Team Dynamics and Interpersonal Skills
MGMT 464 - Section 001
Arts Building L008
Tuesday 4:30pm – 7:10pm
Spring 2012

Instructor: Lynn Hertrick Leavitt, Ph.D.
E-mail: lleavitt@gmu.edu  Cell phone: 703 505-6885
Office Hours: Tuesdays – before or after class
Please send an email to make an appointment.
Course Website http://som.gmu.edu/

Course Description

The knowledge and skills you develop in this course will be critical to you as you manage your relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and subordinates; manage, design and change the teams or groups you belong to; and work to achieve your goals in complex and dynamic organizational settings. Ultimately, the knowledge and skills you develop in this course can help you to become a more effective contributor in any team, group or organization that you join.

Course Objectives

1. To help students become familiar with contemporary theories and research findings about teams, their function and their management.

2. To give students experience in applying these different theories and frameworks in order to diagnose and propose solutions to complex and ill-defined problems related to the function and management of teams.

3. To help students more effectively communicate observations and recommendations about teams and teamwork in both oral and written form.

Required Reading Materials
Course Expectations
Experience has shown that teamwork skills are best learned through a combination of cognitive and experiential learning. By reading and studying the assigned material for each class, students will accomplish the cognitive objective; that is, they will become familiar with the latest research/theories on organizations and the people in them. By participating in classroom exercises, team projects, and case analyses, students will gain experience by putting these theories to work in observing, interpreting, diagnosing, and solving complex problems in teams.

The following course requirements are designed to integrate cognitive and experiential learning:

**Individual Work** (30%)
- Participation/Professionalism/Personal Profile........... 300 pts

**Team Work** (70%)
- Team Facilitation ............................................. 300 pts
- Team Project Paper ............................................. 200 pts
- Presentation of Team Project Paper .................. 200 pts

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>84-86.99%</td>
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<td>60-69.99%</td>
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<td>96-99.99%</td>
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<td>80-83.99%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>0-59.99%</td>
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<td>90-95.99%</td>
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<td>77-79.99%</td>
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<td>87-89.99%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>70-76.99%</td>
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Please note: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. ***Late assignments will not be graded, and will receive zero points***

If you have a documented medical reason or other documented emergency that prohibits you from submitting your assignment on time, please contact me via email ASAP. Attach the documentation to the assignment and submit to me as soon as possible.

**Participation/Professionalism/Individual Profile** (300 pts). Given the emphasis on learning by experience, most of our in-class time will be spent doing activities that require the participation and professionalism of each student (discussions, team exercises, simulations, etc.). The success of these activities will depend on your active involvement. Thirty percent (30%) of your grade will be based on your professionalism and contributions you make to the quality of our classroom discussions and activities.

If I see evidence that you are not professional: eg: lateness, leaving early, lack of preparation, disruption of the class, or other behaviors that indicate a lack of a professional and responsible attitude towards the class or assignments, points will be deducted.

**Individual Profile** (25 of the 300 pts for participation)
The Individual Profile is the last page of the syllabus and will be collected before and/or at the beginning of our second class (1/31). Your Individual Profile will help me to know you better and create teams for this class.
Team Facilitation (300 pts). Each team will be responsible for one chapter from the textbook, and will be required to “facilitate” the material during class on a designated day by creating scenarios, presenting facts, initiating conversations or … other engaging techniques. It is not necessary to cover every single topic in the chapter; your team can select what it believes to be particularly important or interesting. You can also add information from other sources that relate to your topic. Be sure to decide what each team member’s role will be during each component of your team’s facilitation. 60 minutes.

Team Project Paper. (200 pts) With your team, you will write a 19-20 page paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1 inch margins), exploring a specific team in real-world, organizational settings. The purpose of the paper is to identify a team (examples could range from manufacturing teams, to firefighting teams, culinary teams, coaching teams, consulting teams, surgical teams, service teams, sports teams and/or teams in the military, etc.), and to explore why such teams are used, and how they function. This paper should have a section that discusses the teams in terms of concepts from the textbook (at a more conceptual/theoretical level), as well as a section that provides examples of these teams in action, and explores how they actually work and what potential problems might arise in practice. The final part of the paper contains your recommendations for the organization.

1. **Executive Summary.** A good executive summary provides a one-paragraph description of your report and convinces the reader of its importance. It should include the following:
   a. Concise statement of purpose, e.g., “This report addresses the current problems with inter-group coordination at ABC Corporation, particularly . . .”.
   b. The major points in your analysis, e.g., “We suggest that these problems are primarily due to . . .”
   c. Your recommendations, e.g., “We are recommending that management address these problems by . . .”. (You may choose to use a bullet format for recommendations or major points.)

