

Course title:	Entrepreneurial Leadership in Berlin and Europe
Instructor:	Conny Steenblock
Email address:	conny.steenblock@fu-berlin.de
Track:	A-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS credits:	6
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

Leadership surrounds us always and everywhere. Be it as a supervisor, team captain, student activist, or parent – we all need certain leadership skills to thrive in our private and professional lives. However, what makes a good leader has long been the subject of controversial debate in research and practice. Leadership theories have constantly evolved, and modern concepts are manifold. At the same time, management scandals (e.g., Wirecard, Dieselgate, Twitter/X) repeatedly bring leadership failures to light. This course introduces a basic understanding of what leadership actually is and how that understanding depends on time and context.

On this basis, we will take a closer look at what enables individuals to lead in an entrepreneurial way and why an entrepreneurial mindset is more than ever important among today's leaders. The economic, political, and ecological crises around the world have led us to question many of the assumptions on what entrepreneurship and 'typical' entrepreneurs are. Various initiatives have been established to promote diverse forms, purposes, and initiators of entrepreneurial activity. Behind such endeavours lies the hope that entrepreneurship will not only create new jobs, but also new ideas for the future and solutions to the world's most pressing problems. Accordingly, the European Commission developed a reference framework ("EntreComp") to establish an understanding of entrepreneurship as a competence that results in social, cultural, or financial value for others. The basic idea of this framework is that the necessary skills and attitudes can be learned and applied by anyone.

However, the outcome in practice regarding entrepreneurial diversity looks different. Women and ethnic minorities, for instance, remain significantly underrepresented in startup ecosystems worldwide. Counting a global average of 15% female founders, we are still far from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #5 (gender equality) in the entrepreneurial context. We will touch upon the causes and discuss possible solutions in class. The course also emphasizes learning about the diversity of the Berlin startup ecosystem. To this end, we invite and/or visit guests from local startups and impact communities.

Through participation in the course, students will gain a basic understanding of entrepreneurial leadership in its diversity with a focus on Berlin and Europe. Integrated work

with historical and modern role models will help students adopt a critical perspective on good leadership. Moreover, students will have the opportunity to reflect on and develop their own (entrepreneurial) leadership skills. For this purpose, the course is designed to be highly interactive and relies on innovative teaching methods.

A special session will be a full day leadership coaching with horses (physical contact is voluntary!). Such an approach is relatively new to university education but is gaining popularity in Human Resources (HR) and leadership development. The beauty of equine interaction is that horses are not biased. They do not judge a person by status, gender, or skin color, but respond only to personal radiance when deciding whether or not to follow a human being. This way, students experience the value of diversity in leadership and ultimately learn about the importance of trustworthiness and communication. By receiving very honest individual feedback, students will have the opportunity to further develop their personal leadership identity and skills.

Important notice: There is a limited number of students who can attend the full day equine leadership coaching in one day. Should the class size exceed that limit, the group will be split in two. One group will then attend the coaching on the second Monday of the term, while the other group will attend the coaching on **Wednesday** of the same week. The group that does not attend the coaching has the respective course day off. **All students must be available on both days upon sign-up for the course, as the groups will be assigned only in the beginning of the course.** Should the class size not exceed the group limit for the coaching, the whole group will attend the excursion together, and there will be no class on Wednesday.

Student profile

The course is designed for students of any disciplines with a general interest in sustainably responsible entrepreneurship and leadership. There are no special prerequisites for the course.

Course requirements

- 1) Attendance and active class participation
- 2) Individual written assignment (short essay, max. 1,500 words)
- 3) Group presentation

Required language skills

The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52>)

Grading

Attendance and class participation: 30%
Individual essay: 35%
Group presentation: 35%

Readings

A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Monday, July 28, 2025	<p>Contemporary views of leadership An introduction into the main topic and the first discussion of fundamental aspects, which will be addressed in detail throughout the course:</p> <p>Manager, leader, entrepreneur – what is the difference? Does a contemporary definition of leadership exist? To what extent does the understanding of leadership depend on geographical and cultural contexts, especially in European metropolises like Berlin?</p>
Thursday, June 31, 2025	<p>The development of leadership theories An overview of the historical evolution of leadership concepts will be provided and current challenges will be discussed.</p> <p>How have leadership theories changed over time? What are the implications of the grand social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century for leaders and for the importance of diverse leadership?</p>
Monday, August 4, 2025	<p>Full day excursion: Equine leadership coaching</p> <p>Students will have the unique opportunity to participate in a full day leadership coaching with horses. The main aim of the coaching is to sensitize for the importance of trust, non-verbal communication and personal radiance in leadership relations. Equine interaction is voluntary.</p> <p>What can we learn from horses about leadership (skills)? What really matters in relationship building?</p>
Wednesday, August 6, 2025	<p>Full day excursion: Equine leadership coaching – second date</p> <p>Second date for the full day excursion, should the class size exceed the group size limit for the equine coaching. Please see more details in the course description.</p> <p>All students must be available to come to class on this day, should the need arise!</p>
Thursday, August 7, 2025	<p>Entrepreneurial Leadership We will introduce a basic understanding of entrepreneurship and discover distinct characteristics of entrepreneurial leadership.</p>

	Who can become an entrepreneur? What skills and competencies are required to develop an entrepreneurial mindset? Is every entrepreneur a good leader?
Monday, August 11, 2025	<p>Entrepreneurial Diversity The stereotypical entrepreneur is young, white, and male. Deep-level and surface-level diversity dimensions offer an exploration of 'other types' of entrepreneurial leaders.</p> <p>How does entrepreneurial diversity look like in Berlin and Europe? What are key challenges of marginalized groups such as women or ethnic minorities in starting a new venture and how can they be removed?</p> <p>Visit of a local startup / guest lecture by a female entrepreneur.</p>
Thursday, August 14, 2025	<p>Entrepreneurial Ecosystems The concept of startup ecosystems has gained increasing attention among researchers and practitioners. We will explore why.</p> <p>What constitutes an entrepreneurial ecosystem? How can sustainable and diverse entrepreneurial activity be fostered taking contextual influences into account?</p> <p>Visit of an impact (social entrepreneurship) community in Berlin.</p>
Monday, August 18, 2025	<p>Outlook: Current trends in entrepreneurship While global crises have far-reaching consequences for societies and pose numerous challenges for individuals, technological advancements (digital innovation, machine learning, virtual realities, etc.) in particular offer new opportunities for diverse entrepreneurs.</p> <p>What does the future hold for entrepreneurs? What are the opportunities and challenges of current global trends? What can be a next step in becoming a future (entrepreneurial) leader?</p>
Thursday, August 21, 2025	Final student presentations

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.