MGMT 464: Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills
Section 002: TH 4:30-7:10, Robinson B 105

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Hours: by Appointment

Course Description

This course will provide you with concepts and tools to help you understand and manage human behavior in teams and work groups. The knowledge and skills you develop in this course will be critical to you as you manage your relationships with co-workers, bosses, 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

This course has three objectives. These are listed in order of importance from least to most.

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

2. To give students experience with the functions managers need to perform: Evaluation of complex situations, delegation of tasks, presentation of knowledge (written and oral), persuasion of others and defense of your argument.

3. To help students think more effectively – that is, to know how to perceive, interpret, and judge information in such a way that one can be confident in their recommendations, and be able to learn how to improve their knowledge.
Required Reading Materials

Course Expectations
I expect that you will read the assigned material and come to class with the ability to talk intelligently about the material contained in the reading. In class, we will do exercises intended to reinforce key principles related to that day's reading, and to deepen the knowledge beyond what you can get from reading alone. You are responsible for knowing anything in the book or anything covered in class.

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

**Individual Work (40%)**
- Midterm .......................................................... 10%
- Class participation ............................................. 15%
- Final ................................................................. 15%
- Professionalism (adjustment) ......................... +/- 1/2 grade

**Team Work (60%)**
- Team Case Analyses (2) will be tests .................. 20%
- Team Paper ....................................................... 20%
- Team Debate ..................................................... 10%
- Team Teaching .................................................. 10%

Please note: All assignments must be turned in by the due date. Late assignments will not be graded, and will receive zero points.

**Individual Work**
*Midterm.* You will be given a limited number of questions about a scenario or case that will require the understanding, integration, and application of course concepts. You will write short answers to the questions in Blue/Green books. Exams will be evaluated using the following criteria:
- Provides ample justification for all answers
- Integrates knowledge gained from course material
- Provides evidence for all assertions or claims
- Applies course concepts
- Focuses on the group levels of analysis

*Class participation.* We do a lot of class discussion, so participation in the class conversation is crucial. Everyone needs to participate, and that conversation needs to be two-way. I have therefore designed a system to help the class do this. You will be expected to bring Blue, Orange, and White notecards to class. In class, when you answer a question I’ll take one of these cards from you and record it as a measure of class participation. The more cards you are holding, the more you need to speak. But I only take ONE of each type of card per class, and so the fewer cards you are holding the more you should ONLY speak if you have something really good to say.
- White cards are taken for correct answers with “thought effort” (e.g., you don’t just read back from the book, you try to answer me in your own words). They are worth 1 point.
Orange cards are taken when your answer is correct on non-trivial questions (e.g., I ask you to analyze why a negotiator has done something). They are worth 2 points.

Blue cards are taken if you say something very insightful (something that makes me stop and think), or you answer a very hard question very well. They are worth 3 points.

One last note, once you have given away some cards, I still expect you to pay attention. Not paying attention can cause me to fine you a card depending on the offense (e.g., 1 point for texting in class, 2 points for your phone going off, 3 points for something really disruptive).

Final. The final will be like the midterm, only longer and cumulative.

Professionalism [+ or - up to 1/2 letter grade]. Professionalism is a characteristic all Mason graduates should have, and is judged based on how you relate to me, your classmates, and this class. Professionalism is not about the grasp of the material per se, but is rather about your character. Things that increase my respect for you will tend to increase your professionalism, and vice versa. Most people get no change to their grade, but in rare cases of people being especially good or bad, I will adjust their grade up or down.

Team Work
Team Case Analyses. Occasionally you will be given cases to analyze with your team. The purpose here is to again have you think critically, but in the context of a complicated organizational problem where the issue may require a combination of things we have learned. On the day after the case is due, we will discuss the case in class. The efficacy of your team in this discussion will be part of the case grade.

Team Paper (20%). With your team, you will write a maximum 10 (double-spaced) page paper that takes a task that does not use a team to accomplish it, and describes how it would be better if they did use a team to accomplish it. You must effectively argue why using a team would be superior to the current way the task is completed, and how such a team would function. Your argument must be grounded in concepts and knowledge from this course. Extra credit is given if you can also incorporate lessons from other courses you have taken at Mason (e.g., incorporating team member selection criteria from HR, or legal issues from business law). Treat this paper as though you are going into a company as a consultant and trying to convince them to change their work process - you want them to use a team on a particular task. Thus you must be able to convince them to do so.

Each team will be required to present a summary of their paper on the final day of class. Treat this as like the presentation you would give to the company that hired you for your work process analysis. Each team will have 12-15 minutes to give a polished presentation that summarizes the essence of their work and argument.

