

# Virtual World Entrepreneurship BUS610



**Virtual World Research Center**

**Syllabus  
Spring 2008**

**Deborah Wise  
September 15, 2008**

## I. Course

Course Number:	BUS610
Course Title:	Virtual World Entrepreneurship
Number of Quarter Credit Hours:	4
Prerequisite:	None
Date Revised:	September 2008
Prepared By:	Deborah Wise
Textbook:	Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games, by Edward Castronova
	The Entrepreneur's Guide to Second Life: Making Money in the Metaverse, by Daniel Terdiman

## II. Course Description

Virtual World Entrepreneurship is a graduate-level course that examines online culture, design and production. While not intended to create professional online entrepreneurs, it prepares participants for immersion in a virtual environment, virtual market research and produce and execute a virtual business model that can become a template for future projects. Design decisions from a technology view will be assessed, along with the economies of a virtual world lifestyle

## III. Objectives of the Course

- A. Become familiar with Second Life as an example of a virtual social and business environment.
- B. Demonstrate the knowledge, skills and ability to effectively conduct market research in a virtual space to discover new commerce opportunities.
- C. Demonstrate the ability to produce and execute an applicable business plan based on a pre-determined budget, with cost and revenue data during a prescribed period of time.

- D. Develop, deliver and evaluate a product of your own making, as well as products developed by fellow students in the virtual environment.
- E. Prepare a final project report that chronicles the development and execution of market research, business plan, product development and launch, and results.

## IV. Instructional Approach

The course will emphasize creative thinking, where the instructor is less of a teacher and more of a facilitator in the learning process. New knowledge will be created by direct experience and participation in online discussion. Participants are expected to actively question and reflect on the material presented, producing projects that address specific requirements and outcomes. These projects and activities will form the basis for evaluation and grading. The following theorists directly impact the instructional approach for this class:

Dewey: The development of human knowledge as an adaptive response to the environment (particularly a synthetic environment)

Bernstein: The “Fundamental linkage of symbolic systems (*activity*), social structure (*community*), and the shaping of experience, as well as how such shaping takes place (*identity*).”

Bruner: Meaning-making as part of identity

Mead: Meaning-making as part of identity

Piaget: Constructivist learning as a “bottom-up” process enacted by an active learner (project base)

Vygotsky: Internalization and activity - “The process whereby the individual, through participation in interpersonal interaction in which cultural ways of thinking are demonstrated in action.”

Williams: Culture as products of human activity (particularly activity in virtual spaces, producing a “hybrid” culture)

Lave & Wenger: Situated learning/legitimate peripheral participation - Learning by observing from the fringe, then immersing in a community of practice.

## V. Grading Procedure

Evaluation	Points
Discussion Board Participation	200
Individual Projects (3@100pts.each)	300
Final Project	200
Project Presentation	75
Project Peer Review	75
Class activities	50
Online activities	50
Lessons Learned Paper	50
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>1000</b>

## VI. Text and References



**Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games** by Edward Castronova



**The Entrepreneur's Guide to Second Life: Making Money in the Metaverse** by Daniel Terdiman

## VII. General Instructions/Policies

### Contact Information:

Deborah Wise, Virtual World Research  
Email: [deb@bytesight.com](mailto:deb@bytesight.com) (office)

Phone: (720) 394-4043 (office)

## **Questions and Administrative Hours:**

Email is the preferred contact method (please put the course name and number in the subject line) and is checked almost constantly during business hours; outside business hours email is checked less frequently but an answer can usually be expected within 2 hours. The same is true for phone calls during business hours. Online chat can also be arranged.

## **Evaluation activities:**

Entrepreneurship rarely occurs in a vacuum; most development environments have a design project team consisting of requirements gatherers, designers, developers, management and even end-users. While we teach according to a problem-based model, basic material development skills need to be developed individually. Teams may complete the final project, as the entire project lifecycle will be documented. The expectation is that all members of the team will creatively contribute, increasing individual as well as team knowledge.

## **Discussion Board:**

Evaluation of discussion activity will be based on three main criteria: 1) Are there enough individual threads for the student to become part of the discussion (this is a quality vs. quantity decision)? 2) Is the grammar, spelling and sentence structure what one would expect to find in an academic setting (instant messaging grammar and spelling should be saved for that forum)? 3) Overall, do the discussion threads address the forum question presented without venturing far off-subject?

## **Individual Projects:**

Each individual project will focus on a specific phase of business development (Market Research, Product Development and Design, and Business Plan). These will be viewed as development “problems” with requirements and outcomes the learner must meet in order to be successful.

