



## U.Lab: Transforming Business, Society, and Self Course Syllabus

### Welcome!

Welcome to U.Lab. As of this writing, we are over 22,000 people (with more joining each day) from 187 countries. Nearly 24% of participants are from the United States, 8% from India, and 5% from Brazil.



YOU MAY BE a CHANGEMAKER,  
a LEADER at ANY LEVEL of BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, OR CIVIL SOCIETY,  
an EDUCATOR, a STUDENT...

Some of us have 30 years of work experience; others are in high school or college. Some are from the Business sector; others work in Government, Civil Society, Education, Healthcare, Urban Agriculture, the Arts, as Social Entrepreneurs – and much more. We're thrilled that you have decided to join us in this journey through U.Lab!

We will offer a number of new features in this course. We created this syllabus to explain how they work, how they are related to each other, and how you can make use of them. The following page contains an overview of what you will find in the syllabus. As you go through the below (and the U.Lab) keep in mind, that this is our

first prototype, some things will work, others will not, and that we invite you to co-create this new platform of hybrid online and community action learning.

*Please note: this syllabus is subject to change. Check the footer for current version & date updated.*

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## The Basics

### Team

#### Instructor:

Otto Scharmer, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management

#### Co-facilitators:

Adam Yukelson, Presencing Institute, Lead TA

Kelvy Bird, Presencing Institute, Graphic Facilitator

Lily Steponaitis, Presencing Institute and MIT CoLab, TA

### Contact

You can reach us in different ways: You can post questions or problems to the course discussion board, and team members or students of the course will respond. You can also post questions and responses to twitter using the hashtag #ULab. Or you can email questions or problems to (u.lab@presencing.com) and a member of the course team will make every effort to assist you. Due to the high number of students registered for this course, the course team will have very limited capacity to reply, but we will try our best. In addition, during the course we will film “office hours” videos to address some of the most common questions and ideas that emerged during the previous week.

## Course Description

This interactive and experiential course is about leading profound innovation in order to pioneer a more sustainable economy and society. It focuses on the intertwined relationship of the following three questions:

1. Transformation of Capitalism: How can capitalism and society evolve from their current forms to emerging future forms that create well-being for all (society 4.0)?
2. Multi-stakeholder innovation: What kind of leadership is required to create profound innovation at the scale of a whole eco-system of stakeholders and partners?
3. Presencing: How can people access their authentic self — their highest future possibility — and “act from” that heightened state of awareness?

The course facilitates a journey of profound self knowing and change and is organized around three main threads:

1. Personal reflection practices: Each session will introduce a specific reflection practice that will help participants generate the leadership knowledge that matters most: self-knowledge (Who am I? What is my journey and Work?)
2. Relational practices: Each session will focus on distinct relational practices that hone the leadership capacities of deep listening, precise observation, and dialogue.
3. Societal practices: The third thread deals with the transformation of capitalism (“society 4.0”), sustainability, and our role in multi-sector leadership for profound system-wide innovation and change.

In order to “explore the future by doing,” each participant is invited to develop a prototype initiative that connects the three threads — the personal, relational, and systemic dimensions.

## Recommended Readings

For each session we will be recommending specific chapters from this book:

[Scharmer, C. Otto, and K. Kaufer: \*Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies\*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2013.](#)

Although you can do the course without it, we highly recommend buying this book.

## Main Learning Objectives

This course is designed to create three types of knowledge:

1. Conceptual knowledge: The key concepts here are sustainability and awareness-based leadership (Theory U).
2. Practical knowledge: New tools and practices that help people become better listeners, communicators, and leaders.
3. Self-knowledge: The most important dimension of all great leadership — Who am I? What am I here for? What am I going to do with the rest of my life?

## Course Delivery

New course material will go live every Wednesday at 9:00 am (UTC -5) in the Courseware tab on edX.

