

Management 238: Organizational Behavior

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Course Information

Fall 2015: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9-10:20am, JMHH 365

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Course Description and Objectives

Although skills in finance, accounting, marketing, operations, and strategy are crucial for organizational success, the ability to manage an organization, its groups, and its individuals is equally important. In your careers, you will depend on people to accomplish tasks, goals, and projects; you will need to work *for* other people, work *with* other people, and *supervise* other people. An understanding of the human side of management is an essential complement to the technical skills you are learning in other core business courses. Although we will focus primarily on work, you will find that the course concepts have valuable applications to a variety of organizations, including non-profits, athletic teams, social clubs, and religious and political groups.

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts and topics in organizational behavior (OB) and management. The course focuses on OB at three levels: individual, interpersonal, and collective. We will start at the individual level, covering decision-making, motivation, and personality. We will then turn to the interpersonal level, covering relationships and influence. Finally, we will move up to the collective level, covering groups and organizations.

The course is designed to accomplish three main goals:

- Increase your knowledge of OB concepts so that you can understand and analyze how organizations and the people within them work.
- Provide you with opportunities to apply OB concepts to real-world problems faced by managers.
- Develop your leadership and management potential. Effective leaders often manage people and information to accomplish organizational goals under conditions not entirely in their control. Leaders must successfully be able to diagnose problems, communicate clearly, make effective decisions, motivate and influence others, manage diversity, and drive organizational change.

Instructional Methods

To meet these goals, this course uses readings, lectures, exercises, cases, individual and team assignments, and class discussion. Reading assignments provide an important foundation for class discussion and must be completed prior to each class session. The due dates for all readings and other assignments are listed in the class schedule at the end of the syllabus. Lectures will be used to highlight

key points from the readings and provide additional information to supplement the readings. Exercises and cases will provide you with the opportunity to apply what you have learned to real world issues and scenarios. Because each of you brings unique perspectives and experiences to the class, participation in class discussions and activities is essential to your own learning as well as that of other class members. To further enrich your learning, you will also be matched with an MBA mentor.

Readings

The coursepack is available on Study.Net. A few readings and exercises are not in the coursepack, and these will be handed out in class throughout the semester. **It is important that you have completed the assigned readings thoroughly before class on the day shown in the schedule at the end of the syllabus.** We will not have time to talk about everything covered in the readings in class, so be sure to email me or ask questions during office hours about anything that you do not understand. You will be expected to know the key points from the readings for the assignments and final exam.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade in this course will be based on the following deliverables:

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| • Best Self Exercise | (15 points—3%) | September 23 |
| • Diagnosis Paper | (100 points—20%) | October 5 |
| • Interpersonal Challenge | (10 points—2%) | October 26 |
| • TED Talk | (50 points—10%) | November 2 |
| • Group Project Report | (100 points—20%) | November 30 |
| • Final Exam | (150 points—30%) | December 18 |
| • Class Participation | (51 points—10%) | |
| • Recitation Participation | (24 points—5%) | |

Each assignment must be submitted by **the start of class**, and is discussed in more detail below.

Best Self Assignment (15 points—3%): For **September 23**, you will complete the Reflected Best Self Exercise. Submit your portrait, explain in one page maximum what you discovered about your strengths, and meet with your MBA mentor to discuss your insights.

Diagnosis Paper (100 points—20%): The theories and concepts taught in this course will only contribute to your professional success if you apply what you have learned in the classroom to your everyday experiences. The objective of the diagnosis paper, due **October 5**, is to give you some practice in looking at your life through an organizational behavior lens. For this assignment, you will reflect on an organizational problem that you experienced. I use the term “organizational” quite broadly; you can write about an experience at a summer job, on a sports team, a school work group, or any other situation in which you worked with other people for the purposes of completing a collective task. Once you have selected an organizational problem from your past, you should describe and diagnose the problem using concepts from the course, outline the factors that contributed to the situation, and discuss how the concepts could have helped you and/or others deal with the situation more effectively. The paper should be between 5 and 8 pages, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1” margins around.

Interpersonal challenge (10 points—2%): For **October 26**, you will either (a) act like a giver in a relationship where you normally take or match, or (b) enter a retail setting in which negotiation is not a norm, and attempt to lower the price of an item using one or more of Cialdini’s persuasion principles. Whichever topic you choose, write one page maximum about what you learned from the experience.

