MBA 653: Organizational Behavior  
Fall 2016  
Professor David Kravitz

Class meets: Section 001: Wednesday 6:30 – 10:05pm in Fairfax Mason Hall room D023  
Section 002: Thursday 6:30 – 10:05pm in Arlington Founders Hall room 113  
Section 003: Monday 6:30 – 10:05pm in Fairfax Merten Hall room 1202

Office: Enterprise Hall 212  
Office hours: After class and by appointment

Contact:  
e-mail: dkravitz@gmu.edu  
Work: 703-993-1781 (voice); 703-993-1870 (fax)  
Cell: 703-424-3703 (urgent only)

Website: Log in to Blackboard via mymason.gmu.edu.

COURSE OBJECTIVE
To change the way you think about and analyze behavior in organizations so that you become a more thoughtful and effective employee, co-worker, and manager.

LEARNING GOALS
- Students should become familiar with the major concepts of organizational behavior.
- Students should understand how the structures of organizational systems affect human behavior.
- Students should become familiar with the kinds of issues managers encounter and with principles, practices and models that help managers deal with these issues.
- Students should examine the relationships among people within organizational systems and see how they influence organizational effectiveness.
- Students should deepen their understanding of their own behavior in organizations and improve their interpersonal and managerial skills and thus their professional success.

TEAMING AND LEADING MBA PROGRAM GOAL: Students will demonstrate the team leadership and interpersonal skills needed to form, lead, and work effectively on diverse organizational teams.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS MBA PROGRAM GOAL: Students will be able to use their new understanding to critique organizational policies and practices and to design superior policies and practices.

ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MBA PROGRAM GOAL: Students will have a commitment to professional and social responsibility in the conduct of managerial affairs.

CLASS FORMAT
Understanding human behavior in organizations requires a variety of skills. For example, before one can analyze behavior—let alone change it—one must observe it accurately. Likewise, a management or behavioral concept is of little value until one is able to link it to experience and vary behavior accordingly. Finally, understanding and skills improve with practice and feedback. Accordingly, the course design incorporates all these dimensions of learning through the use of cases, exercises, group work, self-reflection, readings, discussion, lectures, written work, and opportunities for feedback. Another reason for the diversity of activities is that different people have different learning styles and thus need different types of learning experiences.
**EVALUATION**

Every graded deliverable in this class will be given a letter grade based on your demonstrated level of understanding. The first level is correct explanation and application of the concepts (B level work); the second level is correct explanation of the concepts along with a demonstration of somewhat creative thinking OR an exceptionally accurate description of concepts (B+/A- level work); the third level is correct explanation and demonstration that you have thought enough about the concepts and their application to have significantly learned from that thinking and gained insight (A level work). Things that are missing or wrong will earn C’s or lower. To earn “A” grades in this class, you must not only know the material, but you must also challenge your thinking on the topics, engage the material at a deep level, and be willing to think critically about the implications of what you are studying.

**General Notes on Deliverables**

**Writing:** Single-space, use a standard 12-point font, and set 1-inch margins in all assignments. Include a title page on the PAA and the team case analysis. When you refer to assigned course materials, use the following format: (Last name of author(s), date). If you refer to other readings, give full bibliographic information at the end of the paper. Good writing skills are so important in the business world, so your deliverables should be clearly written and error-free. This will affect your grades.

**Delivery:** You must submit all writing assignments through the Assignments tab on the class Blackboard site. The team analysis will be submitted to SafeAssign, which checks for plagiarism. All team members are fully responsible for any plagiarism, regardless of who submitted the offending text. You will have the opportunity to submit a preliminary draft of the paper to ensure there are no problems with plagiarism.

**Due dates and late penalties:** All deliverables are due one hour before the beginning of class on the date specified in the class schedule below. Late assignments will incur a penalty of one full letter grade for the first 24 hours and two letter grades thereafter up to one week. Deliverables will not be accepted after one week. I will make exceptions if necessary due to illness or other Mason approved emergencies, in which case written documentation will be required.

**Specific Information about Deliverables**

A. **Weekly Assignment (WA).** We will devote one week to each topic, as detailed in the class schedule below. A WA is due one hour before the beginning of each class except for the first week. Note that it must be posted on line before the official beginning time of class for you to receive credit.
   - The WA is a short paper that must relate to that week’s topic/concepts. The WA must go beyond a simple summary. It could extend or critique the arguments given in the readings, illustrate the points with examples drawn from your own experience, draw connections to other concepts covered inside or outside the class, bring in other articles or books you have read, or relate to the week’s topic or assigned readings in other ways. Do not attempt to address all aspects of all the readings – focus on whatever interests you the most. Depth of thought is more important than breadth. The goal of the paper is to get you to think about the week’s topic and thus deepen your understanding of it and improve class discussion. Be sure to specify any confidential-related issues and please use pseudonyms if such issues exist.
   - Identify the paper on a single line at the top of the page with your name, the course ID (MBA 653, Section X), and the date of the relevant class. The paper must be at least 250 words long (equivalent to a short double-spaced page, though I prefer single spacing); I do not object to longer papers. If you refer to course materials, use the “Name (date)” format. If you refer to external materials that I could access, provide full reference information (or web location) at the end of the paper.
   - Submit the paper by posting it in the Assignment section of the Blackboard website before class.
- I will grade these papers on a 0 to 3 scale. I will assign grades of 0 to papers that are not turned in or are turned in late (after the beginning of class). I will assign grades of 1 to papers that are flawed (too short, tangential topic, inadequate thought). A good solid paper will receive a 2. This will be the typical grade. Grades of 3 will be relatively rare; they will be given only to papers that are exceptionally thoughtful or thought-provoking. Because writing the papers enhances your ability to contribute to the class discussions, I will assign a 1-point penalty if you miss class.

- Because students must sometimes miss class for professional or personal reasons, I will calculate your overall WA grade by summing your seven highest grades. I will consider a total of 18 as perfect (100%) and will not give extra credit for higher scores. Because you can miss papers and still get a perfect score, I do not give “excused absences” for any reason other than a documented multi-week illness.

B. In-Class Quiz. To give you an early indication of MBA standards, we will have a low-value in-class quiz in Week 4. It will cover all aspects of Weeks 1 – 3 plus the readings assigned for Week 4. The quiz will consist of short essay questions, and will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the key theories and concepts and your ability to apply them in work settings. The quiz will be administered in class and you will be free to use any written materials you wish when working on it.

C. Team Case Analysis: Your team will be required to write a case analysis. More information about this assignment is provided on the course website.

D. Personal Application Assignment (PAA): A central part of the course is helping you master self-referent observational and analytic skills and the ability to apply course concepts to your observations. Mastery of these skills will be assessed with the PAA. The class web site contains more information, including documents that specify the criteria on which the PAA will be graded and hints for writing the PAA.

E. Final Exam: This comprehensive exam will test your understanding of the central ideas of the entire course. The core concepts will be emphasized in lecture and will often be explored in cases and exercises. The exam will consist of short essay questions, and will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the key theories and concepts and your ability to apply them in work settings. The exam will be administered in class and you will be free to use any written materials you wish when working on it. The date is given at the end of this syllabus. I will provide more information as we approach the end of the semester.

F. Ungraded Assignments.
   a. Team Charter: You will be assigned to learning teams. To promote effective team-based learning, you will be asked to work with your new team mates to create a “charter,” essentially a document that will help you work as a team. Details on the team charter assignment will be provided in Blackboard.
   b. Teaming Skills Survey: You will be asked to rate the contributions of your teammates on one occasion.
   c. Classroom Contributions Survey – Classmates: You will be asked to rate the contributions of all your classmates on two occasions.
   d. Classroom Contributions Survey – Self-evaluation: You will be asked to rate your own class contributions on one occasion.