## Schedule

**Week 0:** The Journey Ahead – launches Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at 9am EST (UTC -5)

- **Introductory Videos**
- **Tutorials:** How to use edX & Presencing Institute course features
- **Create a profile**
  - Create a profile on [www.presencing.com/ulab/overview](http://www.presencing.com/ulab/overview) (first be sure to follow the tutorials on edX in the U.Lab's **How to Navigate This Course** section).
- **Documentary Film Screening:** watch the documentary *Fire In The Blood* (optional – made available by the filmmaker free to U.Lab participants for this week only). *The film will be available to screen through the edX site.*
- **Pre-reading:** Scharmer, Otto, et al: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies: Introduction
- Scharmer, O., "8 institutional innovations that could update the economic system," the guardian, September 26, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/sep/26/8-innovations-economic-system-capitalism>

**Week 1:** Co-Initiating – launches Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:15am EST (UTC -5)

- **Live Session:** January 14<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am – 10.15am Eastern Standard Time (UTC -5).
- **Join a coaching circle**
  - Sign up for a coaching circle (a great opportunity to connect to other participants but only sign up if you are willing to commit to meeting with your group for 75 minutes each week)
  - Schedule coaching circle meetings with your group
- **From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies** – understanding the deeper sources of our current global crises
- **Theory U** – an introduction to the origins and basic principles of the framework at the heart of this course. In the face of disruptive change, how can we become aware of and actualize our highest future possibility rather than re-enacting patterns of the past?

- **The Art and Practice of Deep Listening:** Shifting the inner place from which we operate as individuals
- **Coaching Circle #1:** Learn the method and practice your first “case clinic” – a process for addressing the root issues of a current leadership challenge in your life or work
- **Guests:** Dayna Cunningham, Executive Director, MIT Community Innovators Lab (CoLab)
- **Practices:** Reflective Journaling
- **Pre-reading:** Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies: Chapters 1-2
- **Suggested supplementary material:**
  - **Film:** *The House I Live In* (2013). Directed by Eugene Jarecki; *Inside Job* (2010). Directed by Charles Ferguson, narrated by Matt Damon.
  - **Reading:** Klein, N. “Climate Change is a People’s Shock,” September 2014 <http://www.thenation.com/article/181621/climate-change-peoples-shock#>  
Johnson, S., “The Quiet Coup,” *The Atlantic*, May 2009 <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/05/the-quiet-coup/307364/>

**Week 2:** Co-Sensing – launches Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 9am EST (UTC -5)

- **Theory U** – principles of co-sensing (going down the left side of the U)
- **Social Fields** – what is a social field? Example from “The Legend of Bagger Vance”
- **The Four Levels of Conversation** - shifting the inner place from which we operate as groups
- **Guests:** Dayna Cunningham, Executive Director, MIT Community Innovators Lab (CoLab)
- **Coaching Circle #2**
- **Practices:** Listening assessment tool, empathy walk, reflective journaling
- **Practitioner Examples** - Theory U practitioners who work in different sectors around the world will post brief descriptions of their work. You can read about their work, post questions, and interact to learn more about the practical application of Theory U in various contexts
- **Pre-reading:** Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies: Chapter 3

**Week 3:** Presencing – launches Wednesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:15am EST (UTC -5)

- **Live Session:** January 28<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am – 10:15am Eastern Standard Time (UTC -5)
- **Theory U** - how to connect with our highest future possibility (the bottom of the U)
- **Guided mindfulness practice**
- **Institutional Innovation** – applying the principles of the levels of listening and conversation to larger systems

- **Absencing** – the inverse of presencing, this is the process that unfolds when we face disruptive change and cling to the patterns of the past rather than opening ourselves to what's emerging
- **Guests:** Dayna Cunningham (CoLab), Peter Senge (MIT); Arthur Zajonc (Mind & Life Institute); Isabel Guerrero (MIT/Harvard Kennedy School, formerly World Bank), Martin Kalungu-Banda (PI)
- **Coaching Circle #3**
- **Practices:** Empathy walk @ home, listening assessment tool, reflective journaling
- **Pre-reading:** Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies: Chapters 4-5

**Week 4:** Prototyping – launches Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 9am EST (UTC -5)

- **Theory U** – Principles of prototyping (moving up the right side of the U)
- **Example of Prototyping:** a conversation with the creators of “[Scratch](#)” at the MIT Media Lab
- **Guests:** Peter Senge (MIT), Ela Ben-Ur, formerly of IDEO and now i2iExperience, who will support your prototyping; Eileen Fisher (Eileen Fisher Inc.); Michelle Long (BALLE)
- **Explore the future by doing** – develop a prototype initiative that connects the three threads — the personal, relational, and systemic dimensions.
- **Coaching Circle #4**
- **Practices:** Listening assessment tool, reflective journaling
- **Form or join a prototyping initiative**
  - Upload your prototyping results to U.Lab Prototype Gallery
- **Pre-reading:** Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies: Chapters 6-7

