MBA 653 003: Organizational Behavior
Autumn 2012
Richard Klimoski

Class meets: Tuesday and Wednesday 3-4:15 pm (University Hall 1200, Fairfax campus)
Office: Fairfax: Enterprise Hall 214
Office hours: Tuesday 1-3 or by appointment
Contact: rklimosk@gmu.edu
Course Website: mymason.gmu.edu

**COURSE OBJECTIVE**
To deepen your understanding of human behavior in organizations and to improve your management practice as a result of that understanding.

**LEARNING GOALS**
- Students will be familiar with and can apply the major concepts of organizational behavior.
- Students will understand and describe how worker attributes affect organizational behavior.
- Students will understand and can describe how relationships affect organizational behavior.
- Students will understand and can describe how of organizational Human Resource Management systems affect human behavior.
- Students will become familiar with the kinds of issues managers encounter and with principles, practices and models that help managers deal with these issues.
- Students will understand and can describe how behavior in work organizations of individuals and groups influence organizational effectiveness.
- Students will understand and can explain how organizational policies and practices can affect the welfare of employees and their families.
- Students should deepen their understanding of their own behavior in organizations and improve their interpersonal and managerial skills.
- Students will demonstrate the team leadership and interpersonal skills needed to form, lead, and work effectively on diverse organizational teams.

**CLASS FORMAT**
Facilitating effective human behavior in organizations requires a variety of skills. For example, before one can analyze behavior—let alone knowingly change it—one must observe it. Likewise, a management or behavioral concept is of little service 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.

**Evaluation**

In a course like this, there are generally three levels of understanding that you can demonstrate. 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). To earn A grades in this class, it therefore means that you not only have to know the material, but you have to 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.

A. **In-Class Quiz (5%)**. A well educated person has mastered the vocabulary and concepts involved in a field of study. Accordingly, you will be expected to learn and learn to correctly use key terms, concepts and constructs important to the field of Organizational Behavior. In an early session of our course you will be asked to demonstrate the state of your knowledge of such material on an in-class, closed book exam. Feedback on this exam will also provide you with an idea of just how well your approach to the material and study habits is working for you at that point in time.

B. **Module Assignments (2@5%=10%)**: The Module Assignments involve 2 short papers that make use of the course material in order to address an issue, problem or phenomenon related to observations of past or current behavior of others in work organizations. The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to think deeply about course material in order to become facile using concepts, models or research findings when you find the need to talk about or to actually confront an organizational problematic.

C. **Personal Application Assignment (PAA) (20%)**: 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, personal or work related challenges, specifically when reflecting upon your team experience. Mastery of these skills will be assessed with the PAA.

D. **Team Case Analysis (2@10%=20%)**: Learning teams will be formed early in the semester. Your team will be required to write two case analyses, and all members must be ready and able to present your ideas and opinions to the rest of class when the case is discussed. More information about this assignment is provided on the course website.
E. Final Exam (20%): This exam will test your understanding of the central ideas of the course. The core concepts will be emphasized in lecture and will often be explored in cases and exercises. The test will consist of short essay, multiple choice questions and an analysis of a case. It will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the key theories and concepts and your ability to apply them to problems or opportunists often found in work settings. The final exam will be comprehensive.

F. Class Participation (10%): Fundamental to this course is learning how to diagnose and understand both your and other’s real life experiences and sharing thoughts on the various readings and theories. Your participation is needed to accomplish this goal. Put simply, you learn more and others learn more when you participate. I will work hard in class to make sure that everyone who wants to participate can do so during our sessions. On the other hand you can demonstrate participation outside of class as well while working in your learning teams. More specific guidance as to what is meant by effective participation will be provided during the first class.

G. Science meets Practice (5%): The field of Organizational Behavior is based on science. But it has immediate and long range applications to management practice. This grade component is being offered in order to promote your regular thinking of the management practice implications of course material. Over the course of the semester you will have several opportunities to identify an “OB challenge” (e.g. retention of key personnel during an acquisition or merger) that is currently in the news and to briefly describe how it relates to course material under discussion. Up to five (5) examples from the news must be turned in during the appropriate point in the semester for up to five points (total) which would then be allocated to your grade. More details about will be provided in class. Note however that each submission is to be aligned with the topic currently being treated in class and turned in at that point in the course. It will not be possible to “back fill”.

H. Ungraded Assignments (Combined=10%). Because the course involves a fair amount of experiential learning you will be expected to respond to requests to complete a set of assignments that support this method. While each assignment will not be graded, the maximum of 10 points can be earned by approaching each one in a conscientious manner, turning in each assignment according to the format provided and (importantly) when it is due.

H1. Team Charter: You will be assigned to learning teams. In order to promote effective team based learning, you will be asked to work with your new team mates to create a “charter”, essentially document that will help you work as a team. Details on the team charter assignment will be provided in class.