2. **Analysis.**
   a. 1st Paragraph.  
      • State the conclusions you will be drawing from your analysis, e.g., “This section argues that the inter-group coordination problems at ABC derive from three sources”
      • Briefly anticipate the arguments you will present to support those conclusions, e.g., “We arrived at these conclusions by applying leader-member exchange theory to . . .”
      • Describe the sub-sections that follow, e.g., “Our discussion is organized as follows: . . .”
   b. Body of the Analysis. Present specific arguments and evidence to support each of the conclusions you introduced in the first paragraph, e.g., “Weak Leadership. An analysis of Joe’s leadership style using leader-member exchange theory suggests that . . .”.
   c. Additional Hints.  
      • Use appropriate concepts from class/textbook to sharpen and integrate your analysis.

3. **Recommendations**
   a. 1st Paragraph. State the recommendations you will be making, e.g., “We propose 3 solutions . . .”
   b. Body. Give your rationale for each recommendation, including an in-depth discussion of benefits and barriers. For each recommendation, identify specific action steps that must be taken. Explain what will be done, who should be involved, when it should take place, etc.
   c. Look forward. Whereas your analysis was based on the past, your recommendations should look to the future. Don't tell the organization what it should have done. Focus on what to do now.
Presentation of the Team Project Paper. (200 pts) Each team will have 30 minutes to present the paper, providing not only an opportunity to impress me (the ‘Professor’) with a polished presentation, but also to inform classmates about different types of teams and how they work.

Guidelines, Recommendations and University Policy/Information

This course requires your commitment and focus in order to be successful. I encourage you to review your schedule over the semester and develop a plan for completing the assignments on-time. Assignments are constructed to help you achieve the goals of this course. Again, class participation is required for this course. If you are unable to meet the requirements of this course, I encourage you to take it at a time when you can. This course was designed so that all students are capable of excelling if they put in the effort.

If you are subject to any religious-related holidays that will affect your participation in this class please provide me with a written and signed summary of the specific dates by the second week of class. (1/31/12)

If you have any medical conditions of which I should be aware, please provide me with an explanation in writing and with any necessary supporting documents by the second week of class. (1/31/12)

You are expected to sign-in at the beginning of each class. You are responsible for assuring that your signature indicates your presence and the excuses of “I was there but forgot to sign the sheet” will *NOT* be accepted. Records of your signatures will be kept as documentation and be a component of your participation grade.

Additionally, please be respectful of your classmates and me by coming to class on time. Excessive lateness will not be tolerated because it is distracting and disrupts the flow of the class. Students who arrive after the sign-in sheet has been accounted for will be recorded as ‘late’ and will lose points for participation. Lateness and leaving early will affect your participation grade. This is to ensure that students who fully participate receive full credit.

Acceptance: I want this to be an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable making mistakes and speaking his/her mind. I believe that an untrusting environment stifles creativity and information sharing. Diversity makes the classroom and workplace more interesting and is important for learning and performance. Therefore I expect that all comments made in class will be received with open minds from classmates. Inappropriate comments and/or behavior will not be tolerated.

Etiquette:

- Keep cell phones and beepers off and refrain from text messaging during class.
- Do not use your laptop in this course as it is distracting to me and other students.
- Use appropriate language when communicating with me and other students via e-mail.
- Act in a professional manner (that includes spell checking your messages).
**Appealing Grades:** Every effort will be made to ensure that your assignments are graded fairly and accurately. If, however, you disagree with a grade on a particular assignment, the following steps should help to both resolve your concern as well as promote your learning:

1. Prepare and document your reasons for requesting a grade revision.
2. Present your case (in writing) to me. I will either agree with you (and change your grade) or explain why the original grade was appropriate.

**Grading Note:** I will not accept 'retroactive excuses' by students. By this I mean bringing up circumstances at the end of the semester as a basis for requesting a better grade. If unique or unusual circumstances occur that might prevent you from doing as well as you normally would (such as illness, medical emergency, unavoidable family commitments, etc.), let me know at the beginning of the semester, or at least as soon as possible. Documentation is important (such as a Dr.’s note).

**Academic Integrity.** The Honor System and Code adopted by George Mason University will be enforced for this class. For a full description of this code please refer to: (http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/acadpol.html).

One specific component of the Honor Code relative to this course:
When using material from the textbook or other sources (including the internet), non-original thoughts, concepts, etc. should be cited in accordance with standard academic guidelines (e.g., APA or MLA).

**ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me AND contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as soon as possible (703) 993-2474. ALL academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**UNIVERSITY INFORMATION**
Students can sign-up for the Mason Alert System to provide emergency information of various sorts at [http://alert.gmu.edu](http://alert.gmu.edu)
An emergency poster exists in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures exists at [http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert](http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert)
In case of inclement weather, call 703 993-1000 for the latest updates about class cancellation and/or university closings.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Read Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Complete/Print Individual Profile (attached to syllabus)</td>
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<td>1/31</td>
<td>Teams: Facts &amp; Myths</td>
<td>Read Chapter 2 DUE: Individual Profile</td>
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<td>Reminder: Last day to drop with no tuition penalty is Tuesday, January 31</td>
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<td>2/7</td>
<td>Performance &amp; Productivity</td>
<td>Read Chapter 3</td>
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<td>(Team Formation in class)</td>
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<td>2/14</td>
<td>Rewarding Teamwork</td>
<td>Read Chapters 4 &amp; 5</td>
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<td>Select Team Facilitation</td>
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<td>Dates/Assignments</td>
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<td>2/21</td>
<td>Designing the Team: Tasks, People, Process, Identity, Emotion, Development</td>
<td>Read Chapter 6</td>
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<td>Communication &amp; Collective Intelligence</td>
<td>Read Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Team ____</td>
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<td>3/6</td>
<td>Team Decision Making</td>
<td>Read Chapter 8</td>
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<td>3/13</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>3/20</td>
<td>Conflict in teams</td>
<td>Read Chapter 9</td>
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<td>3/27</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Read Chapter 11</td>
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<td>Team ______</td>
<td>Work on Team Project Paper</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Read Chapter 12 &amp; 13</td>
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<td>Team ______</td>
<td>Work on Team Project Paper</td>
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<td>4/17 Work on (Practice) Final Team Presentations</td>
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<td>4/24</td>
<td>FINAL PRESENTATIONS</td>
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<td>ALL TEAM PROJECT PAPERS DUE 4/24</td>
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(This class outline is tentative and subject to change if needed – eg: snow day)
SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING A HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM

The following suggestions can help make the difference between a frustrating, ineffective team experience and a fulfilling, effective team experience.

1. **Work to Develop Positive Norms.** During your first few team meetings, you will be developing norms for how your team will operate, e.g., norms for learning, performance, sharing ideas, dealing with conflict, attending meetings, respect for one another, etc. Once established, team norms can be difficult to change so it is critical that you work to develop positive team norms from your first meeting and challenge any negative norms that seem to be emerging.

2. **Discuss Your Goals for the Team.** Many teams do not have an initial discussion about what they want to accomplish. Rather, they become very task-oriented and don't keep the big picture in mind. Take the time to outline your expectations and remind yourselves of those expectations from time to time.

3. **Dividing Labor and Integrating Work.** In attempting to involve all team members equally in a given project, teams will often make one of two mistakes: (1) they try to involve every member in every aspect of every project or (2) they divide a project up into pieces without ensuring that these pieces can and will be integrated into a coherent whole. Both approaches are recipes for failure and frustration. Effective teams are explicit about assigning different project tasks to different individuals (or pairs of individuals) and then deciding how those different portions will be integrated into one coherent product. This may involve the assignment of different roles which change from project to project (e.g., “project integrator”, “task coordinator”).

4. **Discuss Your Schedules Early.** An early discussion of your outside commitments can help the team to plan meetings as well as assign workloads. For example, if you know that you will be busy during a particular project, you may decide to take a heavier load on a subsequent project with the advance approval of the team.

5. **Embrace Differences.** One of the biggest misconceptions that people have when they first begin team work is that disagreements are to be avoided and that conflict is bad. Nothing could be further from the truth. Your team will disagree about how to analyze cases, how to proceed with assignments, or even whether someone is contributing as much as he/she should. If you ignore these points of difference or expect the instructor to resolve them you will sacrifice much of the learning that team work affords and your team performance will suffer as a consequence. The key is to approach differences with candidness, respect, and common courtesy.

6. **Choose Your Performance Appraisal System Carefully.** In this course, you have the option of a one team-one grade appraisal system or a peer performance appraisal system. The system you select can significantly impact the norms of your team. Have a discussion about which system you will adopt for each assignment and why. If you choose the peer performance appraisal system, think carefully about the criteria you will use to evaluate one another's performance, e.g., attendance at meetings, time spent on projects, intellectual leadership, etc.

7. **Anonymity in the Team Process Paper.** Your grade will not be adjusted based on what others in your team say about you in their team process paper. However, team members may decide that they are uncomfortable having their real names used in the team process papers. You may want to discuss this issue as a team.

8. **Have Fun!** Working in a team can be energizing and fun. Be creative and take advantage of this excellent opportunity to learn from one another and to learn about teams.
INDIVIDUAL PROFILE

Please clearly print this information.

Name: _____________________________________________________________

The purpose of the Individual Profile is to introduce yourself to me and help me learn a bit more about you as a student and individual. Include information such as: your academic major/minor/certificate; where you were born/raised; family (siblings, parents, spouse, children and/or pets); extra-curricular activities in which you are/were involved at Mason, hobbies (or what you enjoy doing in your spare time), where you work and/or volunteer, career/life aspirations – and anything else you would like me to know about you.

Major:____________________________________________________________________________

Minor/Certificate:___________________________________________________________________

Born/Raised/Currently Living:

Family:

Hobbies/Interests/Extra-curricular activities:

Current Job(s)________________________________________________________________________

Career/Life Aspiration(s)__________________________________________________________________

Anything else you would like me to know about you: