation.

Student Code of Conduct & Academic Integrity

Berkeley Honor Code: Everyone in this class is expected to adhere to this code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.”

Student Conduct: Ethical conduct is of utmost importance in your education and career. The instructors, the College of Engineering, and U.C. Berkeley are responsible for supporting you by enforcing all students’ compliance with the [Code of Student Conduct](#) and the policies listed in the [CoE Student Guide](#). The Center for Student Conduct is set up to support you when you have been affected by actions that may violate these community rules. This includes an organized and transparent process, student participation in the process, mechanisms for appeals, and other mechanisms to protect fairness (<https://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct>).

Academic Integrity: Any assignment submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals, but only with proper attribution. To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action. For additional information on plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and how to avoid it, see the [Berkeley Library website](#).

If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or examination, be sure to seek clarification from your instructor beforehand. Anyone caught committing academic misconduct will be reported to the University Office of Student Conduct. Potential consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty may include a formal discipline file, probation, dismissal from the University, or other disciplinary actions.

Inclusion: We are committed to creating a learning environment welcoming of all students. To do so, we intend to support a diversity of perspectives and experiences and respect each others’ identities and backgrounds (including race/ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, language, religion, ability, etc.). To help accomplish this:

- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by a lack of inclusion, please contact the instructors, your ESS advisor, or the departmental Faculty Equity

Advisor (list and information at: <https://diversity.berkeley.edu/faculty-equity-advisors>). An anonymous feedback form is also available at

<https://engineering.berkeley.edu/about/equity-and-inclusion/feedback/>.

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from your legal name, designate a preferred name for use in the classroom at: <https://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-records/your-name-records-rosters>.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class (e.g., family matters, current events), please don't hesitate to come and talk with the instructor(s). We want to be resources for you.
- We are all in the process of learning how to respect and include diverse perspectives and identities. Please take care of yourself and those around you as we work through the challenging but important learning process.
- As a participant in this class, recognize that you can be proactive about making other students feel included and respected.

Student Accommodations

We honor and respect the different learning needs of our students, and are committed to ensuring you have the resources you need to succeed in our class. If you need accommodations for any reason (e.g. religious observance, health concerns, insufficient resources, etc.) please discuss with your instructor or academic advisor how to best support you. We will respect your privacy under state and Federal laws, and you will not be asked to share more than you are comfortable sharing. The disabled student program is a related resource, listed below. UC Berkeley is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me.

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you can work with the Disabled Students' Program (DSP) to request an official accommodation. The Disabled Students' Program (DSP) is the campus office responsible for authorizing disability-related academic accommodations, in cooperation with the students themselves and their instructors. You can find more information about DSP, including contact information and the application process here: dsp.berkeley.edu. If you have already been approved for accommodations through DSP, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination

The University is committed to creating and maintaining a community dedicated to the advancement, application and transmission of knowledge and creative endeavors through academic excellence, where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. For more information on related policies, resources and how to report an incident, see the [Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination \(OPHD\) website](#).

Safety and Emergency Preparedness/Evacuation Procedures

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As class activities may keep you on campus at night, check out the Cal's [Night Safety Services website](#) for details on the University's comprehensive free night safety services. See the [Office of Emergency Management website](#) for details on Emergency Preparedness/Evacuation Procedures. The UC Berkeley [Police Department website](#) also has information regarding safety on campus. Dial 510-642-3333 or use a Blue Light emergency phone if you need help.

Grievances

If you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor. Then, if necessary, contact the SCET Academic Program Manager for additional information. Additional resources can be found on the [Student Advocate's Office website](#) and the [Ombuds Office for Students website](#).

SCET Certificate in Entrepreneurship & Technology

This class can be used towards requirements to earn the SCET Certificate in Entrepreneurship & Technology. For details on the certificate requirements and other opportunities to engage with the Center, see the [SCET website](#).

Additional Resources

See the [Student Affairs website](#) for more information on campus and community resources.

Center for Access to Engineering Excellence (CAEE)

The Center for Access to Engineering Excellence (<https://engineering.berkeley.edu/student-services/academic-support>) is an inclusive center that offers study spaces, nutritious snacks, and tutoring in >50 courses for Berkeley engineers and other majors across campus. The Center also offers a wide range of professional development, leadership, and wellness programs, and loans iclickers, laptops, and professional attire for interviews.

Counseling and Psychological Services

University Health Services Counseling and Psychological Services staff are available to you at the Tang Center (<http://uhs.berkeley.edu>) and in the College of Engineering (<https://engineering.berkeley.edu/students/advising-counseling/counseling/>), and provide confidential assistance to students managing problems that can emerge from illness such as financial, academic, legal, family concerns, and more. Long wait times at the Tang Center in the past led to a significant expansion to include a 24/7 counseling line at (855) 817-5667. This line will connect you with help in a very short time-frame. Short-term help is also available from the Alameda County Crisis hotline: 800-309-2131. If you or someone you know is experiencing an emergency that puts their health at risk, please call 911.

The Care Line (PATH to Care Center)

The Care Line (<https://care.berkeley.edu/care-line/>) is a 24/7, confidential, free, campus-based resource for urgent support around sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, and invasion of sexual privacy. The Care Line will connect you with a confidential advocate for trauma-informed crisis support including time-sensitive information, securing urgent safety resources, and accompaniment to medical care or reporting.

Ombudsperson for Students

The Ombudsperson for Students (<http://students.berkeley.edu/Ombuds>) provides a confidential service for students involved in a University-related problem (academic or administrative), acting as a neutral complaint resolver and not as an advocate for any of the parties involved in a dispute. The Ombudsman can provide information on policies and procedures affecting students, facilitate students' contact with services able to assist in resolving the problem, and assist students in complaints concerning improper application of University policies or procedures. All matters referred to this office are held in strict confidence. The only exceptions, at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, are cases where there appears to be imminent threat of serious harm.

UC Berkeley Food Pantry

The UC Berkeley Food Pantry (<https://pantry.berkeley.edu>) aims to reduce food insecurity among students and staff at UC Berkeley, especially the lack of nutritious food. Students and staff can visit the pantry as many times as they need and take as much as they need while being mindful that it is a shared resource. The pantry operates on a self-assessed need basis; there are no eligibility requirements. The pantry is not for students and staff who need supplemental snacking food, but rather, core food support.