H2. Teaming Skills Survey: Toward the end of the semester you will be asked to honestly describe how each of the members of your learning team behaved while working together. This will be a web based survey. All answers will be confidential. Each student will receive a personal profile of scores regarding how he or she is characterized by team mates on the dimensions of teaming skills. In addition to providing you with peer feedback, team member assessments will factor into the score that you will receive regarding “Class participation”. More details on this assignment will be provided in class.
H3. Personal Learning Note: This is designed to give you an opportunity to reflect on the course and its goals, and summarize for yourself the most important information and action resolutions you take from the course—to look at the big picture. The personal learning note should be single-spaced and no more than one page long (including your name); citation is not required. Use bullet points if you like. If you focus on writing something useful for yourself, it will meet my standards. This assignment is primarily for your sake—to help you identify the take-away messages that are most relevant to you. Approach it in that spirit. You may want to write the paper as a reminder to yourself of things to remember or do. This assignment is due when you arrive to take the final exam, although you may also turn it in the week prior.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module Assignment</td>
<td>5% x 2 = 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Application Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Case Analysis</td>
<td>10% x 2 = 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science meets Practice</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ungraded Assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Semester grades will depend on the total points you earn on the assignments described above; no extra credit will be available. The percentage cutoffs are shown below. Scores exactly at the cutoff will be assigned the higher grade; for example, 92.9% will earn an A-, but 93.0% will earn an A. There will not be a curve or any other form of score adjustment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Points</td>
<td>&lt;70</td>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>93-96</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 reuse some questions, you may not show or discuss the examination with past or future MBA students. I urge you to discuss your weekly observations with others. More information about the GMU honor code is given on the GMU web site at various locations, including:

http://www.gmu.edu/depts/unilife/honorcode.html and
http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12

Standards of behavior: The mission of the School of Management 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 SOM 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. SOM 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 SOM. Through our personal commitment to these Community Standards of Behavior, we can create an environment in which all can achieve their full potential.

**OTHER ITEMS**

**E-mail:** I will regularly send electronic messages to the entire class via Blackboard. **Thus, be sure you check the Blackboard site frequently or arrange for mail sent to your GMU e-mail account to be forwarded to whatever e-mail account you normally use.** You are fully responsible for taking the steps listed above, for checking your e-mail regularly, and for any information communicated to the class via e-mail.

**Disability:** Students with disabilities who require special accommodation should contact the Student Disability Resource Center ([http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or 703-993-2474) and should inform me of their needs so I can take them into consideration. Please take care of this during the first two weeks of the semester.

**Religion:** Students who will miss class for religious reasons should inform me of their anticipated absences during the first two weeks of the semester.

**Counseling center:** George Mason University has a counseling 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/csd](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csd).

**Writing center:** George Mason University has a writing center that can help you improve your English writing skills. There is even an office in Enterprise Hall, which is home to the School of Management. More information is available at [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)

**Inclement weather:** Information regarding weather related change in the University's schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the University's main information line (703-993-1000) and will be given to all local media outlets (although media coverage cannot be guaranteed). When in doubt, check. I expect to hold class unless the GMU campus is officially closed.

**Cell phones & beepers:** Cell phone and beepers are distracting. Please turn off all audible signals before class.

**READINGS**

Simply reading the assigned papers is not sufficient. Instead, you should analyze them carefully. You should come to class prepared to summarize the key points of the reading and to
contribute to class discuss and analysis. 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 being made by the paper?
- So what? Why does this matter for the organization?
- What are the implications for my professional behavior and success?
## Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Getting Started</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Deliverable: Team Charter</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>References</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>In-Class Quiz (1/2 hour)</td>
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**Latham, G.** (2003), Goal Setting. *Organizational Dynamics*, 32 (3), 309-318  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct. 9 no class</th>
<th>Managing People</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>Case discussion: Kathryn McNeil (HBS Case #9-394-111)</td>
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Deliverable: Team Case Project #1 (Oct. 11)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct. 16/18</th>
<th>Building Effective Teams - Part I</th>
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<tr>
<th>Oct. 23/25</th>
<th>Building Effective Teams - Part II</th>
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Class exercise: Carter Racing To be distributed
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
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**Case discussion:** Case, J. (2001). When salaries aren’t secret. *To be distributed* |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nov. 20/22</th>
<th>No class</th>
<th>Personal Application Assignment preparation</th>
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</table>
**Case Discussion:** Wetlaufer, S. (1997). What’s stifling the creativity at CoolBurst? *To be distributed* |
**Case Discussion:** Hauser Food Products (HBS 9-402-055)  
Deliverable: Team Case Project #2 (Dec. 6) |
Final Exam: TBA
8/9/12