G. Class Participation: Fundamental to this course is learning how to diagnose and understand both your own and others’ real life experiences and sharing thoughts on the various readings and theories. Your participation is needed to accomplish this goal. Put simply, everyone learns more when students add value through their participation. I will try to make sure that everyone who wants to participate can do so. Exceptional class participation will result in a one-step grade increase for students whose total points fall just below a grade boundary.
Here are some ways in which you can add value to class:

1. Respond to questions (provide articulate answers, summaries, findings, facts, quotes)
2. Spontaneously offer your perspective (work-based, class-based)
3. Actively promote class discussion (react to others, faculty material, see linkages across articles)
4. Facilitate process (seek elaboration, ask for clarification, leverage points being made, summarize ideas being offered, seek feedback encourage others)
5. How you participate is important. Be respectful of others, be parsimonious (get to the point, stay on point) and do not dominate discussion to the point where others cannot contribute.

**Grading**

The assignments will be weighted as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Case Analysis</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Application Assignment</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Semester grades will depend on the total points you earn on the assignments, using the percentage cutoffs shown below. I will not round the grades up, but scores exactly at a cutoff will be assigned the higher grade. In addition, if a student falls just below a grade boundary and has made exceptionally valuable contributions to class discussion, I will move his or her grade up. Do not count on this – it will be unusual and will not apply to students more than half a percent below the boundary (e.g., a 92.49% will always be an A-).

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
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<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
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<td>% of Points</td>
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<td>60-70</td>
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<td>90-93</td>
<td>93-97</td>
<td>97-100</td>
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**Behavioral Expectations**

**Honor code:** The honor code applies to all work required for this class. You are free to confer with other people when working on your assignments (except for the final exam), but the final decisions about the papers and the writing should be your own. Furthermore, because I may re-use some questions, you may not share or discuss the exam with anyone. More information about the GMU honor code is given at [http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/](http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/). The School of Business has established standard penalties for honor code violations. Any egregious violation (e.g., stealing an exam; passing on confidential course material; cheating on an exam, project, or otherwise violating specified rules for an exam or project) will result in an F in the class and dismissal from the program. A less extreme violation will result in an F in the class, with a second violation resulting in dismissal from the program. I assume you are all honorable individuals and this will not be an issue, but if I’m wrong you now know the rules. If you have a question regarding the honor code that remains unresolved after you have read the above, please talk to me about it.

**Standards of behavior:** The mission of the School of Business at George Mason University is to create and deliver high quality educational programs and research. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni who participate in these educational programs contribute to the well-being of society. High quality educational programs require an environment of trust and mutual respect, free expression and inquiry, and a commitment to truth, excellence, and lifelong learning. Students, program participants, faculty, staff, and alumni accept these principles when they join the community. In doing so, they agree to abide by the following standards of behavior:

- Respect for the rights, differences, and dignity of others
- Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community
- Accountability for personal behavior
Integrity is an essential ingredient of a successful learning community. Ethical standards of behavior help promote a safe and productive community environment, and ensure every member the opportunity to pursue excellence. The Mason School of Business can and should be a living model of these behavioral standards. To this end, community members have a personal responsibility to integrate these standards into every aspect of their experience at the School of Business. Through our personal commitment to these Community Standards of Behavior, we can create an environment in which all can achieve their full potential.

*Cell phone and beepers are distracting and their use during class (except for emergencies) is insulting. Please turn off all audible signals before class. Along the same lines, laptop and any other communication devices are to be used for class work only.*

**OTHER**

**E-mail:** I will occasionally send e-mail messages to the entire class. I will use the class Blackboard website for this purpose. Thus, be sure you set up your GMU e-mail account and either use it or arrange for mail sent to that account to be forwarded to whatever e-mail account you normally use. *You are fully responsible for taking these steps, for checking your e-mail regularly, and for any information communicated to the class via e-mail.* You should always feel free to communicate with me via e-mail. I recommend that you keep all my e-mail messages to you and all your messages to me just in case you want to check on something I said or prove that you sent me a message or attachment. I try to keep all relevant messages, but am not perfect.

