



UC SANTA BARBARA
Bren School of Environmental
Science & Management

Value Proposition Design for New Environmental Ventures
ESM 256B, Winter 2025

Class: M 12:30-1:45 pm
BH 1414

Instructor: Emily Cotter
Office Hours: By appointment (see booking calendar)
Office: BH 3406
Email: ecotter@bren.ucsb.edu

Course Description

ESM 256B is about developing analytical and conceptual skills required to assess the market potential of an idea for a new environmental venture. Students will perform customer discovery research to generate an idea, identify and define a market opportunity, and assess whether their concept for a new environmental venture is a viable opportunity. Topics covered include customer discovery, industry analysis, market definition, opportunity recognition, and value proposition design. This course is required for students who want to submit Eco-E Project proposals.

Course Objectives

- Acquire skills for researching and analyzing key industry, market, competitor and customer information, gathering data from both primary and secondary sources.
- Develop analytical and critical thinking skills through the process of identifying and defining a market opportunity for a new environmental venture.
- Build a compelling case to demonstrate whether the concept is a viable opportunity, through a final presentation given to a panel of judges composed of entrepreneurs and investors from the local business community.

Idea Generation

As part of the educational process, throughout the Environmental Innovation & Entrepreneurship ("Innovation") program, individual students will bring a variety of ideas and information to a class project for discussion, review, and analysis. Any ideas or information introduced to a class project by an individual student will be available for use by any student team member, both during or after the class project, for any purpose, unless it is Prior IP. Prior IP is intellectual property that is developed by a student before the class project began and that is both recognized and protectable under United States copyright, patent, or trademark laws. Any Prior IP introduced by a student during the course of an Innovation class project may be used by all student team members in the course of the class project for academic purposes only.

To avoid misunderstandings and confusion, if a student wants to contribute Prior IP to an Innovation class project, that student should clearly identify it as Prior IP to the other student team members and notify the instructor that the Prior IP is being contributed to the class project for academic use in the Innovation class project.

Course Software

Canvas – Learning Management System

Slack – Messaging Application

Students should register for an account with Slack and join the **mesm2026eco-e** workspace. See Canvas for the invitation link.

Required Reading

Harvard Business Publishing Coursepack

Cases are listed in the schedule below. See course entitled “Value Proposition Design for New Environmental Ventures (ESM 256B, W25)” on Harvard Business Publishing site at:

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1249477>

All the readings are listed under the Harvard course entitled “Value Proposition Design for New Environmental Ventures (ESM 256B, W25).” Each Harvard reading costs \$4.95-8.75. The total approximate cost for the coursepack is \$36.15 (paid directly to Harvard Business Publishing).

All other required reading will be made available via download on Canvas.

Optional Reading

Value Proposition Design

Alexander Osterwalder, Yves Pigneur, Gregory Bernarda, Alan Smith and Trish Papadakos

<https://strategyzer.com/books/value-proposition-design>

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend every class. Attendance and participation will account for 15% of your grade (max. 300 points). Participation is evaluated in several ways. Obviously, participation is correlated with attendance. It is impossible to earn participation points if a student is not in class. Students remain responsible for submitting work due even if absent. Students should e-mail the instructor prior to any missed class. Students remain responsible for the material covered and assignments given during an absence. Attendance at all class sessions is critical to the learning process and the participation component of the course. Entrepreneurship is a collaborative and interactive process. Entrepreneurs find opportunities, adapt, and improve themselves by listening and learning from others. Please come to class prepared to participate in the day’s activities.

Course Assessment

The deadline is at the beginning of class (i.e., 12:30 pm) on the due date listed for each assignment, unless otherwise instructed. Assignments submitted after the deadline but within 24 hours will lose 5% of the total points; after that, an additional 5% for each day that the assignment is late.