**Week 5:** Co-Evolving – launches Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:15am EST (UTC -5)

- **Live Session:** February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 9:00am – 10.15am Eastern Standard Time (UTC -5)
- **Theory U:** putting it all into practice – 17 principles of Presencing
- **The Four Distractions:** what keeps us from connecting to our highest future possibility?
- **Tools and Methods:** review of the tools and methods practiced throughout the U.Lab
- **Guests:** Peter Senge (MIT); Roberto Benzo (Mindful Breathing Laboratory, Mayo Clinic)
- **Coaching Circle #5**
- **Practices:** Listening assessment tool, reflective journaling
- **Pre-reading:** Scharmer, C. Otto, et al: Leading From the Emerging Future: From Ego-system to Eco-system Economies: Chapter 8

**Week 6:** Global Movement Building – launches Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>

- What would it take to build a global movement of inspired, awareness-based change makers?
- What's already happening?
- Next steps
- Provide feedback – share what you have been learning as co-creators of this course
- **Guests:** Peter Senge (MIT)

*Week 6 is the closing session for the course.*

## Grading

Each week, there will be four types of activities you can do to earn credit. Each will count toward 25% of your grade for the week.

1. Watch the videos (25%)
  2. Participate in a coaching circle (25%)
  3. Personal reflection exercises (25%)
  4. Real world engagement (25%)
- Week 0 (this week) is orientation and will not be graded.
  - Week 1 will be worth 25% of your overall grade.
  - Week 2 will be worth 24% of your overall grade.
  - Weeks 3-5 will be worth 17% each.
  - Week 6 is the closing session and will not be graded.

There are no tests, exams, or quizzes. You will be expected to complete a reflective journaling exercise each week, beginning Week 1.

The U.Lab is pass/fail. You will need a 50% overall grade to pass and earn a certificate. Additionally, our grading system is completely on the honor code. At the end of each graded week you will find a section called Certificate Track. In this section you will indicate what work you completed during the week.

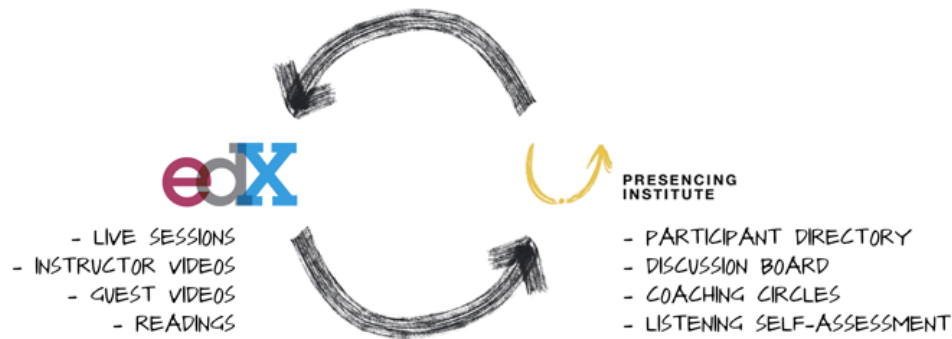
## Pioneering a Global Action-Learning Platform

### Course Design

In the U.Lab, we invite you to join us in pioneering a global action-learning platform that takes the process of learning from the classroom into the real world, from the head to the heart, and from the heart to the hand.

**IMPORTANT:** The online elements of the U.Lab will be hosted on two websites: edX.org and presencing.com.





THROUGHOUT the COURSE, YOU WILL MOVE BACK & FORTH between TWO WEBSITES

## About the Presencing Institute

The [Presencing Institute](#), co-founded by Otto Scharmer, is an awareness-based action-research community that creates social technologies, builds capacities, and generates spaces for profound societal renewal. Several of the course staff and many of the leaders you will meet throughout the U.Lab are affiliated with the Presencing Institute.

