Overview

Businesses today are utterly reliant on information technology; even the briefest interruption in service can cost a firm millions of dollars or even threaten its survival. Business professionals need at least a basic understanding of the role of management information systems in helping businesses to be efficient, effective, and competitive in our technology-oriented world.

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the use of decision support systems for business decision making and process improvement, and explain the role of data warehouses in these systems.
2. Exemplify the use of technology—including networks and MIS infrastructure—to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business processes.
3. Discuss the major policies businesses should implement to protect the privacy, security, and integrity of corporate and customer information.
4. Design and implement Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and Microsoft Access databases to support business decision making.
5. Explain the major types of enterprise applications and the methodologies used to develop them and manage their development.

These goals are related to the following learning goals of the business minor program:

- Students will develop analytical, problem-solving and decision-making skills that can be applied in a variety of business situations within a global business environment.
- Students will be able to use process analysis techniques and tools in order to assess and improve the ways in which organizations conduct business.
Prerequisites
Before taking this class, you should have completed 30 credit hours (i.e., sophomore standing).

Expectations
Taking a course online requires dedication and organization. In order to have a successful semester, it is important that you:

- Visit the course website regularly (at least weekly).
- Stay on schedule with the material covered, and complete all assignments on time.
- Participate actively in discussions.
- Check your Mason Live email (or, if you forward your mail, the forwarding location) daily.
- Dedicate five to seven hours per week, on average, to the class.
- Contact me promptly if a problem arises that is interfering with your performance in the class.

Learning Resources

Required Course Materials – Textbook and Connect

You will also need a subscription to McGraw-Hill’s Connect homework/quiz manager. The bookstore sells a package including the textbook and a Connect access code; you can also purchase the book and the access code separately. See the course website for more information on Connect and a link to the Connect site for our class.

Course Website
Our course website on Blackboard serves as the information hub for this course. To view the site, visit [http://mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu), log on using your Mason Live user ID and password, and click the “Courses” tab. You should see MSOM302-DL1 listed; if not, please email me immediately.

The website includes a Welcome video and a “Start Here!” area providing an orientation to the course and to online learning. Please review these before starting on other course materials.

Study Guide and Unit Folders
Each week’s assignments and activities can be found in unit folders on the course website. Each folder contains a detailed list of readings, activities, and other assignments, and also provides perspective on the material. In addition, you can get the “big picture” of the course, with topics and major due dates, from the weekly course schedule available on the course website.

Availability of Learning Tools
This course is offered completely online (except for your textbook, if you choose a hard copy version). Course materials, including exams, are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Virtual office hours and live online sessions are offered at specific times; however, they are optional.

Communication

Announcements and Course Updates
You will receive an email (sent to your MasonLive email account) every Monday providing an overview of the week’s activities. I will also use email at other times for reminders and
announcements. All emails will be posted as announcements on Blackboard. I may sometimes post lower-priority announcements on Blackboard without emailing them.

**Blackboard Collaborate**

Blackboard Collaborate provides a virtual meeting area for our class. It supports audio, text chat, a whiteboard, and screen sharing. We will use it for virtual office hours and one-on-one meetings (see below), and possibly for optional live tutorials.

You need either a headset with a built-in microphone or a microphone plus headphones in order to participate in sessions using audio features. You can run it on a PC or Mac, and also on an iPad (with a reduced set of features). The course website has additional information on Collaborate.

---

**How to Get Help**

We have vastly different technology backgrounds in the class, and I expect that you may require individual help or tutoring from time to time. Please don’t let yourself get frustrated if you’re struggling with a concept or assignment. Asking for help isn’t a failure—but giving up because you didn’t seek help is.

The previous paragraph assumes that you have first taken advantage of all course resources related to the topic—readings, videos, and practice activities. One-on-one help is available to supplement these resources, not to replace them.

**Technical Help**

- If you have problems with the Mason network, Blackboard, Virtual Computer Lab (VCL), or the Respondus Lockdown Browser, you can contact GMU’s ITU Support Center ([https://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=6129](https://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=6129), or see the course website for a link).
- If you have problems with Connect, you can contact McGraw-Hill’s Customer Experience Group Support Center ([http://mpss.mhhe.com](http://mpss.mhhe.com)) by phone or online chat.

**Help with Course Concepts or Logistics**

If you need help with course concepts or logistics, here are two good options for quick questions:

- **Ask the Professor forum:** The course website includes an “Ask the Professor” discussion forum. You may post questions there, and I will answer them within 24 hours Monday through Friday, and usually on weekends as well (but see “Three Before Me” below).
- **Email:** I check email frequently. I will respond within 24 hours or less Monday through Friday, and usually on weekends as well (but see “Three Before Me” below).