For each project, it is expected the deliverable will be posted according to requirements (email or learning management system), as well as virtual world demonstration. If participants don’t have access to the materials necessary for completion (computer hardware necessary to effectively participate in a virtual space), please let the instructor know at the first class session.

### **Final Project:**

The final project will actually follow a period of time as an operational business in Second Life, with costs and revenues submitted as part of project completion. The final project will be submitted in as other assignments, as well as demonstrated synchronously in Second Life. For this project only, participants may work in teams, in order to improve collaborative learning skills. There will be a separate rubric for the final project, to insure all requirements have been met.

### **Other Activities:**

Participation in this class requires the student to create a Second Life account and develop an avatar identity in a virtual space. There is no basic cost to do this, however there are optional paid accounts that can be purchased at the discretion of the student. Any money earned past the initial budget allotment (which will be provided) will be the student’s, as well as the copyright to any products developed. This is to encourage the student to further develop and create products and services that may or may not have real-world application.

### **Project Peer Review:**

This form-based review is meant to objectively determine how completely participants met the requirements and deliverables for each project. The object of this evaluation is to provide presentation feedback to the student.

### **Lessons Learned Paper:**

This one-page paper is less of an assignment and more of a reflective evaluation that answers three questions: 1) How has my knowledge of the subject been changed as a result of this class? 2) What concepts can I take back to my place of business/influence? 3) Has the class improved my ability to think creatively, conceptualize and complete a project according to defined outcomes, both in my estimation and that of my peers?

## VIII. Course Schedule

Date	Topics	Activities/Class	Reading/Online
Weeks 1-2	What is Second Life and who is in there?	Course Intro- Overview of syllabus and objectives	Discussion Board Questions
	Defining Virtual Worlds as Social Networks	Assignment guidelines	
	Intro to Final Project - choose teams (optional)	Week 1-2 learning activity: Create SL account and avatar	Online Activity Castronova Chap 1 -2 Terdiman Chap 1-2
	Podcast 1 on identity in Virtual Spaces	Final Project Rubric	Project 1- Explore SL and do market research
Weeks 3-4	Project Management Life Cycle - Business Plan	Project 1 Due- Review market research in class	Discussion Board questions
	Requirements and Outcomes for proposed product - how will it benefit residents?	Peer Review - Project 1	Online Activity - Building & Scripting
	The best and worst products in SL	Week 3-4 learning to build - prims	Castronova Chap 3 and 4 Terdiman Chap 3-4
	Scripting & Texturing	Sample Products from Past Classes	Project 2 - Proposed Product for consideration
Weeks 5-6	Business Plans - the economy of SL	Project 2 Due	Discussion Board Questions
	Marketing in SL	Peer Review - Project 2	Submit Fact-finding from market research
	Active Learning -	Talk about	Online Activity -

	constructing knowledge with Activity	business plan progress	Building Prototype
		Week 5-6 camera tools	Castronova Chap 5-6 Terdiman Chap 5-6
	Screen Shots		Project 3 - Prototype
Weeks 7-8	Prototypes		Discussion Board Questions
	Testing		Submit Final Project Requirements and Outcomes
	Refining	Week 7-8 SL scavenger hunt	Refine Prototype
	Feedback/Peer Focus Groups	Work on Final Project Plan	Castronova Chap 7-8 Terdiman Chap 7-8
Weeks 9-10	Rental Space - Setting up Shop	Prototype Due	Discussion Board Questions
			Online Activity - creating packaging
	What to charge	Peer Review - Prototype	Submit final prototype
	No Mod/No Copy/No Transfer	Packaging - making it look pretty	Castronova Chap 9-10 Terdiman Chap 9-10
Weeks 11-12	Product Launch!	Advertising the grand opening	Discussion Board Questions
	Keeping Accurate Records		Online Activity - Retail grand opening (synchronous)
	Copyrights and Taxation	Grand opening event	Project 3 - Business Plan
	Business plan financials		Castronova Chap 11-12 Terdiman Chap 11-12
Weeks 13-14	Long Term sales with short term memories	Project 3 Due	Discussion Board Questions
		Peer Review - Project 3	Online Activity
	Building on Innovation	Virtual Business - can it become real?	Final Project: Business plan and Post Mortem
Weeks 15-16	What did we learn?	Final projects due	Week 5 Discussion Board Questions
	Is activity an effective way	Project	Submit final project

	to learn? Could you teach what you learned to someone else?	Presentations - in SL (synchronous)	and postmortem
	Feedback		FCQ's