Team Teaching (10%). Each team will be randomly assigned two opportunities to teach the class. These should take about 45 minutes. Do them as follows:
1) Pick something in the assigned reading that your team found to be interesting, useful or bullshit. Do not cover all the topics in the reading.
2) Explain to the class what the concept is, and why your team found it to be interesting, useful or bullshit. **You must actually teach something new about the concepts, don’t simply reiterate or summarize what is in the book.**

3) Provide some kind of exercise or other engaging technique to demonstrate a lesson to the class. **You can be creative here - do not just lecture.**

4) Make sure the class has a takeaway for how to use your lesson in the future. **This should be a clear takeaway that is connected to what you presented (#2), and what you demonstrated (#3).**

**Team debate (10%).** Each week I will assign two teams to debate a proposition or question. Teams will debate according to this format:

1) Opening statements (3 minutes) - each side gives evidence for their position
2) Rebuttals (2 minutes) - each side rebuts what the other said
3) Cross examination (2 minutes) - each side gets to directly challenge claims made by the other team; the other team must respond
4) Closing statement (1 minute) - each side gives closing argument

After the debate, the class will vote on which argument they were more convinced by. The winner gets an increase in their grade of ½ step (e.g., B to B+), the loser suffers a ½ step decrease.

**A Note on Team Grades and Free Ridership.** All team members will get the same grade on each of the above team assignments unless a majority of the team decides to change to a peer performance appraisal system. Under such a system, members will rate one another's contribution to each of the team assignments and individual grades will be adjusted (both upward and downward) based on these ratings. If you decide to go with the peer performance appraisal system, prepare a document to that effect signed by a majority of your team to be submitted with the team assignment(s), and then I will contact you for your evaluation of your fellow team members’ contributions.

**Some Guidelines and Recommendations**

**Appealing Grades.** Every effort will be made to ensure that your assignments and quizzes are graded fairly and accurately. If, however, you disagree with the way you were graded on a particular assignment or quiz, 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 will attempt to explain why the original grade was appropriate.
3. If you still feel that your grade is incorrect, or you were unfairly treated, you should pursue appeals beyond the classroom – probably to the Dean of the undergraduate program.

**Grading Note:** I will not accept 'retroactive excuses' by students. By this I mean bringing up ameliorating 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, a learning disability, unavoidable family commitments, etc.), let me know at the beginning of the semester, or at least as soon as possible. I make no guarantees
as to what is acceptable and what is not but I encourage you to communicate any problems that you want taken into account to me sooner rather than later, so that we can work something out.

**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). In adherence with **III. Responsibility of the Faculty**, a delineation of Honor Code Violations for this class is provided below.

- **III.A.** Group participation is permissible during in-class small group exercises and while studying for Exams. Homework assignments in preparation for the following class period may also be discussed among classmates. Discussion with classmates in other groups with regard to the group project should be limited to format and structure and not include content. No discussion will be permitted while taking Exams.
- **III.B.** Study aids, memoranda, books, data, and other information is **not** permissible to use while taking the Exams.
- **III.C.** 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).

Cheating and other violations of academic integrity in this course will be dealt with swiftly following the procedures outlined in the George Mason University policies. (Furthermore, a random sampling of papers will be randomly scanned by the Turnitin.com service for possible plagiarism). If I am faced with anything that I interpret to be a possible violation, I will immediately refer it to the appropriate authority. This policy does not presume any innocence or guilt – it is formulated to avoid any confusion or gray areas.
## CLASS SCHEDULE

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<td>Conflict – 8</td>
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Note: Schedule subject to change as needed  
Specific team assignments for debate and team teaching will be posted after the first class.

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**SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING TEAM CASE ANALYSES AND TEAM PAPERS**

*Team Case Analyses*

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: 1) weak leadership,"
      - 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 to sharpen and integrate your analysis.
   • Assume that the reader is already familiar with the facts of the case.

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 management what they should have done. Focus on what to do now.

What does it mean to formulate a good response? (1) identify insights – insights are not obvious. They show a grasp of the implications of the material beyond just regurgitating what the book says. They do this by taking into account the specifics of the situation (e.g., “It is critical to confront a perceived slacker early in the semester, by the time we had talked to Bill (the slacker), it was too late to change anything.”) (2) analyze what happened - analysis is more than just saying what happened, analysis tells you why it happened. Bad analysis gives no evidence for why beyond the authors own opinion. Good analysis considers and discounts alternative “why” explanations by defending the specific “why” you use. For example, “Confronting bill was useless (your claim)” should be backed up by saying why (e.g. “Bill wanted to do more but because we had already set up a team work allocation structure that did not rely on him, work did not get funneled his way.”). Note that this “why” is good because it uses course concepts (team structure). It is better than saying “because Bill is a lazy jerk” as this shows very little understanding of course concepts, and you have not provided evidence Bill is a jerk. Both of these are better than simply restating with more elaboration that confronting Bill was useless (e.g., “We talked to Bill, he was apologetic, but nothing happened.”) (3) make recommendations for improving the situation based on the insights you identified. These also must be well defended.