Course Description
An entrepreneur is someone who is always on the lookout for problems that can be turned into opportunities and finds creative ways to leverage limited resources to reach their goals. In this course, you will explore fundamental concepts, theories, and frameworks of entrepreneurship.

Through cases, articles, and team challenges, you will gain knowledge of how to identify and evaluate opportunities, interpret, analyze, and build financial models, live life as an entrepreneurial leader, and create a new product or service.

This course is not just for students who want to be entrepreneurs. Anyone who wants to create and sustain positive change should enroll.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students should have knowledge of:
1. Entrepreneurial mindsets
2. How to identify and evaluate opportunities
3. Ways of financing an entrepreneurial venture
4. Models of entrepreneurial leadership
5. Skills needed to network and improve resources
6. Principles of entrepreneurship (e.g. importance of Idea, Product, Team, Execution, and Timing)

Attendance, Class Participation & Contribution, & Class Format
Missing class will affect your grade and more importantly your own and your classmates’ experience in the class. If you do miss a class, it will be your responsibility to find out what materials were covered, what assignments were made, and what handouts you missed. If you miss more than one session without warning me 24 hours in advance, it will severely impact your class participation grade.

You should be prepared for every class. I will open every class by asking someone to summarize the Core Curriculum Reading briefly. Core Curriculum Readings cover the fundamental concepts, theories, and frameworks that you must learn about entrepreneurship. Authored by faculty at Harvard Business School, each Reading is about 20-40 pages long. Many also include video clips and Interactive Illustrations. You should be able to briefly outline the topics that the Reading addresses, describe the core points, and offer your analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the text’s arguments. You should also be able to go into detail of the “Questions for Discussion” outlined in this syllabus.

We will then take a short break and when we return, begin the case study or the entrepreneurial simulations. Regarding the entrepreneurial simulations, please make sure that you have purchased the simulation and course pack, have all appropriate software installed and updated, and have done this at least one-week before the simulation.

Regarding the case, you should be able to identify the key issues, problems and opportunities facing the central protagonists, to articulate and evaluate alternative approaches to the problems, and to describe the course of action that you recommend and the reasons for your recommendations. You should also be prepared to address all the "Questions for Discussion" listed in this syllabus in detail.

I provide supplemental readings that can be read at a later date. They are made available so that you can deepen your understanding of the corresponding topic at a time of your choosing. I am always happy to discuss these supplemental readings in office hours.

Finally, to encourage close case analysis and class discussions, (except during entrepreneurial simulations) laptops, phones, recorders, and other electronic devices many not be used in class.
Requirements and Grading

1. **Case & Core Curriculum Preparation, Presence, Promptness, & Participation (50%)**
   Case discussions depend upon the active, effective participation of the students. The student must get involved and take a great deal of— in fact, the primary — responsibility for his or her learning. It is necessary that each student be committed to the “4 Ps” of student involvement in case discussions:
   1. **Preparation.** If the student does not read and analyze the case, and then formulate an action plan, the case discussion will mean little.
   2. **Presence.** If the student is not present, she or he cannot learn and, more important, cannot add her or his unique thoughts and insight to the group discussion.
   3. **Promptness.** Students who enter the classroom late disrupt the discussion and deprecate the decorum of the process.
   4. **Participation.** Each student’s learning is best facilitated by regular participation. More important, the case student has the responsibility to share his or her understanding and judgment with the class to advance the group’s collective skills and knowledge.
   The instructor will access the “4 Ps” based on the AAC&U Value Rubrics. Students may attend office hours each week to get feedback on their “4 Ps” performance.

2. **Group Entrepreneurial Simulations (25%)**
   Students will engage in in-class online entrepreneurial simulation and role-playing exercises from Harvard Business School Press and The Wharton School called The Startup Game and The Food Truck Challenge. These simulations are in-class opportunities for students to apply the content from the case studies and Core Curriculum Reading. Students will be graded on how well they implement the content during the simulation. Students will also be graded by a 360-degree feedback for self and peer assessment to make up this portion of the grade.

3. **Individual Case Studies (25%)**
   After each entrepreneurial simulation, each student will write an individual case study. The purpose of the case study is to give the student an opportunity to show that they can abstract the content read and discussed in class, and reflect on how to apply it to various situations, including the entrepreneurial simulation. The case study must a) show an accurate story of the students experience with the simulation from start to finish b) articulate how the student applied (or did not) the content from the reading and in-class discussions c) share lessons learned e.g. insights about entrepreneurship learned from the experience, what the student would repeat, what they student would not repeat, and always answering the question “Why?” The instructor will access the case studies based on the Guidelines for Critical Reading and Analytical Writing found at the end of this syllabus.

**Grading Expectations**

**A:** Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning.

**B:** Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research.

**C:** Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level.

**D:** Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations.

**F:** Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria.

**Course Materials**
Core Curriculum readings and simulations can be found here: [http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/70956141](http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/70956141)
Course Schedule Overview
Week 1: The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur
Week 2: Becoming an Entrepreneurial Leader
Week 3: Recognizing and Shaping Opportunities
Week 4: Developing Business Plans and Pitching Opportunities
Week 5: Attracting Talent and Building Ecosystems (The Startup Game)
Week 5: Financing Entrepreneurial Ventures
Week 6: (Case Study 1/360-Degree Feedback Due Sunday before 23:59)
Week 7: Partnering with Venture Capitalists
Week 8: Experimenting in the Entrepreneurial Venture (The Food Truck Challenge)
Week 9: Selling and Marketing in the Entrepreneurial Venture
Week 10: Leading High-Growth Ventures
Week 11: (Case Study 2/360-Degree Feedback Due Sunday before 23:59)
Week 12: Leading Breakthrough Innovation in Established Companies
Week 13: Launching Global Ventures
Week 14: Final Project Presentations and Feedback

The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur
Discussion/Lessons:
1. Entrepreneurial Mindsets: Focus
2. Thoughts and Ideas

In-class Activities:
1. Beginners mind
2. The Entrepreneur and the Artist
3. Right where you are sitting

Supplementary Reading:
1. Learning by the Case Method by John S. Hammond
2. Creativity is Overrated by Eliot Gattegno (available free on TechCrunch.com)
3. Why Entrepreneurs Should Strive to Be Sensitive by Eliot Gattegno (available free on AlleyWatch.com)
4. Want to be more innovative? by Eliot Gattegno (available free at NBC News)
5. Why mastery beats creativity? by Eliot Gattegno (available at Quartz)
6. Mindsets from designkit.org

Becoming an Entrepreneurial Leader
Case: Cesar Zanchet & Adezan: A Different Kind of Leadership
Core Curriculum Reading: Becoming an Entrepreneurial Leader

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. What kinds of activities are critical to each of the various stages of the innovation life cycle?
2. What leadership challenges do entrepreneurial leaders face as they launch and grow new ventures?
3. Why do different types of opportunities require different types of leadership?
4. What skills seem critical to successful founder CEOs?

Case Questions for Discussion:
1. How would you describe the changes in Adezan's environment before the 7-7-7 announcement? What factors affected Adezan’s profitability and growth most directly?
2. Why do companies outsource supply chain activities to third-party logistics providers? What is the nature of the outsourced activities? What are the benefits?
3. Based on the information contained in the case, would you be willing to invest money in Adezan? Explain your answer. How important is Cesar Zanchet as you consider investing?
4. What are the skills and behavior characteristics that distinguish Cesar Zanchet as a leader?
5. If you were hired as a consultant, what would you recommend as the most important things for Zanchet to do in order to achieve his goal of R$150 million in revenues by 2010? And what markets should Adezan pursue?
**Supplemental Readings:**
1. *The Innovator’s DNA* by Jeffrey H. Dyer, Hal B. Gregersen, and Clayton M. Christensen

**Recognizing and Shaping Opportunities**

**Case:** Dragonfly Therapeutic Retreats: Creating An Affordable Indulgence

**Core Curriculum Reading:** Recognizing and Shaping Opportunities

**Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:**
1. How does an idea become an opportunity?
2. How do entrepreneurs come up with ideas for a new venture?
3. What lessons can you draw from the stories of these three different entrepreneurial ventures?
4. What are the key skills that innovative entrepreneurs use to identify the ideas for a new venture?
5. What is a business model and how did the entrepreneurs discussed earlier define the business model that shaped the opportunity they pursued when they first entered the market?

**Case Questions for Discussion:**
1. Describe how Georgie Yam turned a market gap into a unique brand offering for Dragonfly. What are Dragonfly’s brand strategy and positioning?
2. Describe the role of business design and the role Georgie Yam has played in the launch of Dragonfly. What is strategic to the success of the Dragonfly brand?
3. Draft an expansion plan for Dragonfly and evaluate possible expansion options. What are the critical assumptions underpinning the brand’s integrity?

**Supplemental Readings:**
*Disciplined Entrepreneurship* by Donald N. Sull

**Developing Business Plans and Pitching Opportunities**

**Case:** Cork’d Building a Social Network for Wine Lovers

**Core Curriculum Reading:** Developing Business Plans and Pitching Opportunities

**Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:**
1. What is the purpose of a business plan, and what’s the relationship between a business model and a business plan?
2. What kind of information should a business plan include? How do you link assumptions you are making to cash flow forecasts? How will you identify key areas of uncertainty and risk? What experiments can you use to reduce uncertainty and risk as you implement and what metrics and milestones can you use to measure progress?
3. What are the different options for communicating your new venture business model?
4. How do entrepreneurs prepare for—and deliver—a successful pitch to investors and other stakeholders?

**Case Questions for Discussion:**
1. Assess Lindsay’s vision of Cork’d as a two-sided network. What value do wineries bring users? Do users bring wineries? Do users bring each other?
2. Beyond the fees, why might a winery be reluctant to join Cork’d? An individual user? What, if anything, could Cork’d do to address this reluctance?
3. Do you agree with Cork’d’s decision to charge wineries $999 for an account? If yes, justify. If not, what alternative would you propose?
4. Should Cork’d have allowed advertising on its site? Sold wine? Why or why not?

**Supplemental Readings & Materials:**
1. *How to Write a Great Business Plan* by William A. Sahlman
2. Worksheet 1: Analyze your business plan
Attracting Talent and Building Ecosystems

**Case:** Apple’s Core

**Core Curriculum Reading:** Attracting Talent and Building Ecosystems

**Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:**

1. What are the key challenges faced by an entrepreneur in building the founding team?
2. What factors do you imagine to be most critical in attracting employees to a new venture?
3. What is the difference between a board of directors and a board of advisers, and what roles do each play? What challenges and opportunities do each present for the entrepreneur/founder?
4. What other professionals may be needed to provide assistance, and how would you find them?
5. Describe the role of an ecosystem in the evolution of a new venture. Imagine the ecosystem for a startup in the electronic publishing industry; for example, a company that proposes to provide electronic books to owners of Kindles, iPads, and other mobile devices that consumers use to read e-books.
6. What lessons can be gleaned from the Skyhook example?
7. What is the appeal of transacting some or all of the venture’s innovation activity outside the traditional boundaries of the firm, and how might a startup actually do this?
8. How do incubators and accelerators differ from one another, and why would an entrepreneur want to be associated with either one?
9. What lessons do you glean from the story of Dan Bricklin’s founding of VisiCalc?

**Case Questions for Discussion:**

1. Does Apple have a good founding team? Take into account the skills, goals, and values of each founder.
2. What qualifies a person as a true founder? Which person—Jobs or Wozniak—is the “real” founder of Apple Computer, or are they equal founders? Could others be classified as founders?
3. Imagine you are Steve Wozniak and you just found out the truth about Break-Out. What would you do?

**In-class Activity:**

1. The Startup Game

**Supplemental Readings:**

1. *Ecosystem Advantage: How to Successfully Harness the Power of Partners* by Peter James Williamson and Arnoud De Meyer
Financing Entrepreneurial Ventures

Case: Negotiating Equity Splits at Updown
Core Curriculum Reading: Financing Entrepreneurial Ventures

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. Which features of a business determine the amount of cash that will be required to finance it?
2. Why might an entrepreneur choose to bootstrap a venture?
3. What factors determine which of these sources of financing is more suitable for a particular entrepreneurial venture?
4. Which type of equity investor would be most appropriate for a high-growth, high-potential venture requiring $10 million to $20 million to get it to cash flow positive?
5. Which factors determine the type of investor that is a good fit with a particular venture?
6. Whom might you approach to raise financing for a small restaurant requiring $250,000 in capital?
7. How does the financing source influence the business model, and vice versa?
8. How is the kind of financing sought by a venture likely to change over time, and what factors drive that evolution?
9. What’s the difference between “token” crowdfunding and real crowdfunding investing?
10. What specific things can entrepreneurs do to raise the valuation in a financing?

