



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

# **PADM-GP 4311.001**

## **Lean Approaches to Social Innovation**

### **January 2023**

#### **Instructor Information**

- Alexander Shermansong
- Email: shermansong@nyu.edu
- Office Hours: Before / After class by appointment

#### **Course Information**

- Class Meeting Times:
  - Wednesday, January 4, 2022, 6.00 – 9.00 PM
  - Saturday, January 7, 2022, 9.00 AM - 4.00 PM
  - Wednesday, January 11, 2022, 6.00 - 9.00 PM
- Class Location: Zoom

#### **Course Description**

Affordable housing that's 40% less expensive to build. Three times as many soup kitchen clients served each hour. Hospital ER wait time cut by 90%. This is the type of impact social innovators aspire to achieve by applying the method called "Lean."

In the 1950s, Toyota developed the Lean methodology for process improvement that's driven by the frontline and middle managers in order to cut waste and improve customer service. Since then, manufacturers globally adopted it, then finance and healthcare organizations, and now nonprofits, government agencies, and for-profit and hybrid social enterprises. What is Lean?

How do you set up a Lean program? Which organizations have seen great results, and why? How does Lean relate to financial and social impact strategy and operations?

## Learning Objectives

Students will understand the basic concepts and methods of Lean; gain familiarity with case studies from nonprofit, government, and social enterprise; and become ready to take an active role in a Lean project

## Course Requirements

### Class participation, 30% of grade

Students will be expected to show evidence of their reading through questions, discussions, and presentations.

### One pagers, 30% of grade

Students will submit two one-page decision memos. The purpose of the assignments is to show mastery both of the concepts and communication skills persuading others of your views. Decision memos will be addressed to a social impact CEO (e.g., government commissioner, social enterprise founder, investor) and will lay out the rationale for a key decision. In each exercise, students will be expected to take a point of view, estimate the potential impact, and explain the rationale – all in condensed, compelling prose. Writing assignments:

- What is the problem / waste?
- Who is the customer? What is the value add?

### Lean process improvement / business model, 40% of grade

As a final project, students will write a short memo applying the concepts from class to a specific project or opportunity (~1,200 words). Students may either propose a Lean process improvement at their workplace or another social impact organization or conceive a startup or new initiative using Lean principles. These memos are typically used in the early stages of a Lean endeavor and then iteratively over the life cycle. To be effective, they must include hypotheses on how to deliver value to customers, potential impact and hypothesis for achieving it, the voice of the customer, and specific goals, metrics, and benchmarks.

## Reading Assignments

- Aristotle. *Physics*. Book II. 350 BC. (11 pages)
- Brian Elms. *Peak Performance*. Governing Books. 2016. Chapters 1-4. (29 page)
- Zack Rosenburg. "What a car company had to teach a non-profit about rebuilding faster after natural disasters." *Quartz*. 20 September 2016. (2 pages)
- Nawras Skhmot. "The 8 Wastes of Lean." *The Lean Way*. 2017. (7 pages)
- "How 'Form-a-Palooza' is Helping Washington DC Simplify City Government." *Bloomberg Cities*. August 2018. (2 pages)

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- "Chicago Creates 150 Additional Neighborhood Police Officers by Streamlining Administrative Operations." *US Mayor Newspaper*. August, 2009.  
Mona El-Naggar. "In Lieu of Money, Toyota Donates Efficiency to New York Charity." *The New York Times*. 26 July 2013. (4 pages)
- Mark Friedman. *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough*. Trafford. 2005. Chapters 1-2. (14 pages)
- Atul Gawande. "The Checklist." *The New Yorker*. 2007.
- IDEO. "Innovation in Government." (18 pages)
- Lean Program Office, The Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting. *State of Colorado Lean Program Office Progress Report: Pursuing Effective, Efficient and Elegant Government Services*. 2013. (98 pages)
- Nikhil Sahni et al. "Unleashing Breakthrough Innovation in Government." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. 2013. (9 pages)
- Steve Blank. "Why the Lean Start-up Changes Everything." *Harvard Business Review*. May 2013. (6 pages)
- David Collis. "Lean Strategy." *Harvard Business Review*. March 2016. (11 pages)
- Michel Gelobter. *Lean Startups for Social Change*. Berrett-Koehler. 2015. Chapters 3, 10-12. (56 pages)
- Eric Ries. *The Lean Startup*. Crown. 2011. Chapters 9-12. (86 pages)

