Thoughts on Interdisciplinarity from Paul Cubbon

In the process of designing your interdisciplinary cross-listed courses, what kinds of challenges did you encounter? How did you address them?

- Identify a student interest that is unmet – it may be latent and unarticulated.
- Get a level of senior admin support for a pilot course.
- Pilot courses are key!
- Find a willing partner to co-design with
- Set a deadline for launch and publicize it! Use the public commitment to drive you to deliver the pilot.
- Try a variety of things that fit your learning objectives. Don't be bound by convention. Be willing to let go of some control.
- Gather student feedback along the way as well as at the end.
- Share results with your stakeholders and snr admin asap to harness momentum for stage 2.

What would you do differently next time to design an interdisciplinary course and interdisciplinary course activities and assignments?

- Would not do a lot different. Of course, more time and some resources would be nice, but somehow the urgency and "start-up" mentality of doing this "lean" seems to work – at least for me.

What are the benefits of interdisciplinary learning that you see emerging in your course this term?

- students learn from each other and ask different questions than in a single discipline course.
- Course design has to be different – to make space for activities based on tensions and synergies between disciplines.
- It is liberating and refreshing and quickly forces a higher level of enquiry and debate.

How do you respond to different student expectations and motivations for participating in the course, particularly if they originate from disciplinary norms?

- To date, most of these have been opt-in electives. So, be very explicit about how and why it is different from a normal course, and allow students to self-screen out (or in.) Don't be afraid to put students off taking it! Tell them it may make them uncomfortable and challenge them in different ways which they might not like. Some will find this appealing anyway!

What is one piece of advice or resource you would share with someone who is designing a new interdisciplinary course or course activity?

- PILOT, PARTNER, PUBLIC launch date commitment.

Courses referenced:
- Decoding Social Media: Sauder and Journalism
- New Venture Design: Sauder and APSC Engineering
- Comm101 Intro to business: different specializations within Sauder: Marketing and Accounting lead, but 8 faculty involved.
- BAEN 506/507 and APSC542 – like NVD above but for grads
- Prototyping for Business students – taught by Eng Physics
- Lean Launch Pad via e@ubc: non credit start-up venture support course
- Entrepreneurship 101 – new course for 2014 UBC wide.