Case Questions for Discussion:
1. How would you describe your team’s negotiation?
2. Was the November agreement a good idea? Is reevaluating the agreement now a good idea?
3. In general, when is it okay for a party to suggest renegotiating an existing agreement?

Supplemental Readings:
1. Bootstrap Finance: The Art of Start-Ups by Amar Bhide

Partnering with Venture Capitalists

Case: A Day in the Life of a Venture Capitalist
Core Curriculum Reading: Partnering with Venture Capitalists

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. What are the key distinguishing features of venture capital as a financing source?
2. What is the most important factor in VC’s investment decisions?
3. What are the forces that drive the VC decision-making process?
4. How should entrepreneurs think about how much money to raise for their venture?
5. What is the basic purpose of the term sheet? What is the VC financing deal attempting to accomplish?
6. What is a participating preferred share and how does it differ from a straight preferred share?
7. How do the VCs exert control and influence over the company after they have made their investment?
8. How do options factor into the valuation of a proposed VC deal?
9. Why is a simple pre-money/post-money valuation an imperfect way of comparing VC proposals, and what other approaches could be used instead?
10. Consider three deals in which the VCs propose to invest $5 million at a $12 million pre-money valuation. Each deal has a 5% dividend, and an exit takes place after four years. Deals A and B have a liquidation preference and Deal C has that as well as a participating preferred. What are the circumstances under which Deal C is worse for the founders than Deals A and B?
11. Now, imagine that the VCs in Deal C change their pre-money valuation to $20 million—how does your answer change?
12. What are the principal challenges to establishing a productive VC—entrepreneur relationship?
13. Which is a better outcome for a VC—a sale or an IPO? For an entrepreneur?

Supplemental Readings:
1. How to Negotiate with VC’s
Experimenting in the Entrepreneurial Venture

Case: Dropbox: “It Just Works”
Core Curriculum Reading: Experimenting in the Entrepreneurial Venture

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. What are the key features of a “lean startup”?
2. What are the other approaches to managing an early-stage startup and how do they compare to the lean startup approach?
3. What is the role of a “vision” in the process of hypothesis-driven entrepreneurship?
4. What are the key dimensions of a business model? Imagine what these might be for the Nest Thermostat.
5. What kind of hypotheses might you develop regarding the Nest product as you considered launching it?
6. Develop some MVP tests for a new web-based service that lets people take pictures of the clothes in their closets, which are then assembled into “outfits” by a sophisticated software back-end.
7. In the above fashion software example, how would you prioritize these various tests (or others you might imagine)?
8. Imagine the above-described MVP tests for the fashion software and the Nest thermostat. Imagine some of the learning that might transpire from interactions with prospective customers during the MVPs that have been discussed.
9. For the two ideas discussed above, describe a set of circumstances that would lead to a pivot as opposed to simply persevering, and describe what that pivot might look like.
10. What is the key criterion for scaling?
11. What other factors should influence the way a management team thinks about scaling the venture?
12. What circumstances might make you reluctant to pursue the hypothesis-driven approach? Can you think of a product or service that fits these circumstances?

In-class Activity:
1. Food Truck Challenge

Supplemental Readings:
1. Why the Lean Startup Changes Everything by Steve Blank
Selling and Marketing in the Entrepreneurial Venture

Case: Wallit

Core Curriculum Reading: Selling and Marketing in the Entrepreneurial Venture

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. At an entrepreneurial firm, do you think the selling task begins sooner or later in the product introduction cycle than it does at an established business? Why?
2. How does the notion of features and benefits relate to the logic of market segmentation?
3. Compare the issues and process of selling a new and improved product—like a lighter, more flexible garden hose—versus a brand-new product in a new category, like the iPad or Kindle e-reader.
4. What is the difference between segmenting and partitioning a customer base? Give an example of a product or service that you think is appealing to a particular segment and describe what that segment is and what about the product and its features are designed to appeal to that segment.
5. In the BPC case, what were the key insights that allowed the company to turn around its selling effort?
6. Think of effective salespeople you have known or bought products or services from. Do they share any common traits? What traits do you have that you feel would make you an effective salesperson? Do you feel those traits are applicable to any particular type of product, customer, or channel?
7. Imagine that you’re trying to sell a new product. In the “understanding customers” phase of your efforts, the initial wave of customers has told you they did not value the features you were describing for your planned offering. Should you change the product feature set? Spend more time looking for customers who do value those features? How would you make this decision?
8. What kind of information are salespeople in a good position to glean and how can it be used?
9. What defines a boundary role and what challenges does such a role represent? What conflicting incentives and motivations might a salesperson in a boundary role be subject to, and how could those be mitigated/managed?
10. What activities are part of a typical sales funnel? What factors determine the most critical/highest leverage phases of the funnel?