## Live Sessions

Pre-recorded videos are a great teaching tool and we've been working hard to create a set of videos specifically designed for this course. However, we all know that live events have a unique energy. When a large group of people turn their attention to an event in real time, a real sense of connectedness emerges.

For this reason, during the first, third, and fifth weeks of the course, Otto will facilitate a live, interactive, 75-minute session that will bring together U.Lab participants from all over the world.

See the Course Schedule above for more detail.

*\*Live sessions will be recorded and made available immediately following the conclusion of the live broadcast*

## Hubs

The U.Lab invites you to create a place to learn together with other people. We're calling these places Hubs.

Creating a Hub is actually quite simple. A Hub is any space where some U.Lab participants gather together (in person) to watch the live sessions and, if you choose, engage in dialogue and reflective exercises in small groups before and afterward. A Hub is a space in which U.Lab participants complement the online/digital part of the U.Lab with a place based, in-person component. It's simple



because it starts by having a conversation after each of the three live-sessions – something that anyone can organize.

There are two different ways to form a Hub:

1. **Circle of Friends:** as a small group in your home or in another suitable location. Invite your friends, **or** use the Presencing Institute Participant Directory to find other U.Lab participants in your area and arrange a space to meet. Or tell friends with whom you want to connect to enroll in the U.Lab class now so you can use the Lab (and your Circle) to deepen your connection with them.
2. **Innovation Hub:** as a group of individuals who want to change the system in which they work. If you are taking the U.Lab with others in your organization or larger system, use live sessions as the opening part of half- or full-day workshops, and use the entire U.Lab as a six-week innovation period to co-create or accelerate a new initiative.

## Coaching Circles

**The coaching circle feature will launch on January 14<sup>th</sup>**

Coaching circles are probably the single most effective method in the U.Lab for moving from concept to practice. The backbone of the coaching circles is a process we call case clinics. Next week, you will learn the case clinic method and have a chance to practice it. But in order to practice, you first need to create or join a coaching circle - on or after January 14th.

*Here are some FAQ's about coaching circles:*

*What is a coaching circle?* A coaching circle is a group of five U.Lab participants who will meet virtually (or in person, if possible) for 75 minutes each week to practice the leadership skills taught in this course and support each other in developing new ways of thinking about and dealing with their current leadership challenges.

*A group of five? But I don't know anyone else in this course...* Perfect! There are thousands of other people thinking the same thing. Next week, we'll show you how to meet other U.Lab participants and create or join a coaching circle. All coaching groups will be self-selected. You can start a new group, or browse groups that are still in need of members. When browsing groups, you'll be able to search by preferred meeting time, preferred language, other group members' interests, and more.

*I'm not sure if I want to join a coaching circle. How do I know if I should really join?* For a coaching circle to be effective, each member needs to be committed to meet each week. See if one of the following applies to you:

1. If you're definitely interested in participating in a coaching circle on a weekly basis, sign up next week after the Live Session concludes.
2. If you've joined the U.Lab and only intend to browse the course material - that's great and we're happy that you're here - but you should not join a coaching circle.
3. If you're not sure whether you want to join a coaching circle, it's better to wait and create or join a group later in the course than to join a group and not participate or to join and then drop out.
4. If you're definitely interested but know in advance that you won't be available to join a coaching circle during a particular week, you should still join, but we recommend you bring this up in advance in your circle. Make sure that you can fully join all other sessions.

*Great, I'm ready! How do I join a coaching circle?* After the Live Session next week, you will see a tutorial explaining how to create or join a coaching circle.

*I'm not going to join a coaching circle. Can I still participate in U.Lab?* Yes, absolutely. It won't be the full experience, but you can still participate and earn a certificate.

*I'm participating in a Hub. Can I form a coaching circle with people in my hub instead of joining one virtually?* Absolutely. If you choose to do this, we encourage you to ALSO create an online space on the Presencing Institute site where members of your coaching circle can share written assignments with each other. We'll explain how to reserve a coaching circle group next week.

*When does my coaching circle meet?* That is entirely up to your group to decide! Before you join a group, pay close attention to the preferred meeting times listed below each person's name. Comparing their availability to your own will help you anticipate whether scheduling could be a challenge. Your coaching circle should always meet before the next week of the course goes live. New weeks go live on Wednesdays.

**We look forward to working together with you in U.Lab!**