## Course Schedule

### Class 1: What is Lean?

The course will begin with an overview of Lean concepts and methods, including: History of Lean, plan-do-check-act approach to problem solving, voice of the customer, seven types of waste, and engaging the frontline.

#### Pre-read

- Aristotle. *Physics*. Book II. 350 BC. (optional)
- Brian Elms. *Peak Performance*. Governing Books. 2016. Chapters 1-4.
- Zack Rosenburg. "What a car company had to teach a non-profit about rebuilding faster after natural disasters." *Quartz*. 20 September 2016.
- Nawras Skhmot. "The 8 Wastes of Lean." *The Lean Way*. 2017.

#### Guest Lecturer

- Brian Elms, Innovation Practice Lead at Change & Innovation Agency; author of *Peak Performance*; former director of City of Denver Peak Academy

### Writing Assignment due Next Class

- One pager: What is the problem / waste?

### Reading due Next Class

“How ‘Form-a-Palooza’ is Helping Washington DC Simplify City Government.” Bloomberg Cities. August 2018.

- "Chicago Creates 150 Additional Neighborhood Police Officers by Streamlining Administrative Operations." *US Mayor Newspaper*. August, 2009.
- Mona El-Naggar. "In Lieu of Money, Toyota Donates Efficiency to New York Charity." *The New York Times*. 26 July 2013. (4 pages)
- Lean Program Office, The Governor’s Office of State Planning and Budgeting. *State of Colorado Lean Program Office Progress Report: Pursuing Effective, Efficient and Elegant Government Services*. 2013. (98 pages) – just skim this

### Optional Reading

- Mark Friedman. *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough*. Trafford. 2005. Chapters 1-2. (14 pages)
- Atul Gawande. "The Checklist." *The New Yorker*. 2007. (2 pages)
- IDEO. "Innovation in Government." (18 pages)
- Nikhil Sahni et al. "Unleashing Breakthrough Innovation in Government." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. 2013. (9 pages)

### **Class 2: Lean in Government and Nonprofits**

Many state governments have adopted Lean across regulatory, infrastructure, and operations. This class includes several case studies.

- Brief presentations from students of assigned reading
- Peer review of one-pagers
- In-class exercise: Multi-round process-improvement simulation typically used in Lean training programs

### Writing Assignment due Next Class

- One-pager: Who is the customer? What’s the value add?

### Reading due Next Class

- Michel Gelobter. *Lean Startups for Social Change*. Berrett-Koehler. 2015. Chapters 3, 10-12. (56 pages)
- Eric Ries. *The Lean Startup*. Crown. 2011. Chapters 9-12. (86 pages)

### Optional Reading

- Steve Blank. "Why the Lean Start-up Changes Everything." *Harvard Business Review*. May 2013. (6 pages)
- David Collis. "Lean Strategy." *Harvard Business Review*. March 2016. (11 pages)

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### **Class 3: Lean Startups**

Many social entrepreneurs want to change the world; the challenge is going from a small beginning to sustainable scale. This class will cover Lean concepts tied to launching a new program or organization.

- Student presentations of their one-pagers
- Brief presentations from students of assigned reading

Preparation for final project

Guest Speaker

- Kat Benesh, Chief of Operations, Strategy, and Oversight, MBTA (invited)

Writing Assignment

- Final project

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

## **Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## **NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternative.