Case Questions for Discussion:
Case Analysis: Which market to target first, consumer or commercial? What are the pros and cons of each? Which is riskier? Which requires more funding? Is there a sequence that makes more sense (i.e., consumer than commercial, vs. commercial than consumer)? Potential Applications: Analyze the potential business models within each market. i. Consumer. What is the value proposition of Wallit to consumers? Do you think augmented reality transforms the consumer experience?b. Which business model do you think is best? Why? a. Display Advertising b. Sponsored Posts c. Branding d. Personal Walls e. Paid app f. Subscriptions c. If the founders choose to focus on consumers, how should they attract users? Which subsets of users might be early adopters? Are there certain verticals that Wallit could use as a beachhead (e.g., tourism)? How will they keep existing users engaged? d. How can Wallit control the quality of the content on the newsfeeds? What information should be public versus private?ii. Commercial a. What is the value proposition of Wallit to businesses? b. Which application do you think is best? a. Dynamic Pricing b. Utilities c. Hospitals. What other commercial opportunities do you see for this product? Give the class 3 to 5 minutes to come up with other commercial applications. c. If Wallit choose to pursue this route, should they focus on small companies or large companies (e.g., Wal-Mart)? What challenges might they encounter with each? d. Once all of Wallit’s growth options have been laid out and discussed, ask students how they would go about assessing the opportunity set. What factors should determine which path to take? Opportunity Assessment a. Who would invest in the technology? Is this a game changer? Could Wallit become another dimension of the internet? Why or why not? b. More generally, how does an entrepreneur, marketer or investor recognize which technologies have the potential to be truly revolutionary?
Leading High Growth Ventures

Case: Cloudflare, Inc.: Running Hot?

Core Curriculum Reading: Leading High Growth Ventures

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the difference between “scaling” a venture and “expanding the scope” of a venture? What lessons emerge from the study of these three examples?
2. What growth options do entrepreneurs have for their expanding ventures, and how should they choose among them?
3. What explicit choices did Zappos make in the design and development of its organization, and how do those choices link—or not—to the company’s strategic choices and success?
4. How does the Zappos culture influence its strategic position, organization design, and value proposition?
5. What leadership, management, and governance challenges do entrepreneurs face as their firms grow and become increasingly complex?

Case Questions for Discussion:

1. With respect to the elements of CloudFlare’s business model—i.e., its customer value proposition, technology and operations management, go-to-market plan, and cash flow formula—what should be management’s top priorities, both in terms of what they need to keep doing well, and what they need to do next? What do these priorities imply about organizational structure, processes and culture at CloudFlare?
2. Which of the resignations discussed in the last section of the case is most alarming to you, and why? For each resignation, what are the main reasons for the employee’s departure? What do these reasons imply about the need to change organizational structure, processes and culture at CloudFlare?
3. Formulate a specific action plan for any changes you recommend in management/leadership approaches and/or in organizational structure, processes and culture. Be sure to consider how Prince and/or Zatlyn should communicate any changes to CloudFlare’s employees.

Supplemental Readings and Materials:

1. Why Entrepreneurs Don’t Scale by John Hamm
2. Worksheet: Leadership Assessment Guide
Leading Breakthrough Innovation in Established Companies

Case: BP’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer: Driving Open Innovation Through an Advocate Team

Core Curriculum Reading: Launching New Ventures in Established Companies

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. Why do large companies struggle with pursuing new opportunities—even when they are very successful in their core businesses?
2. How would you compare the mind-set and approach used by GM and Tesla in launching electric vehicles?
3. Which critical factors enabled Steve Jobs, who returned as CEO of Apple in the mid-1990s, when the company was on the brink of bankruptcy, to regain its innovative edge?
4. What was the key problem Gerstner and his lieutenants identified?
5. What are the key elements of the Horizons of Growth model? What are its limits?
6. Why do different “horizons” require differing management approaches?
7. How did IBM design its Emerging Business Opportunities (EBO) unit? What do you see as the key advantages of this approach?
8. Which parts of the IBM case study do you believe to be specific to IBM rather than generally applicable?
9. Which techniques can large companies use to access external resources? Is this important?
10. Which best practices help execute new-venture creation in large companies?