Assessment	Individual Contribution	Project/Team Contribution
Attendance and Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Attendance • In-Class Discussions • In-Class Presentations 	300 points (15%)	
Eco-E Opportunity Concept Project:		
Student Profile Survey	100 points (5%)	
Eco-E Opportunity Concept (Initial Proposal)		100 points (5%)
Sprint 1 Progress Report		100 points (5%)
Sprint 1 Presentation		200 points (10%)
Sprint 2 Progress Report		100 points (5%)
Interview Summaries (Sprint 1 & 2)	300 points (15%)	
Final Presentation (Sprint 1 & 2)		400 points (20%)
Final Report (Written Summary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning Statement • Environmental Problem • Value Proposition Design Canvas: Value Map + Customer Profile 		300 points (15%)
Individual Contribution to Team Project, Based on Peer Evaluation	100 points (5%)	
TOTAL	800 points (40%)	1,200 points (60%)

GRAND TOTAL **2,000 points (100%)**

Eco-E Opportunity Concept Project

Working on an Eco-E Opportunity Concept Project, students will demonstrate their ability to perform customer discovery research and analyze a potential Eco-E Opportunity. Students may choose to work individually or on a team comprised of two to five people.

During the quarter, students will conduct customer discovery research, perform industry/market analysis, and research the environmental problem in two 3-week long “sprints,” as follows:

	<u>Sprint Period</u>	<u>Sprint Length</u>	<u>Presentation Date</u>
Sprint 1:	1/13/25 to 2/2/25	21 days	2/3/25
Sprint 2:	2/3/25 to 2/23/25	21 days	2/28/25*

**Eco-E Opportunity Concept Project – Final Presentations at 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (tentative timing) on Friday, February 28, 2025.*

The goal of these sprints is to “get out of the building” and talk to customers and/or industry experts face-to-face (or via Zoom), to begin gathering evidence for the following:

- a customer problem exists;
- a proposed solution that solves a problem for an identifiable group of customers/users;
- the market is accessible and potentially large enough that a viable business might be built; and,

- a significant environmental problem exists that potentially can be addressed by a new product or service.

Teams should set milestones for each sprint (e.g., interview 5 industry experts and 5 potential customers during Sprint 1). During each sprint, teams should aim to interview at least 10-15 industry experts and/or potential customers. The required minimum for each student will be 3 interviews per sprint or 6 interviews per project over the six weeks.

Students will also gather secondary research to analyze the environmental problem, environmental policy and existing solutions. Additionally, teams will research and analyze the external environment to provide supporting context for developing a business model based on the Eco-E Opportunity Concept.

On each presentation day, students will report what they learned through customer discovery research. Students will also share their research and analysis that supports the overall Eco-E Opportunity Concept.

Description of Course Assignments

Student Profile Survey

The purpose of a Student Profile is to provide your classmates with some insight into your background and to help in the formation of project teams. Note: Your responses will be shared with the entire class. A Google Form survey link will be provided on Canvas.

Your Student Profile must be completed by 5:00 PM on Mon 1/6/25. The Student Profile will account for 5% of your grade (max. 100 points).

Eco-E Opportunity Concept – Initial Proposal

By the Team Formation Deadline, teams will create an Eco-E Opportunity Concept “Initial Proposal.” This 1-page initial proposal should provide the team’s working name and the name of each team member, followed by a one-sentence description of the team’s proposed Eco-E Opportunity Concept or research focus.

In a brief paragraph, explain why the team came together or what initiated the project. Next, address the following questions:

- Is there a particular environmental problem that the team wants to help solve? Alternatively, list the possible environmental problem(s) the team expects to explore. Explain why.
- Is there a trend in a specific industry that may represent an opportunity? Is there a particular industry that interests all the team members? Alternatively, list the possible industries the team expects to explore. Explain why.
- Does the team have an initial hypothesis for a pain point to be solved for an identified customer or specific industry? What data, evidence or observations support this hypothesis?
- Is the team continuing research from the previous quarter? If so, what is the project status?

The goal for this quarter is to develop a clear and compelling Eco-E Opportunity Concept. Share your initial hypotheses and any evidence gathered, to date (if any).