Here are some options for getting help when the question isn’t quite as simple:

- **Virtual office hours:** Virtual office hours using Blackboard Collaborate will take the place of traditional office hours. I will announce a schedule at the start of each week. If you have a question or problem, you are welcome to “drop by” at these times.
- **One-on-one sessions:** If you need individual help and the scheduled virtual office hours don’t work for you, please contact me to schedule an online meeting. We can meet on Blackboard Collaborate, Skype, or the phone, whatever works best for you.
- **Telephone:** If an emergency arises and you need to reach me right away, my phone number is at the top of Page 1 of the syllabus.
“Three Before Me”

The website and readings are your first sources for finding answers to your questions. It is your responsibility to use them—and then to ask for help if they do not provide the answers you need.

Unfortunately, students have too often asked me questions they could have answered themselves—emailing me seemed easier than checking the website, and I am known for quick responses to email. In other words, they took advantage of my willingness to help. This used up time I could have spent with students who genuinely needed help.

As a result, all emails and “Ask the Professor” posts must be accompanied by a list of three appropriate places in the course materials where you sought the answer but didn’t find it (e.g., the syllabus, the unit folders, or a relevant video, depending on the question). If you don’t include this information with your request, you should not expect an answer. The exception is if you found an answer but you’re not sure you understand. In that case, just tell me where you found the answer (you don’t need three sources).

This is called a “Three Before Me” policy and is becoming commonplace in education. It benefits both the instructor and the student: employers want to hire (and promote) people who are able to work independently, and who understand when it’s appropriate to ask for help.

However …

As I said at the start of this section, don’t let yourself get frustrated or upset if you run into problems. Do your best with the resources provided, but then if you still need help, ask.

### Grading and Assignments

Weeks begin on Monday and end on Sunday. All assignments are due before midnight on Sundays, except for initial posts in online discussions, which are due on Thursday in order to allow time for responses later in the week. See the Class Schedule for specific due dates.

Each unit in the course will be available one week in advance so that you can work ahead of schedule if you choose; however, you must take exams and participate in discussions during the week in which they are assigned.

The assignments in the class will earn the following maximum point values (each type of assignment is described in the sections that follow):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th># assigned</th>
<th># scores dropped</th>
<th>Points each</th>
<th>Total points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50-80</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startup activities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect activities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written assignments and discussions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>900-1,000</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>600-699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>800-899</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>700-799</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exams

There will be two exams during the semester. Exams are non-cumulative, except in the sense that later material builds on early material. Exams will be “closed book” with one exception. You may use one sheet of letter-sized paper (measuring 8.5 x 11 inches) during the exam, with whatever you like written or printed on both sides. See the Exams area on Blackboard for more information on exam format, content, and preparation.

You will take exams online at a time of your choosing within a one-week time range, using a service called Respondus Monitor. You need to install a special browser, the Respondus Lockdown Browser, and you must have a webcam and microphone (they are used to record you while you take the exam). See “Technology Requirements” below for specific hardware and software requirements.

If you have a conflict with an exam period that makes it impossible for you to take it by the deadline, contact me at least two weeks in advance to discuss it. Note that personal travel plans are not an acceptable reason for a schedule change. Otherwise, failure to complete an exam by the deadline will result in a score of zero, except in case of a documented emergency.

Homework

You will complete a series of homework assignments using Microsoft Excel and Access to organize data and create reports. The course includes a series of tutorial videos, readings, and practice exercises designed to help you to learn the skills needed to complete the assignments. Assignments will be submitted on Blackboard.

You may work alone or with a partner on each of the homework assignments; however, both partners are expected to be able to demonstrate any skill required to complete the assignment.

You may take an extension of up to 48 hours (2 days) on one homework deadline without a penalty. Aside from this “free extension,” late homework will be subject to the following penalties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How late?</th>
<th>Penalty (points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 12 hours</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-24 hours (1 day)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-48 hours (2 days)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework submitted over 48 hours late will not be accepted and will receive a score of zero points.

Quizzes and Activities

Without the discipline imposed by regular class meetings, it’s easy to drift away from an online course. Missing assignments and cramming for exams will compromise your learning and hurt your grade. Successful online students allocate regular time slots to the class.

In order to help you to stay involved and up to date with the course material, and to give you opportunities to practice new skills, each unit of course material will include small assignments to complete. Some will be graded; others will be ungraded practice activities with solutions provided so you can check your work. These activities fall into the following categories:

Startup Activities

The Start Here! folder contains a combined quiz/survey designed both to test your understanding of “how things work” in the class, and to help me to learn more about you. In addition, during the first
week of the semester, you will be asked to post a personal introduction to the class. Each of these activities is worth ten points.