Case Questions for Discussion:
1. Should the CTO office be expanded so that it can take on more projects in areas in which it may not have technical coverage or business unit knowledge?
2. Should the CTO office request a larger budget so that it can perform more detailed due diligence and experimentation, as opposed to having to abandon a concept if no business unit is willing or able to fund even a small-scale pilot project?
3. Considering the changes in the IT world since the dot-com crash of 2000, would the CTO office benefit from developing new capabilities for finding, evaluating, and transitioning technologies? What topics would you recommend for a future Blue Chalk? Should the CTO office pursue technologies beyond digital and IT?
4. How might the CTO office’s engagement with business units and top BP executives be improved, and to what ends?
5. What important lessons can you identify from this story regarding execution of an open innovation strategy? How might BP improve its leveraging of outside partners in technology-seeking and application experimentation?

Supplemental Readings:
1. Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Entrepreneurship by David A. Garvin and Lynne C. Levesque
Launching Global Ventures

Case: Trying to Create a Stir: Opening a Coffee Shop in Korea

Core Curriculum Reading: Launching Global Ventures

Core Curriculum Questions for Discussion:
1. How are globalization and global ventures defined?
2. What factors explain the relatively recent popularity of global ventures?
3. What challenges confront entrepreneurs considering launching and running global ventures?
4. What Is Being Globalized?
5. How Does the Business Harness the Advantages of Globalization?
6. When does each of these globalization strategies make sense?
7. What best practices help execute globalization strategies?
8. Do the returns from globalization accrue linearly as the number of countries involved increases? Why or why not?

Case Questions for Discussion:
1. Evaluate the decision of Kim and Andes to open a coffee shop in Korea. Is a coffee shop a good fit for them as entrepreneurs? Is Korea the right market for yet another coffee shop? How are they trying to quantify what seems like a personal decision? What other things should they be considering before making a final decision?
2. Given that Kim and Andes seem to be set on opening a coffee shop in Korea, what factors should influence their mode of entry decision? What are the trade-offs between franchising and other choices?
3. If Kim and Andes decide to open their own coffee shop (i.e. not a franchise), what can they do to differentiate it from all the existing market entrants?

Supplemental Reading:
1. The Global Entrepreneur by Daniel J. Isenberg
Guidelines for Critical Reading

As a critical reader of a particular text (a book, article, speech, proposal), you need to use the following questions as a framework to guide you as you read:

1. What's the point? This is the analysis issue: what is the author's angle?
2. Who says? This is the validity issue: On what (data, literature) are the claims based?
3. What's new? This is the value-added issue: What does the author contribute that we don't already know?
4. Who cares? This is the significance issue, the most important issue of all, the one that subsumes all the others: Is this work worth doing? Is the text worth reading? Does it contribute something important?

If this is the way critical readers are going to approach a text, then as an analytical writer you need to guide readers toward the desired answers to each of these questions.

Guidelines for Analytical Writing

In writing papers for this (or any) course, keep in mind the following points. They apply in particular to the final paper or take-home exam for this class. Many of the same concerns apply to critical reaction papers as well, but these short papers can be more informal than the final paper.

