MGMT 464: Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills
Section 001:  F 1:30-4:10, University Hall 1201

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Course Web site: http://courses.gmu.edu
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 most difficult thing to learn about teams is that structure dictates behavior. We tend to want to see team successes and failures as attributable to individuals and their characteristics, and not as the outcome of well or poorly designed systems that control team member behavior. This course attempts to get you to think “up a level of analysis” to the emergent features that affect behavior.

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.
Suggested Reading Materials

The course has the team teach/ team ask assignments (see below) connected with the chapters from this text in mind. It can also be a resource for ideas and topics you will use in your team pitch assignments (also see below). But frankly, the book is more like a laundry list of concepts than an integrative way to understand teams. I will therefore be focusing on a much narrower and more integrated set of concepts (which these often touch). Thus whether you want to purchase or use this book is entirely up to you. However, this does not mean that “all answers are equally good.” If you are going to offer something, you best have credible justification for it, especially if it is an assignment. But in reality there is a wealth of knowledge out there already.

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

**Individual Work** (50 points possible)
- Teammate evaluations ......................................................25
- Class participation..............................................................25
- Professionalism* (adjustment)........................... +/-10 points

**Team Work** (50 points possible)
- Pretest ...................................................................................5
- Postest ..................................................................................5
- Team Ask .............................................................................. (1 each) 2
- Team Teaching (4x)......................................................... (2 each) 8
- Team Pitch (6x).................................................................(2 each) 12
- Team Paper/Presentation ............................................. 6+12

Please note: All assignments must be turned in by the due date. Late assignments will not be graded, and will receive a 0.

**Individual Work**

**Teammate evaluations:** One of the biggest reasons people hate teams is the presence of free riders. One of the worst things about student teams is that people have no capacity to reward or punish. For this reason, a large part (25%) of your grade is based on peer feedback. In about week 5, your team will submit to me a contract for your expectations of each other. Most importantly, you will all agree on a scheme to rate each other, one that you must construct. It should meet the following requirements:

1) Each team member rates all other team members
2) The feedback will be anonymous, but easy for me to record and manage
3) The score for each team member should, after aggregation, range from 0-25, where
   - 21-25 = A, 16-20 = B+, 11-15 = B, 6-10 = C+, 1-5 = C, 0 = F

**Class participation.** I expect you to be engaged at all times. At minimum it means taking exercises seriously when you are in front of class, and watching closely and commenting on what happens when you are not. But there are a lot of ways to be engaged – talking to me after class or at breaks, helping other students, offering ideas for class, there are all sorts of things. Simply raising your hand all the time is not engagement, it is habit/extroversion. Sitting there is not
engagement either, even if you “just prefer to listen.” Trying to secretly check your text messages during class is not only “disengagement” it is unprofessional, and I will react unfavorably to this, in fact I will penalize your team, not just you. Engagement is about quality, not quantity. And I know it when I see it.

Professionalism [+ or - up to 10 points]. 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 0 (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**

*Pretest/Post-test.* These are class activities.

**Team Ask.** Each week one team will be assigned to look through the assigned Thompson chapter and find a concept, issue, or question that they would like me to address in class. The question can be broad or narrow, pragmatic or theoretical. But it should correspond to the content of that chapter and it should be something interesting and insightful. It should also be something that I can meaningfully answer (not “what kind of teams are good?”). Questions must be sent to me by the Wednesday before class at 9 AM. This is pass (1 point) – fail (no points)*.

*For all pass/fail assignments, you should expect to pass if you perform at “B” or higher level.

**Team Teaching.** Each weak a team or set of teams will be assigned to teach the class something practical from the chapter assigned that week. Teaching something practical means that you take a concept from the book and tell us how to apply it. You have about 20 minutes, and this is pass-fail. Here are some guidelines – as a general rule you will fail if you miss one of the four.

1) Pick something related to the assigned reading that your team found to be interesting or useful. **Pick a single concept or idea to focus on.**

2) Explain to the class what the concept/idea is, and why your team found it to be interesting or useful. **You must actually say something new about the concepts, don’t simply reiterate or summarize what is in the book.**

3) Teach the class how to use the concept or idea in a real world setting. Provide some kind of exercise or other engaging technique to demonstrate your lesson to the class. **Be creative here, you need to make sure people understand how to use the concept or idea in real life.**

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 pitch.** Each week we will do a kind of roleplay where two teams play consultants trying to convince a potential client company’s board of directors (played by the third team) to purchase their idea or services. I will assign the problems and general approaches to the solution to the pitch teams. Each pitch team is responsible for trying to convince me and the BOD. The pitch teams (A and B, decided at random) will have 4 minutes to tell us the gist of their solution, why
it is the more sensible one, and how it can be easily and effectively implemented. The procedure is as follows:

1) Team A provides their solution and justification for it (4 minutes), BOD asks questions (2 minutes). Team B waits in hall.
2) Team B provides their solution and justification for it (4 minutes), BOD asks questions (2 minutes). Team A waits in hall.
3) BOD discusses, class input is welcome (3 minutes). Teams A and B wait in hall.
4) Contract is awarded (or not).

Performance of each of the teams is pass/fail.

For the pitch teams – pass means that you gave me:
   a) A tailored solution – one that makes sense given the specifics of the situation.
   b) A credible solution – one that makes sense given what we know about teams.
   c) A feasible solution – one that you show is possible and economical to implement.

For the BOD – pass means that
   a) You ask good questions of each pitch team – ones that show you understand that week’s topic and that you can think critically about what people are trying to sell you
   b) That you contribute good thoughts to the BOD discussion.

For both the pitch and BOD teams, I expect everyone to tangibly contribute (one way or another). The better pitch team (the one whose solution we choose to adopt) will get random prizes (these can change from week to week).

Team Presentation. With your team, you will present an idea 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). Your team will pitch your idea to the class on the final day. Treat this 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 have about 20 minutes to present on the final day of class. The presentation is worth 12 points, but you will also turn in an accompanying executive summary of not more than three pages worth 6 points. This must include a) a short overview of your idea and its benefits, b) a breakdown of what the cost of implementing your change would be, and c) a timeline for how you would roll it out.

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.

**Course schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Chapter focus</th>
<th>Teach</th>
<th>Pitch A</th>
<th>Pitch B</th>
<th>Bod</th>
<th>Ask</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-Jan</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>31-Jan</td>
<td>Intro-1</td>
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<td>7-Feb</td>
<td>Basics-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>14-Feb</td>
<td>Rewarding teamwork – 3</td>
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<td>21-Feb</td>
<td>Designing the team – 4</td>
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<td>28-Feb</td>
<td>Team Identity - 5</td>
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<td>7-Mar</td>
<td>Sharpen team mind - 6</td>
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<td>21-Mar</td>
<td>Team Decision Making - 7</td>
<td>1&amp;2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>28-Mar</td>
<td>Conflict – 8</td>
<td>3&amp;4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>4-Apr</td>
<td>Creativity – 9</td>
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<td>11-Apr</td>
<td>Networking – 10</td>
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<td>18-Apr</td>
<td>Leadership – 11</td>
<td>1&amp;2&amp;3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>25-Apr</td>
<td>Inter-team relations - 12</td>
<td>4&amp;5&amp;6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>2-May</td>
<td>Team across distance - 13</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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