Your team's Initial Proposal must be submitted on Canvas by 5:00 PM on Mon 1/13/25. The Eco-E Opportunity Concept – Initial Proposal will account for 5% of your grade (max. 100 points). These points will be the same for each team member.

Interview Summaries

Students will demonstrate their analytical skills and their ability to perform customer discovery research through interviews with industry experts and/or potential customers. Each student is required to participate in and submit Interview Summaries for at least 6 interviews over the six-week project.

An interview summary should be submitted for each interview conducted by the team. It is a brief report of the key insights from an interview with an industry expert or potential customer. Be sure to list all students who participated as interviewees. You will create an "Interview Summary" (PDF) to be submitted on Canvas. For further instructions, see "Interview Summary Guidelines" on Canvas.

Students should try to spread out interviews over the six-week project and strive for at least 3 interviews in Sprint 1. Interview summaries must be completed by 12:30 PM on Mon 2/24/25 for grading purposes. Interview Summaries will account for 15% of your grade (max. 300 points).

Progress Reports

At the end of each sprint, a Progress Report will be submitted by each team/project. The Progress Report will state the research focus and goals for the reported sprint, then summarize what was achieved through research and key takeaways. For customer discovery research, the Progress Report should include what was learned during the sprint, any customer problems discovered, any new ideas generated or any resulting pivots, and an assessment of potential opportunities.

Each team will create a "Progress Report" (MS Word Doc) to be submitted on Canvas. For further instructions, see "Progress Report Guidelines" on Canvas.

A progress report for Sprint 1 must be completed by 12:30 PM on Mon 2/3/25. This Progress Report will account for 5% of your grade (max. 100 points). These points will be the same for each team member.

A progress report for Sprint 2 must be completed by 12:30 PM on Mon 2/24/25. This Progress Report will account for 5% of your grade (max. 100 points). These points will be the same for each team member.

Presentations

Each team will give one Sprint Presentation in class on Mon 2/3/25 and one Final Presentation to an audience on Fri 2/28/25. The Final Presentation will be judged by a panel of experts (business leaders, investors and entrepreneurs). Detailed guidelines for the Sprint Presentation and Final Presentation will be posted on Canvas.

A soft copy of the Sprint Presentation must be uploaded on Canvas by 12:30 PM on Mon 2/3/25. The Sprint Presentation will account for 10% of your grade (max. 200 points). These points will be the same for each team member.

A soft copy of the Final Presentation must be uploaded on Canvas by 8:30 AM on Fri 2/28/25. The Final Presentation will account for 20% of your grade (max. 400 points). These points will be the same for each team member.

Please use the following format for submission of your team's presentations:

Sprint Presentation_(Team Name)

Final Presentation_(Team Name)

Final Report (Written Summary)

At the end of this course, teams will write a Final Report to summarize their Eco-E Opportunity Concept (roughly 3-4 pages in length). This written summary will include a one-sentence "Positioning Statement," a strategic statement that succinctly communicates the unique value that the new environmental venture would offer to a particular target market segment. Next, teams will define their environmental problem by narrowing from an overarching issue to a specific environmental problem that is scaled to the team's proposed solution.

In addition, teams will complete a final Value Proposition Design Canvas, which includes both the Customer Profile and Value Map. In this Final Report, the team will address each component of the Value Proposition Design Canvas and provide industry datapoints, market research and evidence from primary research to support the team's current hypotheses. The final Value Proposition Design Canvas will be included as an attachment to the Final Report. Detailed guidelines for the Final Report (Written Summary) will be posted on Canvas.

A soft copy of the Final Report (Written Summary) must be uploaded on Canvas by 12:30 PM on Mon 3/10/25. Each team will upload a Final Report on Canvas. The Final Report will account for 15% of your grade (max. 300 points). These points will be the same for each team member.

In addition, 5% of your grade (max. 100 points) will depend on your individual contribution to the team, as evaluated by your teammates. An evaluation form will be completed at the end of the quarter to provide these peer evaluations.