**Connect Activities**

In most units, you will take a quiz on McGraw-Hill’s Connect website summarizing the textbook material; sometimes you will complete an interactive activity as well. After completing the quiz or activity, you may take it once more to improve your score. As long as you score at least 90%, you will earn the full value (ten points); lower scores will earn partial credit. Your three lowest scores will be dropped; this means you can skip three activities without a penalty. For this reason, there are no extensions offered on Connect activities.

**Extra Credit: LearnSmart**

The Connect website contains at least one LearnSmart exercise for each chapter in the text. LearnSmart is an adaptive question-and-answer tool; it chooses questions to ask based on your previous answers. You may complete these exercises in the current week for extra credit (up to five points each). You may also use them for exam preparation as non-credit exercises.

**“Reflect” and Practice Activities**

In addition to the graded activities listed above, the unit folders also contain ungraded practice activities. These are short exercises that help you to check your understanding of concepts by applying them to a specific situation. Sample answers will be provided. They are of three types:

1. Short “Reflect” exercises asking you to use course concepts to evaluate a business situation or to provide examples of a concept in action.
2. Interactive practice activities on Connect asking questions about a concept.
3. Microsoft Excel and Access practice activities.

Sometimes students are tempted to skip these activities since they aren’t graded; however, unless you are already competent in the concepts or skills covered by the activities, you need to complete them. They allow you to practice skills in isolation, helping you to prepare for exams and assignments where you must apply several skills to more complex examples.

**Minicase Assignments and Discussions**

**Minicase Assignments**

A few times during the semester, you will be asked to submit a short paper in which you apply course material to a specific business situation presented in a short case, called a "minicase." These assignments are worth up to 20 points. I will drop your lowest discussion score OR your lowest score on these assignments, whichever is lower.

**Group Discussions**

You will be assigned to a group of 10-12 students for online discussions related to the course material. For each discussion, you will be required to make your initial post by Thursday of the given week, followed by at least two comments on others’ posts before the end of the week. See the “Group Discussions” area on Blackboard for more details.

**Grading**

Each discussion and written assignment is worth 20 points. I will drop your lowest score, which means that you can skip one of these activities (a written assignment OR a discussion) without a penalty.
Technology Requirements

To take this course, you will need the following hardware and software (this information is also in the “Start Here!” area of the course website):

**Hardware**

- A PC running Microsoft Windows XP/Vista/7/8, or a Mac running OS X 10.6 (Snow Leopard) or higher, with at least 2GB of memory. It’s best to have a screen size of at least 13 inches.
- A fast, reliable broadband Internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL).
- Computer speakers or headphones to listen to recorded content.
- A headset with microphone, or a built-in or external microphone plus headphones, to participate in live audio sessions using tools like Blackboard Collaborate.
- Sufficient hard disk space to download required software and save your course assignments.
- A webcam (internal or external) and a microphone, for use during exams.

**Software**

- A web browser supported by Blackboard (see Blackboard Support for more information)
- Access to Blackboard Collaborate. To verify, complete the Blackboard Collaborate System Check. Collaborate has its own software requirements (including an up-to-date version of Java), which the system check will verify.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (free download)
- A current version of Adobe Flash Player (free download)
- The Respondus Lockdown Browser, used to take exams. It has software requirements of its own (see the “Exams” area of the course website for more information).

**Microsoft Office Applications**

To complete the homework, you will need access to these Microsoft Office applications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Acceptable versions (Windows)</th>
<th>Acceptable versions (Mac)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The “Microsoft Excel and Access” area on the course website offers several low-cost/no-cost options for obtaining or using these applications (including ways for Mac users to use Microsoft Access remotely).

**Employer-provided Computers**

If you are planning to use an employer-provided computer for class activities, please verify with the system administrator that you will be able to install the necessary software and access course materials. Corporate firewalls may restrict access to some websites and media types.

**University Policies and Resources**

**Academic Integrity Policy**

You are expected to adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits actual and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. These rules apply to this course:

- You may use one sheet of letter-sized paper (8.5x11 inches) as a reference during exams. Both sides of this page may contain anything you choose, hand written or created on a printer. You may use no other information sources during the exam, whether hard copy,
electronic, or human. Your answers on exams must be entirely your work, with no assistance given or received.

- For Connect activities, discussions, homework, and written assignments, you may use both hard copy and electronic references for general information when preparing your answers. However, your answers must be entirely your own work (or, if you work with a partner on the homework, yours and your partner’s) with no assistance specific to the assignment given or received, with one exception: you are encouraged to seek assignment-specific help from the instructor if you need it after using resources provided as part of the course.

