

## **15.671 U-Lab: Transforming Business, Society, and Self**

**H1 Fall Term 2017, Thursdays, 5:30–9:00 PM, E62-233**

Credits: 6 Units of Pass/Fail credit

Faculty: Otto Scharmer, E62-419

Phone: 617-253-0486, [scharmer@mit.edu](mailto:scharmer@mit.edu)

TA: Shweta Agarwal [shwetaag@mit.edu](mailto:shwetaag@mit.edu)

TA: Swati Shah [swatis@mit.edu](mailto:swatis@mit.edu)

Admin. Support:

Barbara Seidler

Phone: (617) 715-5675

E-mail: [seiglerb@mit.edu](mailto:seiglerb@mit.edu)

Maximum size: 60 participants

Open to all MBA, SF, MIT, and non-MIT students

No special requirements or application necessary

Main resource website for the class:

[www.presencing.org](http://www.presencing.org)

[www.ottoscharmer.com](http://www.ottoscharmer.com)

<https://www.edx.org/course/transforming-business-society-self-u-lab-mitx-15-671x>

Required books:

For each session we will use specific chapters from these two books:

Scharmer, C. Otto: [\*Theory U. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.\*](#) San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2007/2016.

[\*Scharmer, C. Otto, and K. Kaufer: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies.\*](#) San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2013.

*Theory U* will be the primary textbook and focuses on the introduction to the U process and the U theory, including examples, drawings, and tools. *Leading* focuses on applying the U Theory to transforming economics and capitalism, and will be the complementing textbook.

## **U.Lab Intro Videos**

[Intro video 1 \(3 min\)](#)

[Intro video 2 \(5 min\)](#)

## **Course Description**

This interactive and experiential class is about leading profound innovation for pioneering a more sustainable economy and society. It focuses on the intertwined relationship of the following three questions:

- (1) Transformation of Capitalism: How can capitalism and society evolve from its current forms to an emerging future form that creates well-being for all (society 4.0)?
- (2) Multi-stakeholder innovation: What leadership does it take to create profound innovation at the scale of the whole ecosystem of stakeholders and partners?
- (3) Presencing: How can people access their authentic self — their highest future possibility — and “act from” that heightened state of awareness in the now?

The class facilitates a journey of profound self knowing and change and is organized around three main threads:

(1) Personal reflection practices: Each class will introduce a specific reflection practice that will help participants to generate the leadership knowledge that matters most: self-knowledge (Who am I? What is my journey and Work?)

(2) Relational practices: Each class will also focus on distinct relational practices that hone the leadership capacities of deep listening, precise observation, and dialogue.

(3) Societal practices: The third thread deals with the current transformation of capitalism (“society 4.0”), sustainability, and our role in multi-sector leadership for profound system-wide innovation and change.

In order to “explore the future by doing,” each student will develop a prototype initiative that connects the three threads — the personal, relational, and systemic dimensions.

## **Course Objectives**

This course is designed to create three types of knowledge:

- Conceptual knowledge: key concepts are sustainability and awareness-based leadership (Theory U)
- Practical knowledge: new tools and practices that help people become better listeners, communicators, and leaders
- Self-knowledge: the most important dimension of all great leadership — Who am I? What am I here for? What am I going to do with the rest of my life?

## **Key Ideas**

- The keys in sense-making are precise observation, deep listening, and tuning in to emerging patterns.
- All profound innovation and creativity involves some deeper understanding and knowledge of your Self.
- Leaders who change the world need to investigate the two root questions of creativity: Who is my Self? What is my Work?
- In a rapidly changing world, creating the future involves rapid prototyping rather than long-term planning.
- To make social responsibility in business work, leaders need to develop the skill of facilitating collaboration among key actors from all three sectors: business, government, and civil society.
- You cannot solve today's leadership problems with the same level of consciousness that created them (paraphrasing Einstein).
- Leaders must know themselves and their context, and understand the forces that transform society and self.

## Schedule

### **Class 1: Sept. 8, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: Intro to Theory U

Practice: Effective Listening

Pre-reading: Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: *Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*: Introduction, Chapter 1

HuffPost column 1: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-dark-money-and-shifting-consciousness\\_us\\_58ddbbae7e4b04ba4a5e25274](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-dark-money-and-shifting-consciousness_us_58ddbbae7e4b04ba4a5e25274)

HuffPost column 2: Seven Acupuncture Points  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/58e006cce4b03c2b30f6a6fa>

Assignment 1 (due following week): Reflection paper (question), Empathy walk

Video Clip

Thich Naht Hanh on Compassionate Listening:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyUxYflkhzo>

### **Class 2: Sept.15, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: The current transformation of global capitalism;

Practice: Sculpting; the art and practice of deep listening

Assignment 2 (due following week): Reflection paper (on class discussion, case clinic 1)

Pre-reading:

Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: *Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*: chapter 2

Films:

*Inside Job* (2010). Directed by Charles Ferguson, narrated by Matt Damon

Trailer: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/inside-job/>

Video clips:

Wealth Inequality in America:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM>

Video

Case Clinic Intro: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJTrLUgl-qE>

Case Clinic Instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwjKROGi6H4>

Articles:

