

Course title:	Entrepreneurial Leadership in Berlin and Europe
Instructor:	Dr. Meike Siefkes
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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. Whether as a supervisor, team captain, student activist, or parent, we all need certain leadership skills to thrive in private and professional contexts. However, what makes a good leader has long been debated in research and practice. Leadership theories are constantly evolving, and modern concepts are manifold. At the same time, management scandals such as Wirecard, Dieselgate, and 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 turn to entrepreneurial leadership; a concept that is increasingly relevant also outside of the startup world. Local and global economic, political, and ecological crises challenge traditional assumptions about leadership, entrepreneurship, and their role in society. Today's leaders are expected not only to drive innovation but also to act responsibly and create sustainable value. We will examine how responsible leadership principles intersect with entrepreneurial thinking and why sustainability is becoming a core element of leadership practice.

The course introduces key frameworks such as the European Commission's "EntreComp", which defines entrepreneurship as a competence that creates social, cultural, or financial value for others, based on skills and attitudes that can be learned and applied by anyone. We will explore how these competencies can be applied to develop sustainable business models and address pressing global challenges. Students will also learn about the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems in fostering responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship, including support actors such as incubators, accelerators, and investors such as angel investors. 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. Several guest lectures and excursions will provide practical insights into the local startup environment. Integrated work with historical and modern role models will help students adopt a critical perspective on responsible 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.

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) 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>

Attendance

Each class consists of six teaching modules (45 minutes each). If you miss 6 modules (unexcused), your final course grade will drop by one grade. Coming more than 20 minutes late counts as one missed module (this also applies to excursion days). If you come late to class six times (up to 20 minutes) your entire course grade will also drop by one grade. If you miss 14 modules or more (unexcused), you will fail the class. Excused absences, such as those with medical documentation, do not count toward these totals.

Grading

Active class participation: 30%
Individual essay: 35%
Group presentation: 35%

Readings

A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Monday, July 20, 2026	<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, July 23, 2026	<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 responsible leadership?</p>
Monday, July 27, 2026	<p>Full day excursion* Destination tba</p>
Thursday, July 30, 2026	<p>Entrepreneurial Leadership A basic understanding of entrepreneurship will be introduced to discover distinct characteristics of entrepreneurial leadership.</p> <p>Who can become an entrepreneur? What skills and competencies are required to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and leadership abilities on top of that? Is every entrepreneur a good leader?</p>
Monday, August 3, 2026	<p>Sustainable Entrepreneurship While the trend goes away from climate tech and impact startups, and toward AI, defense tech and space, sustainable business ideas and innovations still matter. Different business models and value creation approaches are explored, together with their implications for leadership.</p> <p>What makes a start-up sustainable? How can entrepreneurs balance social and economic value creation? Who are key actors that support sustainable entrepreneurs in developing leadership skills?</p> <p>Visit of a local startup/guest lecture by a sustainable entrepreneur and/or investor.</p>
Thursday, August 6, 2026	<p>Entrepreneurial Ecosystems The concept of startup ecosystems has gained increasing attention among researchers and practitioners. We will explore the driving forces behind the recent interest and different facets of entrepreneurial ecosystems, including impact, deep-tech, and other foci, with a special focus on the Berlin environment.</p> <p>What constitutes an entrepreneurial ecosystem? How can sustainable and diverse entrepreneurial activity be fostered taking contextual influences into account?</p>

	Visit of an impact community in Berlin.
Monday, August 10, 2026	<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, AI, virtual realities, etc.) as well as alternative forms of organizing offer new opportunities for change-oriented 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 13, 2026	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.