1. Pick an important issue: Make sure that your analysis meets the "so what" test. Why should anyone care about this topic, anyway? Pick an issue or issues that matters and that you really care about.
2. Keep focused: Don’t lose track of the point you are trying to make and make sure the reader knows where you are heading and why.
3. Aim for clarity: Don’t assume that the reader knows what you're talking about; it's your job to make your points clearly. In part this means keeping focused and avoiding distracting clutter. But in part it means that you need to make more than elliptical references to concepts and sources or to professional experience. When referring to readings (from the course or elsewhere), explain who said what and why this point is pertinent to the issue at hand. When drawing on your own experiences or observations, set the context so the reader can understand what you mean. Proceed as though you were writing for an educated person who is neither a member of this class nor a professional colleague, someone who has not read the material you are referring to.
4. Provide analysis: A good paper is more than a catalogue of facts, concepts, experiences, or references; it is more than a description of the content of a set of readings; it is more than an expression of your educational values or an announcement of your prescription for what ails education. A good paper is a logical and coherent analysis of the issues raised within your chosen area of focus. This means that your paper should aim to explain rather than describe. If you give examples, be sure to tell the reader what they mean in the context of your analysis. Make sure the reader understands the connection between the various points in your paper.
5. Provide depth, insight, and connections: The best papers are ones that go beyond making obvious points, superficial comparisons, and simplistic assertions. They dig below the surface of the issue at hand, demonstrating a deeper level of understanding and an ability to make interesting connections.
6. Support your analysis with evidence: You need to do more than simply state your ideas, however informed and useful these may be. You also need to provide evidence that reassures the reader that you know what you are talking about, thus providing a foundation for your argument. Evidence comes in part from the academic literature, whether encountered in this course or elsewhere. Evidence can also come from your own experience. Remember that you are trying to accomplish two things with the use of evidence. First, you are saying that it is not just you making this assertion but that authoritative sources and solid evidence back you up. Second, you are supplying a degree of specificity and detail, which helps to flesh out an otherwise skeletal argument.

7. Draw on course materials (this applies primarily to reaction papers, not the final paper). Your paper should give evidence that you are taking this course. You do not need to agree with any of the readings or presentations, but your paper should show you have considered the course materials thoughtfully.
8. Recognize complexity and acknowledge multiple viewpoints. The issues in the history of American education are not simple, and your paper should not propose simple solutions to complex problems. It should not reduce issues to either/or, black/white, good/bad. Your paper should give evidence that you understand and appreciate more than one perspective on an issue. This does not mean you should be wishy-washy. Instead, you should aim to make a clear point by showing that you have considered alternate views.
9. Challenge assumptions. The paper should show that you have learned something by doing this paper. There should be evidence that you have been open to changing your mind.

10. Do not overuse quotation: In a short paper, long quotations (more than a sentence or two in length) are generally not appropriate. Even in longer papers, quotations should be used sparingly unless they constitute a primary form of data for your analysis. In general, your paper is more effective if written primarily in your own words, using ideas from the literature but framing them in your own way in order to serve your own analytical purposes. However, selective use of quotations can be very useful as a way of capturing the author's tone or conveying a particularly aptly phrased point.

11. Cite your sources: You need to identify for the reader where particular ideas or examples come from. This can be done through in-text citation: Give the author's last name, publication year, and (in the case of quotations) page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence or paragraph where the idea is presented -- e.g., (Ravitch, 2000, p. 22); provide the full citations in a list of references at the end of the paper. You can also identify sources with footnotes or endnotes: Give the full citation for the first reference to a text and a short citation for subsequent citations to the same text. (For critical reaction papers, you only need to give the short cite for items from the course reading; other sources require full citations.) Note that citing a source is not sufficient to fulfill the requirement to provide evidence for your argument. As spelled out in #6 above, you need to transmit to the reader some of the substance of what appears in the source cited, so the reader can understand the connection with the point you are making and can have some meat to chew on. The best analytical writing provides a real feel for the material and not just a list of assertions and citations. Depth, insight, and connections count for more than a superficial collection of glancing references. In other words, don't just mention an array of sources without drawing substantive points and examples from these sources; and don't draw on ideas from such sources without identifying the ones you used.

12. Take care in the quality of your prose: A paper that is written in a clear and effective style makes a more convincing argument than one written in a murky manner, even when both writers start with the same basic understanding of the issues. However, writing that is confusing usually signals confusion in a person's thinking. After all, one key purpose of writing is to put down your ideas in a way that permits you and others to reflect on them critically, to see if they stand up to analysis. So you should take the time to reflect on your own ideas on paper and revise them as needed. You may want to take advantage of the opportunity in this course to submit a draft of the final paper, revise it in light of comments, and then resubmit the revised version. This, after all, is the way writers normally proceed. Outside of the artificial world of the classroom, writers never turn in their first draft as their final statement on a subject.