Johnson, S., "The Quiet Coup," *The Atlantic*, May 2009

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/toc/2009/05/>

**Class 3: Sept. 22, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: Sensing and Embodying the Future

Practice: Social Presencing Theatre and Case Clinic

Assignment 3 (due following week): Reflection paper (on class and Case Clinic 2)

Pre-reading:

Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: *Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*: chapter 3

Second Nature – The Biomimicry Evolution <http://vimeo.com/65480081>

GNH Animation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zqdqa4YNvI>

**Class 4: Sept. 29, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: Connecting to Source

Practice: Stepping into the Field of the Future

Assignment 4 (due following week): Reflection paper (on visioning practice and case clinic 3);

Pre-reading: Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: *Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*: chapter 4-5

Video clips:

Steve Jobs, Stanford University Commencement Speech, 2005

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1R-jKKp3NA>

Thomas Heatherwick, "Building the Seed Cathedral", TED, May 2011

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXbhTHaMwTw>; and Thomas

Heatherwick and Stuart Wood discuss the work of Heatherwick Studio:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3EIRbxzo4Y>

**Class 5: Oct. 6, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: Prototyping ideas

Practice: Empathy walk@home

Assignment 5 (due following week): Empathy walk at home, Reflection paper (on case clinic 4; prototype);

Pre-reading:

Pre-reading: Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: *Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*: chapters 6-7

Brene Brown: The Power of Vulnerability

[https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en)

**Class 6: Oct. 13, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: Prototyping review

Practice: Cross-team coaching

Assignment 6 (due following week): Create prototype

Pre-reading:

Pre-reading: Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: *Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies*: chapter 8

**Class 7: Oct. 20, 5:30–9:00 PM**

Subject: Project presentation and crystallization of key learnings

Practice: Speaking with authentic leadership presence

Assignment 7 (due Oct 31): Final paper

**Course Evaluation**

This will be a pass/fail course. In order to pass, you must attend all class sessions. In addition, each student must

- (a) participate in and facilitate results in a self-organized project,
- (b) participate in weekly peer coaching sessions,
- (c) write weekly reflection report (one page), and a final reflection paper on some key lessons that have emerged from the U-Lab journey.

Students who sit in on part of the class, or who miss days or parts of days, will not receive credit.

**Course Application and Enrollment**

The course is limited to 60 participants. If you confirm your participation and do not attend class, you will have prevented another student from participating. If you cannot fulfill this professional commitment, give immediate notice of cancellation.

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## **Student Experiences:**

"For me Otto's class has been one of the most memorable and enjoyable classes at MIT. It's hard to really categorize the material that Otto covers; perhaps one part inward reflection, one part self-discovery, and one part strategic planning for the future. At the heart of the material are the lessons from Theory U, which outline progressive stages of self-exploration and personal growth, enabling future leaders to delve into their deepest sources of inspiration and vision, connect to the authentic self, paint a vision for a best future possibility, then strive to realize it! The class is both humbling and inspiring, uplifting and reflective."

--Yusuf Bashir, Sloan Fellows Program, Class of 2011

"How do I live in the possibilities of the moment, engage in deeper conversations, build meaningful relationships and engaged communities and organizations? Otto's thoughtful and creative approach in enabling you to realize your purpose and find your inner voice is fascinating. Ultimately to create effective organizations and dynamic teams, we need to first begin with ourselves. What does it mean to thrive and to progress in the context of an individual, family, organization, and community? The course makes you challenge yourself, reflect on your values and priorities, and hence be intentional in defining your strategy and paving the way forward."

--Abide Sadaffe, Mid-Career Program,  
Harvard Kennedy School, Class of 2011

"Otto's course has been the most formative one for me, because at first, I was actually skeptical, for example Otto's idea on Business 3.0, I initially thought it was a nice idea, but highly improbable. Using the opportunity to develop a prototype for change, several of my Sloan Fellow colleagues brainstormed on how to fortify our community post graduation, and ultimately, to develop our class ethos and therefore, with Otto's assistance, we created a mini-course, titled "Legacy & Leadership" to expose our entire Sloan Fellows community to Theory U. As a result, we have set up four sessions for our classmates who are already overloaded with classes, but for the single weekly two hour class, we have had some great turnout. Specifically, we developed guiding questions that were tailored to our community, to foster a dialogue that goes into developing a framework upon which we can build a sustainable supportive alumni network. Ultimately, this effort has been successful about using Theory U to capture the value of our network, and, most importantly, we feel it will create a sustainable alumni community well beyond graduation."

--Cisco Gonzales, MIT Sloan Fellow MBA Candidate 2011

Program in Innovation and Global Leadership

"My original goal in attending the class was to fulfill Sloan's leadership requirement. In hindsight, I found one of the most important things that led me to business school in the first place: something closer to my truer self. The turning point for me was the in-class visioning exercise. I had heard and read a lot about the power of envisioning things in the future—people use it often in sports, for example—but I personally never thought about applying it to life in general. The comment that most successful leaders meditate in their own way lent credibility to the exercise, so I gave it a sincere try in the classroom. It made me feel great. I realized that if I could feel that great just by 'meditating' for a few moments in a classroom, establishing a routine to re-center myself on a more regular basis could be really powerful.

I think that my experiences in and outside of the lab that I take forward will make me a better person, a better husband, a better provider, and down the road, a better father. I think those are amongst the most important leadership roles in life."

--Michael W. Holmes, MBA Class of 2005