The School of Business recommends a minimum penalty of an F in the class for a first-time Honor Code violation. We take the Honor Code seriously; so should you. Consult the Office of Academic Integrity website for more information about the Honor Code issues.

Disability Policy

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services to make arrangements.

Accessibility

GMU has services available to create recordings, transcripts, or other materials to meet the needs of students requiring accessible media. In addition, I have done my best to provide an accessible course (see the “Accessibility” area on Blackboard for specifics); however, I could easily have missed something. Please contact me immediately if:

- You have problems using a course resource due to an accessibility issue.
- You need access to a resource that is not yet accessible.

If you would prefer not to identify yourself, you can also report the issue anonymously on the Accessibility Issues Form provided by the GMU Web Accessibility initiative. Please be sure to provide the course number and my name so that the information reaches me quickly.

University Policies

Students must follow the GMU University Policy and the Responsible Use of Computing Policy.

University Resources

GMU provides a number of resources to facilitate student success (e.g., Counseling and Psychological Services, Learning Services, University Career Services, Writing Center). If you need assistance, please consider taking advantage of these services.

| Weekly Schedule |

See the next page.
**Weekly Course Schedule – Fall, 2014**

Weeks start on Mondays and end on Sundays. All assignments for the week are due before midnight on Sunday except for initial discussion posts (due on Thursday, and highlighted in red text below). See the Course Content area on Blackboard for more specifics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Topic 1</th>
<th>Topic 2</th>
<th>Connect Activities</th>
<th>Connect Extra Credit*</th>
<th>Other Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/18-8/24</td>
<td>&quot;Start Here!&quot;</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Course Orientation Quiz/Survey; Personal Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/25-8/31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to MIS</td>
<td>Excel Lesson 1</td>
<td>▪ Ch 1 quiz</td>
<td>LS Ch 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/1-9/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decision Support Systems</td>
<td>Excel Lesson 2</td>
<td>▪ Ch 2 quiz A</td>
<td>LS Ch 2A</td>
<td><strong>Discussion: Strategy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/8-9/14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Business Processes</td>
<td>Excel Lesson 3</td>
<td>▪ Ch 2 quiz B</td>
<td>LS Ch 2B</td>
<td><strong>Homework #1 (Excel)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/15-9/21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E-Business</td>
<td>Excel Lesson 4</td>
<td>▪ Ch 3 quiz</td>
<td>LS Ch 3</td>
<td><strong>Minicase: Decision Support/Bsns Processes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/22-9/28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Information Security</td>
<td>Excel Lesson 5</td>
<td>▪ Ch 4 quiz</td>
<td>LS Ch 4</td>
<td><strong>Discussion: Info Security</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/29-10/5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Databases &amp; Business Intelligence</td>
<td>RDB Lesson 1</td>
<td>▪ Ch 6 quiz</td>
<td>LS Ch 6</td>
<td><strong>Homework #2 (Excel)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/6-10/12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Access Lesson 1/ RDB Lesson 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ RDB quiz 1</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exam #1 (covers Units 1-6)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13-10/19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Access Lesson 2</td>
<td>▪ Ch 5 quiz A</td>
<td>LS Ch 5A</td>
<td><strong>Discussion: Infrastructure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20-10/26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Infrastructure (cont.)</td>
<td>RDB Lesson 3</td>
<td>▪ Cloud Video Case</td>
<td>LS Ch 5B</td>
<td><strong>Homework #3 (Access)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27-11/2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Business Networks</td>
<td>RDB Lesson 4</td>
<td>▪ Ch 7 quiz A</td>
<td>LS Ch 7A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3-11/9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mobile Networks</td>
<td>RDB Lesson 5</td>
<td>▪ Ch 7 quiz B</td>
<td>LS Ch 7B</td>
<td><strong>Discussion: Net Neutrality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10-11/16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Enterprise Apps</td>
<td>Access Lesson 3</td>
<td>▪ Food Safety Video</td>
<td>LS Ch 8A</td>
<td><strong>Homework #4 (Access)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17-11/23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Enterprise Apps (cont.)</td>
<td>Access Lesson 4</td>
<td>▪ CRM Activity</td>
<td>LS Ch 8B</td>
<td><strong>Minicase: Enterprise Apps</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/24-11/30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thanksgiving week – enjoy the break!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/1-12/7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>System Development, Project Management</td>
<td>Access Lesson 5</td>
<td>▪ Ch 9 quiz</td>
<td>LS Ch 9</td>
<td><strong>Homework #5 (Access)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/8-12/14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exam #2 (covers Units 7-14)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* LS = LearnSmart