

Economics of Innovation Syllabus

Department of Economics

Econ 2211 Winter 2026

Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched the part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Course Instructor(s)

Name	Email	Office Hours
Jonathan Simms	jjsimms@dal.ca	Mondays 4:30 (by appointment)
Name	ta@dal.ca	Dates, Time, Location

Course Description

This course examines the place of innovation in microeconomic policy space. It does so from two perspectives: the capacity of the private sector to recognize and address productivity gaps with investments in innovative products, processes and methods, on the one hand, and the capacity (i.e., limits) of government policy and program initiatives to promote innovation in their economies, on the other. NOTE: All Economics courses, unless stated otherwise, must have a minimum grade requirement of C for their prerequisite courses.

Course Prerequisites

ECON 1101 or ECON 1102, or by permission of the professor.

Course Exclusions

None.

Student Resources

The Teaching Assistant will be available to review your in-class tests and assist in your understanding of subject material and writing style.

Course Structure

Course Delivery

The method of course delivery will be in-person and lecture slides will be available on the course website. Any potential additional readings and notification of events will be announced on the course website.

Lectures

17:35 – 20:25 Mondays; Studley LSC-COMMON AREA C244

Laboratories

None

Tutorials

None

Course Materials

Swann, G.M. Peter, “The Economics of Innovation”, Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, Mass.:

Edward Elgar Publishing Inc. 2009. (available at the Campus Bookstore).

Assessment

Assignments

Component	Weight (% grade)	Date
In-class Tests (5@8% each)	40	Choose 5 from 8 classes, in Feb 2 to Mar. 30 period.
Group Project	15	Due March 16 at start of class (lates deducted 5%/ hr.)
Final Exam	45	TBA
Bonus	10	Attendance at 3 of 5 field events/presentations

Tests/quizzes

These will be based on in-class tests, a group project and a final examination (see below). In each of the 8 Monday classes between February 2 and March 30, there will be a 20-minute test. You must write 5 of the 8. You cannot write more than 5 tests. These short essay tests will be based on the readings for each week. You must do 3 of your 5 tests by March 9th, inclusive.

Group Project

For the projects, groups of five students will have each member prepare a three-page segment on a topic of the group's choosing; a common format for the documents will be discussed in class. Groups must be confirmed and with a defined topic – short paragraph – by February 9th. Projects must be delivered in softcopy by 12:00 noon, March 16th in a common “look and feel” – i.e.,

font and format – across their five segments. The final examination will be in essay format and will question your broad knowledge of the topics covered in the course.

Final exam

The final exam will take place during the University's exam period.

Other course requirements

The practical/experiential sessions (offering bonus points) will be of two varieties:

Field Trips. Field trips may be arranged according to the existing Faculty of Science practices and rules, with the possibility of additional fees for buses etc., if necessary, and these fees will be announced in advance. Such visits may be to one or more of the following: a research lab, a business, public sector facilities, and a non-governmental organization. These will be designed to introduce the economic considerations – both upstream and downstream - that are required for the pursuit of a new invention, introducing a new innovation, investing in a commercialization opportunity, or offering an environmentally sustainable product or production process.

Presentations: Guest Speakers/ Panel discussions on economics topics that pertain to the inputs, operations and outputs of innovation initiatives such as, intellectual property and patent law, management innovation, processing innovations, product and service innovations, and public policy (regulatory and program development).

Conversion of numerical grades to final letter grades follows the

Dalhousie Grade Scale

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (0-49)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements

General:

Students are expected to use the Student Declaration of Absence form for late or missed requirements, prior to the academic deadline. A student may submit a maximum of one (1) Student Declaration of Absence form.

Note that medical notes are not required, including for the final exam. Notification, prior to the start of the exam is required, if students cannot write the final exam. A make-up exam will be arranged with the professor.

As this is a more experientially oriented course, your attendance and participation are of particular value in gaining a first-hand understanding of the economics of innovation. Details regarding the arrangement of these events, and your confirmation of participation, will be outlined, in class.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity

Use of prepared notes, particularly any from generative AI and large language models (e.g., ChatGPT), is permitted for the group project; however, copious footnotes and your reference sources will be required.

Use of electronic devices and of prepared notes, particularly any from generative AI and large language models (e.g., ChatGPT), in the writing of tests, or in the final exam, is not permitted.

Learning Objectives

- To enhance students' understanding of the innovation imperative in a growing economy
- To improve students' knowledge of what accounts for the state of innovation performance
- To survey, with students, the key factors that comprise a framework for an innovation strategy
- To improve students' capacity to critically assess innovation policy in a global context.

