

# What you may be wondering about **COMM 3991: Exploring Science-based Businesses**

## Answers to some FAQs from the course instructor, Dr. Dawn Henwood

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### 1. How does the course work?

At the beginning of the course, you'll be placed in a team of four to five students. The aim is for each team to include a mix of students from Commerce and Science.

Early in the course, your team will be matched with a science-based business located somewhere in New Brunswick. This business will become your "client" for the duration of the course. Your task will be to listen to the problem your presents, analyze it (conducting various kinds of research as needed), and develop a viable solution. At the end of the course, you'll pitch your solution to the client in a live event on campus.

As part of your analysis phase, you'll participate in a **two-day industry tour of innovative New Brunswick businesses on November 14 and 15**. This tour will give you insights into several science-based businesses, which will provide additional context to help with developing a solution for your client.

### 2. What kind of guidance will the teams have?

My main role in the course will be to serve as your coach. That means I won't do much lecturing (although we will have some intriguing guest speakers from industry). Instead, I'll concentrate on providing three kinds of support as you work with your client:

- **Context**—Each week, you'll do some readings and participate in a group discussion on those readings. The readings will orient you to the fascinating, diverse world of science-based business. They'll also help you develop the consulting skills you'll need to work effectively with your client and introduce you to some of the analytical frameworks management consultants use.
- **Team coaching**—As you work with your client, I will be available during class time and outside of class time to help you investigate and solve the problem. While I won't tell you what to do, I'll ask questions and serve as sounding board so your team can figure out the next steps along your problem-solving journey. I'll also help you sort out issues with team dynamics (because those are an inevitable part of any project, and learning to deal with them will likely be one of your most things you take from the course).
- **Feedback and evaluation**—Throughout the course, I'll give informal feedback during team coaching sessions. I'll also collect from you a few "client deliverables," documents in which you'll show your team's progress. These assignments will be graded, as will be your final presentation to the client.

### 3. What will the workload be like?

You can expect the workload for this course to be similar to what you'd do in other courses—but the work may be distributed differently:

- **The two-day industry tour during Reading Week** is mandatory. In designing the course, I've considered the time you'll spend on the tour as equivalent to time you'd normally spend outside of class completing projects or essays.
- **Your out-of-class time will be spent on teamwork.** The readings will be kept light because I expect that you'll need to spend time each week meeting with your team and/or completing research and deliverables related to your team project.
- **You have the option of counting the Business of Science workshop toward your course grade.** If you attend the entire Business of Science workshop on September 14-16 and provide official proof of participation, you can count that experience as 10% of your course grade. (The alternative is a critical reflection assignment on commercialization of scientific research.)

### 4. How will the teams be formed?

During the first class, I'll collect information from you about your academic and work background, as well as your interests. I'll use this data to form diverse teams, which, ideally, will include a mix of Commerce and Science students. The teams will be diverse because research shows that diverse teams tend to perform better, especially when creative thinking is required.

### 5. How will I know my team members will pull their weight?

There's no failproof solution to ensure that everyone on your team contributes at a high level. However, the course does include four measures to help make each group of students a high-performing team:

- **Instruction in teamwork skills**—Working as a team will be a topic we'll explore through readings and group discussion.
- **Strengths-based approach**—You'll be encouraged to explore what motivates you personally and to consider how you can work as a team to leverage your individual strengths for the greater good.
- **Team coaching sessions**—These will provide regular checkpoints so we can catch small issues before they become hard to manage.
- **Peer evaluation**—A significant portion of your course grade (15%) will be based on evaluation forms submitted by your team members. The peer evaluation form will be available to you at the beginning of the course.

## 6. What if I don't have a lot of business or scientific knowledge?

No worries! The beauty of a team-based course is that you don't need to bring all the goods to the table. Come with the skills, knowledge, and interests you have—and a collaborative attitude that will enable you to share with and learn from others.

## 7. Who's the professor?



My name is Dr. Dawn Henwood. I've been the Manager of Experiential Learning in the Ron Joyce Centre since Feb 2017. You may have seen me promoting the Alumni Career Mentorship Program and various kinds of internships, including the Reisman Internship Program. Or you may recognize me from my involvement with the Case Study Program, which I coached last year.

I bring to this course an eclectic background. I've spent time as a professor (teaching literature and then communications), an independent writing consultant, a corporate trainer, and an instructional designer for an eLearning company. During my career, I've worked extensively with science-based businesses, helping them articulate their business value in terms accessible to non-experts. I've also gained an inside view of more than one global consulting firm by developing training materials for consultants in a variety of industry sectors, including technology, health care, energy, and chemicals.

If you have any questions about Exploring Science-based Businesses, I'd love to hear from you: [dhenwood@mta.ca](mailto:dhenwood@mta.ca) or 506-364-2292.