



Spark Social – Challenge yourself to improve society

HSÞ000G – Spring 2023

Aurora Course hosted at the University of Iceland

Important links

- <https://english.hi.is/spark> (English page for the course)
- <https://www.hi.is/kveikja> (Icelandic page for the course)
- <https://aurora-universities.eu/course-catalogue/> (Aurora Course Catalogue)

Deadline for initial registration request

- December 16th, 2022

Course description

The University of Iceland offers this transdisciplinary course for senior graduate students registered in all schools and disciplines across the University. The course is also open to students from all Aurora universities. The course combines online content, three virtual sessions that take place over the semester, and a three-day capstone experience on-site at the university of Iceland.

Participants will gain insights into current and future challenges and learn about how these are being addressed. Participants will work in collaborative interdisciplinary teams under the guidance of experienced industry and academic leaders to apply their new knowledge toward developing their own recommendations for tackling immediate and foreseeable challenges. Students will gain a deeper understanding of their own strengths as well as developing methods and approaches for innovative thinking under the guidance of experienced teachers.

The course incorporates the approach of *Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, which is part of the Aurora Competency Framework. This concept includes both *social entrepreneurship*, a way to achieve social change by employing entrepreneurial principles with or without the formation of new organizations, and *social innovation*, a process of developing and deploying effective solutions to challenging and often systemic social and environmental issues in support of social progress.

The course relies on brief assignments worked on during the virtual sessions, intense group work on the days of the on-site capstone session, and preparation of final deliverable, which is presented on the final day of the on-site session.

The course is 4 ECTS credits. Successful completion of the course depends on completion of the preparatory work, participation in the group work, and completion of a satisfactory final project and deliverable during the on-site capstone session.

Lesson Plan

The course runs from February to May in the spring of 2023. In February through April, students work individually and in groups, with three virtual sessions taking place through Zoom. Students attend the virtual sessions *either* on Thursday afternoon (1pm GMT), *or* on Friday mornings (9pm GMT), and each student must commit to either the Thursday or Friday sessions before the start of the course. In May we meet on-site for a three-day capstone session.

February 23/24 – Virtual Session – Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation

We will work together to consider questions such as: What is Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation? Should I strive to be a Social Entrepreneur? Or a Social Innovator? How can I best leverage my unique skills for the benefit of society and for my own fulfillment?

March 23/24 – Virtual Session – Societal Challenges

We will discuss the societal challenges that the world faces today, from the existential to the trivial, and from the global to the local. We will consider where a person can make the greatest impact, when to take the lead, and when to join a pre-existing effort.

April 20/21 – Virtual Session – Tools for Tackling the Challenges

We will dive deep into the methods of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation, in preparation for the capstone project. After the session, students will be ready to choose their challenge and familiarize themselves with it before we meet on-site in Iceland.

May 11-13 – On-Site Capstone Session

We will hear from thinkers on social challenges before working on our selected challenges in student teams supported by faculty members who guide the process. We will also work hands-on on understanding our personal career interests and think about how social networks can help us achieve our goals. During the three days, we will also hear from people from different sectors in society on how they have achieved their own goals.

At the end of the on-site session, student teams will present their own solution. The presentation will be attended by the organizers of Startup Social, an accelerator focused on social ventures, and successful teams will receive support to prepare an application to the accelerator.

Finally, students will receive a diploma confirming their participation and successful completion of the program.

Course Material

There is no course book for this course. Course material, including reading material, videos, and other on-line media content, is distributed through Canvas, the course management system.

Assessment

The course relies on brief assignments worked on during the virtual sessions, intense group work on the days of the on-site capstone session, and preparation of final deliverable, which is presented on the final day of the on-site session.

The course relies on group work on the day of the course, and preparation of final deliverable, which is presented at the end of day. Students who complete preparatory work, participate in the group work, and complete a satisfactory final deliverable receive a passing grade.

Learning Outcomes

Following the course, the student should

- be able to analyze and articulate the key societal challenges of today
- be able to take initiative on change and innovation in society, including using the methods of social entrepreneurship and innovation to do so
- be able to participate in interdisciplinary collaboration related to social entrepreneurship and innovation
- be aware of their own knowledge and capabilities relating to social entrepreneurship and innovation

This syllabus may be updated – detailed and finalized course information will be made available to registered students through the course site on Canvas.