Course Content

Date	Lecture	Reading Modules
Jan 12	Overview	Syllabus: The Imperative of Innovation https://www.coursera.org/ca/articles/critical-thinking-skills
Jan 19	Aspects	Swann Ch 3-6. Gerguri, Shqipe MA, Ramadani, Veland PhD, "The Impact of Innovation into the Economic Growth". MPRA Paper No. 22270, posted 23 Apr 2010 10:49 UTC https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/22270/1/The_impact_of_innovation_into_economic_growth-final_2008-eng-Shqipe-Veland.pdf

Jan 26	Firms	Swann Ch 9-11
Feb 2	Trends	<p>Swann Ch 13, 20</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mF2CsUcwFrw</p> <p>https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2025/09/19/the-worlds-most-innovative-countries</p> <p>https://www.economist.com/leaders/2025/11/27/what-china-will-dominate-next</p> <p>https://www.economist.com/asia/2025/11/13/which-is-indias-superstar-state</p>
Feb 9	Talent	<p>Swann Ch 14</p> <p>The Economist Intelligence Unit, The Elements Innovation.2019 https://innovationmatters.economist.com/</p> <p>https://www.economist.com/business/2025/12/14/job-apocalypse-humbug-ai-is-creating-brand-new-occupations</p> <p>World Economic Forum, “The Future of Jobs Report, 2025</p> <p>https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025</p>

Feb 23	Unleashing	<p>John VanReenan, “Can Innovation Policy Restore Inclusive Prosperity in America?” MIT Economics Strategy Group, 2019</p> <p>https://economicstrategygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Maintaining-the-Strength-of-American-Capialism-Can-Innovation-Policy-Restore-Inclusive-Prosperity-in-America.pdf</p> <p>Deloitte Center For Integrated Research, The neurodiversity advantage: How neuroinclusion can unleash innovation and create competitive edge. July 2024</p> <p>https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/diversity-equity-inclusion/unleashing-innovation-with-neuroinclusion.html</p>
Mar 2	Governance	<p>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Getting Technology Governance Right: Innovate More, Innovate Well”.</p> <p>https://www.oecd.org/sti/science-technology-innovation-outlook/technology-governance/</p> <p>Michael Peregrine (McDermott Will & Emery LLP) and Charles Elson (University of Delaware), “Twenty Years Later: “The Lasting Lessons of Enron” Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, April 5, 2021.</p> <p>https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2021/04/05/twenty-years-later-the-lasting-lessons-of-enron/</p>
Mar 9	Consumers	<p>Swann Ch 15</p> <p>Jennifer Lee, “Is the customer always right? How consumers can help drive innovation”, Deloitte, 2013</p> <p>https://www2.deloitte.com/ca/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/consumer-driven-innovation.html</p> <p>McKinsey and Company, “Will innovation finally add up for consumer-goods companies?” August 2020</p> <p>https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/will-innovation-finally-add-up-for-consumer-goods-companies</p> <p>The Economist, “China’s Audacious and Inventive New Entrepreneurs”, September 2017</p> <p>https://www.economist.com/briefing/2017/09/23/chinas-audacious-and-inventive-new-generation-of-entrepreneurs</p>

Mar 16	Diffusion	<p>Swann Ch 16</p> <p>Nick Skillicorn, Blog: "The Law of Diffusion of Innovation", Idea-To-Value Community, 2021 https://www.ideatovalue.com/inno/nickskillicorn/2021/01/the-law-of-diffusion-of-innovation</p> <p>James W. Dearing and Jeffrey G. Cox, Diffusion Of Innovations Theory, Principles, And Practice, Health Affairs, Vol. 37, No. 2, February 2018. https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.1104</p>
Mar 23	Social Context	<p>Swann Ch 21</p> <p>Diana Porumboiu, Blog: "Social Innovation - The What, Why and How", Viima Solutions, April 2021. https://www.viima.com/blog/social-innovation</p>
Mar 30	Innovation & Gov't	<p>Swann Ch 22</p> <p>Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Building a Nation of Innovators, Government of Canada 2019 https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/innovation-better-canada/en/building-nation-innovators</p>
Apr 6	Summary/ Review	<p>An overview of topics and preparation for exam.</p>

University Policies and Statements

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel, and support. Visit or e-mail the Indigenous Student Centre at 1321 Edward St or elders@dal.ca. Additional information regarding Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Relations (including the Elders in Residence program, Land Acknowledgements, Understanding Our Roots, and much more) can be found at:
<https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/mikmaq-indigenous-relations.html>

Internationalization

At Dalhousie, ‘thinking and acting globally’ enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is “interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders.” Additional internationalization information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/global-relations.html>

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Additional academic integrity information can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html

Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact the Student Accessibility Centre (https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html) for all courses offered by Dalhousie with the exception of Truro. For courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, please contact the Student Success Centre in Truro (https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/ssc.html).

Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Additional diversity and inclusion information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility/about-office-equity-inclusion.html>

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner - perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. The full Code of Student Conduct can be found at:

<https://www.dal.ca/content/dam/www/about/leadership-and-governance/governing-bodies/code-student-conduct.pdf>

Fair Dealing Policy

The Dalhousie University Fair Dealing Policy provides guidance for the limited use of copyright protected material without the risk of infringement and without having to seek the permission of copyright owners. It is intended to provide a balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users at Dalhousie. Additional information regarding the Fair Dealing Policy can be found at:

<https://www.dal.ca/content/dam/www/about/leadership-and-governance/university-policies/fair-dealing-policy.pdf>

Student Use of Course Materials

Course materials are designed for use as part of this course at Dalhousie University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as books, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this course material for distribution (e.g. uploading to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law.