**Inclement weather and campus emergencies:** Information regarding weather-related changes in the University’s schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the GMU website and via Mason Alert. Students can register for the Mason Alert system, which provides emergency information of various sorts, at [https://alert.gmu.edu](https://alert.gmu.edu). I plan to hold class unless the campus is officially closed. If class is cancelled due to inclement weather or other emergency, activities (e.g., coverage of material, exams, etc.) scheduled for that class will be moved to the next class. We will discuss further changes when we meet.

**Information about Mason’s academic and non-academic policies** in general can be accessed as follows:

- University Catalog: [http://catalog.gmu.edu/](http://catalog.gmu.edu/)
- University Policies: [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/)

**Religion:** Students who will miss class for religious reasons should inform me of their anticipated absences as soon as possible.

**Disability:** If you have a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Please take care of this during the first two weeks of the semester. More information about ODS is available at [http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc)

**Counseling center:** George Mason University has a counseling and psychological services center that can provide assistance if you find yourself overwhelmed by life, want training in academic or life skills, or the like. More information is available at [http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc/](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc/)

**Business Library Liaison Information:** Jo Ann J. Henson, MLIS is the Business and Economics Liaison Librarian, Fenwick Library Fairfax Campus. She has organized and created a variety of tutorials and access to relevant data bases, which you can find here: [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/business](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/business)

**Writing center:** George Mason University has a writing center that can help you improve your English writing skills. More information is available at 703-993-1200 and [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)
**READINGS**

**Access**

Journal articles can all be accessed directly from the library. For several, I provide links below that should take you directly to the reading. Harvard Business Publishing readings are available in one of two ways. First, several can be purchased from HBP for $4.25 each. The link to our Coursepack is [http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/51534531](http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/51534531). Our library has access to Harvard Business Review and you can print out most HBR readings by accessing them on the library’s website (instructions: [http://library.gmu.edu/tutorials/ejournal-finder](http://library.gmu.edu/tutorials/ejournal-finder)) and then printing them as PDFs. You can also use this approach to access the other assigned journal articles, if there are problems with the links I provide below, or to access non-assigned articles you may want to read for your own education or when working on assignments. For the assigned videos (Youtube & TED talks), I provide links below. You may need to register with Harvard Business Publishing to access the blogs by Mayo (Week 9) and Pant (Week 10). I will post the case I wrote for Week 9 on Blackboard. Finally, I will make the case needed for the Team Case Analysis available through a HBP Coursepack later in the semester. I strongly recommend that you download all the readings before the first class, to make sure you have them when you need them. If you are unable to access a reading, let me know so I can fix the problem.

**Study the readings**

I recommend that you read the assignments in the order in which I have listed them.

I encourage you to not only read the assigned papers but to analyze them carefully. Think about each reading from both a conceptual and a practical perspective. As you read the papers, ask yourself:

- What are the key concepts and principles?
- What are the key points or arguments?
- So what? Why does this matter for the organization?
- What are the implications for my professional behavior and success?
- What is wrong with this paper? What critique might I make?
## Class Schedule

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<th>Week: Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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Munzo, E. (2011, January 26). The ladder of inference creates bad judgment. [website](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9nFhs5W8o8) 
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DeLong, T. J., & Vijayaraghavan, V. (2003). Let’s hear it for B players. *HBR, 81*(6), 96-102. [Print PDF from library website.]  
CCS - Self In-Class Quiz Revised/Final Team Charter (if desired) |
CCS - Classmates |
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| Week 7: September 26, 28, 29 | Conflict | Porath, C., & Pearson, C. (2013). The price of incivility. *HBR, 91*(1/2), 114-121. [Print PDF or download from library website.]
 | WA Team Case Analysis |
Dweck, C. (2014). The power of believing that you can improve. TED talk. [https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve](https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve) | WA Teaming Skills Survey |
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| Week 9:  
| Week 10:  

**Final Exam – Saturday, October 22th (8:30-11:30 am for Fairfax cohorts; 1:15-4:15 pm for Arlington cohort)**