MBA 653: Organizational Behavior, Spring Semester 2014
Professor David Kravitz

Class meets: Thursday 4:00 – 7:00 pm
Office hours: After class and by appointment
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703-993-1781 (work); 703-993-1870 (fax); 703-424-3703 (cell)
Website: Blackboard

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

LEARNING GOALS
• 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 become familiar with the major concepts of organizational behavior.
• Students should understand how human behavior is affected by organizational systems.
• 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 sense of 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 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. Another reason for the diversity of activities is that different people have different learning styles and thus need different types of learning experiences.
**EVALUATION**

What you learn and how much you learn depends a great deal on how actively you approach this course. I encourage you to push yourself to make the most of the opportunities offered. I use a variety of deliverables to maximize learning (different deliverables stimulate different types of learning) and fairness (different students excel at different types of assignments).

**Every graded deliverable in this class will be given a letter grade.** In general, you can demonstrate three levels 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 B-, C or lower. To earn grades of A 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. In addition, of course, you must show me that you have done so.

**Due dates and late penalties:** Deliverables are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the class schedule below and will incur a penalty of two grade steps (e.g., A- to B) for the first 24 hours and four grade steps thereafter up to one week. Deliverables will not be accepted after one week. I will make exceptions if necessary due to illness or other emergency.

**A. Weekly Assignment (WA).** We will devote one week to each topic, as detailed in the class schedule below. A WA is due at the beginning of each class except for the first week.

- Most of the WAs will be short papers that must relate to that week’s topic/concepts. They may not simply summarize the readings, because I assume you have read and understood the assigned papers. Instead, the WA should 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. I am open regarding the manner in which the WA connects to the topic, as long as it involves some thought and is not a simple summary. Do not attempt to address all aspects of all the readings – focus on whatever interests you the most. 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.

- For the week on Teams, the WA must be an analysis of your experience in writing the team case analysis. More information about that assignment is provided on the course website.

- The paper should be identified on a single line at the top of the page with your name, the course ID (MBA 653), and the date of the relevant class. The paper must be around one page long (250 words), though I do not object to longer papers.

- Submit the paper by posting it in the Assignment section of the Blackboard website.

- These papers will be graded on a 2/1/0 basis. The normal grade will be 2. I will assign a grade of zero to papers that are late, simply summarize the readings, or do not clearly
demonstrate adequate thought about the topic. I will assign a grade of 1 if you do not attend class, because this is the only way in which I give credit for class contributions.

- Because students must sometimes miss class for professional or personal reasons, you must earn only 20 of the 24 possible points to receive full credit. I recommend that you get them done early in the semester, because unexpected problems may force you to miss some later in the semester and an “excused absence” is not an option. I will not award extra credit if you earn more than 20 points.

B. **In-Class Quiz.** A high performing student has mastered the vocabulary and concepts involved in a field of study. Accordingly, you will be expected to learn and correctly use key terms, concepts and constructs important to the field of Organizational Behavior. In Week 4, you will be asked to demonstrate the state of your knowledge of such material on an in-class, closed book quiz. This quiz will include all aspects of Weeks 1 – 3 plus the readings assigned for Week 4. Feedback on this quiz will also provide you with an idea of just how well your approach to the material and study habits is working at that point in time.

C. **Science Meets Practice (SMP):** The SMP assignment is a short paper in which you apply the course concepts to an “OB problem” reported in the news. It must be about two to three pages long and is due Week 7. More information about this assignment is provided on the course website.

D. **Team Case Analysis:** Your team will be required to write a case analysis, which is due Week 10. More information about this assignment is given on the course website.

E. **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, which is due Week 13. More information about this assignment is provided on the course website.

F. **Final Exam:** 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 questions, and will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the key theories and concepts and your ability to apply them in work settings. I am not particularly interested in your memory of case details or of author names, except when the names are needed to identify a particular theory or perspective. The final exam will be comprehensive and open-book/notes. I will provide more information as we approach the end of the semester.

G. **Ungraded Assignments.** While these assignments will not be graded, the maximum of 10% can be earned by approaching each one in a conscientious manner, turning in each assignment according to the format provided and when it is due. Everyone begins the semester with an A+ and can lower that grade by doing the work poorly and/or completing it after the deadline.

- **Team Charter:** You will be assigned to learning teams. To promote effective team based learning, you will be asked to work with your new teammates to create a “charter” – essentially a document that will help you work as a team. Details on the team charter assignment, including the due date, will be provided in class.
• **Personal Learning Note (PLN):** The PLN is designed to give you an opportunity to reflect on the course and its goals, and to 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 no more than 600 words. 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 Week 13.

• Depending on how the class progresses, I may add **additional ungraded assignments.** If I do so, they will not be particularly time consuming.

**Notes on Writing Deliverables**

**Writing:** Double-space, use a standard 12-point font, and set all margins at one inch margins in all assignments. You should include a title page only on the PAA and the team-case analyses. To conserve resources, I encourage you to use two-sided printing on any hard deliverables I request. When you make reference to assigned course materials, use the following format: (Last name of author(s), date). If you use other outside readings, give full bibliographic information at the end of the paper. Because good writing skills are so important in the business world, each of your deliverables should be clearly written and completely free of spelling and grammatical errors. This will affect your grades, except for the weekly assignments and personal learning note.

I cannot stress how important good writing is for your personal success as well as success in the program. Even if you have a great idea, if you can’t communicate that idea and persuade your manager (or teacher), that idea may be wasted. Use your MBA program to work on your writing as much as you possibly can.

**Delivery:** You must submit all writing assignments through the Assignments tab on the class Blackboard site. The team case analysis is submitted to SafeAssign, which checks for plagiarism. You will be able to submit one draft version to check for problems, which you should fix before submitting the final version. For the team case analysis, all members of the team are equally and jointly responsible for any plagiarism, regardless of which member submitted the offending text.

**A Note on Team Grades and Free Ridership**

All team members will get the same grade on the team assignment unless at least two people in the team decide to change to a **peer performance appraisal** system. Under such a system, members will rate one another’s contribution for the team case analysis and individual grades will be adjusted **downward** (only) based on these ratings. If you decide to go with the peer performance appraisal system, prepare a document to that effect signed by at least two members of your team and submit it with your paper. In this case, I will contact all team members for their evaluations of their team members’ contributions. **You cannot decide to do peer performance appraisal after you receive your grade.** You must tell me and hand in the document with signatures when the assignment is due.
Evaluation Summary

Semester grades (A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, F) will depend on an average of the letter grades you earn throughout the semester following, with the following weightings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments</td>
<td>Weeks 2 – 13</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class Quiz</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Meets Practice Paper</td>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Case Analysis</td>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Application Assignment</td>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungraded Assignments</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behavioral Expectations

Honor code: The honor code applies to all work required for this class. I encourage you to discuss your weekly assignments with others and you are free to confer with other people when working on your other written assignments (excluding exams), 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 show or discuss the quiz or examination with past or future MBA students. More information about the GMU honor code is given on the GMU website at various locations, including: http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=410&bc=1#Honor. If you are ever uncertain about whether certain class-related behavior is ethical, please check with me. Be aware that I will send any violation of the honor code to the Honor Committee and will probably recommend that the penalty be an F in the class. I feel very strongly about this.

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.

Technology: 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, PCs and PDAs are to be used for class work only.
OTHER

Blackboard: Except for most of the readings, all materials needed for this class will be available on the class Blackboard website. If you note that something is missing, please alert me to the absence.

E-mail: Students must use their Mason email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See [http://masonlive.gmu.edu/overview.html](http://masonlive.gmu.edu/overview.html) for more information. To comply with student privacy laws, you and I both need to use our GMU email accounts when corresponding with one another. You are fully responsible 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 I am not perfect.

Disability: If you have a disability and require academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474 or [http://ods.gmu.edu/](http://ods.gmu.edu/). All accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

Religion: Students who will miss class for religious reasons should inform me of their anticipated absences as soon as possible. See [http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/](http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/) for Mason’s official list of holidays that have been designated as non-work days by the religions that observe them.

Inclement weather & emergencies: Class will be cancelled if the facility is closed due to inclement weather or any other emergency. If the facility is open, I will hold class if I can make it. If weather seems to be an issue, I will use email to communicate with the class. If we have to miss a class, we have an open week between Class 13 and the final exam, so we will probably just move everything back a week.
**Readings**

Readings are available through the class Blackboard site, through full-text journal access via Mason’s library, through electronic reserve at Mason’s library, and from Harvard Business Publishing. I indicate the source of each reading within [brackets] at the end of the citation.

**Harvard Business Publishing [HBP]**

You have already been given instructions about how to access these readings.

**Mason Library: Full-text access**

For information about how to download full text articles from the Mason library, see: [http://library.gmu.edu/education/students/find_fulltext.html](http://library.gmu.edu/education/students/find_fulltext.html)

**Mason Library: Electronic reserves**

You can access electronic reserves at [http://library.gmu.edu/](http://library.gmu.edu/) by identifying the course and instructor and entering the password. Our password is “OB” without the quotation marks.

**Study the readings**

I encourage you to not only read the assigned papers but to also 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 being made by the paper?
- So what? Why does this matter for the organization?
- What are the implications for my professional behavior and success?
- How can I critique the arguments being made?

You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

**Class Schedule [Source of assignment is given in closing brackets or web link]**

**Week 1 (1/23): Introduction to course; People matter**


**Week 2 (1/30): Evidence-based management [Team Charter individual statement due]**

Week 3 (2/6): Perception and attribution [Team Charter due]

Week 4 (2/13): Decision making [Quiz administered]

Week 5 (2/20) Building and maintaining working relationships

Week 6 (2/27): Communication

Week 7 (3/6): Power & influence [Science Meets Practice due]
Week 8 (3/20): Motivation & rewards

Week 9 (3/27): Leadership

Week 10 (4/3): Teams [Team Case Analysis due]

Week 11 (4/10): Organizational culture
Week 12 (4/17): Managing diversity – international and domestic

- Point your browser at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/website. Click on the Demonstration button. Follow the links to the demonstration tests and complete two of them. Pick two groups or dimension to which you think you’ll have different reactions. **Do this before you complete any of the following assignments.**


Week 13 (4/24): Ethics / Wrap up  [PAA due]


**Catch-up week (May 1):** We will use this week if we must cancel an earlier class due to inclement weather or some other emergency.

**Week 14 (May 8): Final Exam. [Personal Learning Note due]**