TED Talk (50 points—10%): Pairing up with one classmate, you will have the chance to film a mini-TED talk about a new idea in OB. The video, due **November 2**, should include (1) a story or example, (2) a finding from OB or psychology research that is *not* covered in this course, and (3) a call to action highlighting the practical implication of your idea. You should focus on a surprising or counterintuitive insight about behavior at work—advocate for an idea that goes against the grain of conventional wisdom, question a fad, or tell us something we would not have expected. You are welcome to challenge principles that we have covered in class, provided that you can back up your argument with evidence. It is up to you whether both members of the pair appear in the video or one person is on camera. The video must be between 4 and 5 minutes in total. The talk will be evaluated on the rigor of the evidence, the interestingness of the idea, the relevance of the story, the practicality of the recommendation, and how engaging the overall delivery is. Be bold: I applaud originality in content and delivery.

Group Project Report (100 points—20%): The goal of this assignment, due **November 30**, is to analyze and apply OB concepts in a real organization. You will be divided into groups of four to five members. Your group's task will be to use concepts from the course to identify, analyze, and develop a plan for resolving a key problem that an organization is facing.

- **Group formation and process:** In October, you will fill out preference forms, and I will create and announce groups. Each group will be responsible for finding a local organization to study using interviews, observations, and/or surveys. The organization can be a business, extracurricular club, athletic team, or other social collective in the Philadelphia area—as long as **no one in your group is a member**. In November, you will announce your client in class. Of course, I would recommend starting the project earlier so that you have adequate time to collect data and write your report.
- **Report guidelines:** The report should answer the following questions, using data from your interviews, observations, and/or surveys to support each answer:
 - 1) What is the nature of the problem, and what are the likely causes based on OB concepts?
 - 2) How can OB concepts be applied and extended to solve the problem?
 - 3) What specific action steps should the organization take to solve the problem?
 - 4) What are the potential barriers and obstacles to following your recommendations?
 - 5) What are the risks and possible unintended consequences of following your recommendations?
 - 6) How will you communicate your findings to your clients and overcome potential resistance?

The report should be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins around. The minimum length is 15 pages and the maximum length is 20 pages. You should include a one-page executive summary before the introduction, and a letter of approval from a representative of your client organization. Throughout the report, feel free to use specific references to course readings and/or lectures to add credence to your diagnoses and recommendations.

- **Selecting and working with your client organization:** In the past, students have especially enjoyed this project when they find the organization fascinating, benefit from its services, or feel strongly committed to its purpose. If you have difficulty securing a site, let me know. After generating a list of potential clients, you can work collaboratively to negotiate entry into the organization, find a liaison to help you gain access to relevant data and employees, diagnose the problem, write your report, and submit copies of the report to me and your liaison.
- **Report grading:** Your group will receive one grade for the project. However, if multiple members of a group feel that particular individuals deserve higher or lower grades, I will consider the possibility of assigning individual grades to that group.

Final Exam (150 points—30%): According to the registrar, the final exam is **December 18** from 9-11 am. The exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, covering material presented in class and in the readings throughout the entire semester.

Class Participation (51 points—10%): I believe that the best way to learn, especially about OB, is to actively participate in your education. In this class, “participation” is defined in terms of *quality contributions to class discussion and exercises*. There are four prerequisites for successful participation:

- Be here on time. If you’re not here, you can’t contribute much to class discussion. If you need to miss class for a predictable reason (e.g., job interview, athletic competition), please notify me at least 24 hours in advance so that I can make arrangements for any in-class exercises and so that you can obtain the materials distributed during the class. Of course, I realize that in some cases unforeseeable emergencies arise. Although I will not directly penalize you for non-attendance, be aware that multiple absences will indirectly hurt you by preventing you from participating in class, thereby lowering your participation grade.
- Be prepared. To contribute to class discussion, you must come to class having carefully prepared all assignments (i.e., readings, cases, exercises).
- Be brave. Everyone in this class is smart, interesting, and has unique life experiences to share. You will get the most out of this course if you ask questions, voice opinions, and express your thoughts to one another. If you feel uncomfortable talking in class, please send me an email or set up an appointment to talk with me early in the semester. I will do everything I can to accommodate each of your individual circumstances, but I can only do so if they are brought to my attention.
- Be courteous. Successful participation includes treating your classmates in a respectful and professional manner. Listen carefully to the comments and questions that your classmates voice. You may learn something new from their perspectives, and you will be able to avoid simply repeating something that another classmate has said earlier in discussion. Also, it is perfectly acceptable for you to voice disagreement with an opinion provided by another student; open debate often leads to the most thoughtful and informative class discussions. However, please voice your disagreement in a kind and considerate manner.
- Be engaged. This class is “unplugged.” Once class starts, all electronics (e.g., computers, cell phones, tablets, etc.) should be turned off and put away. If you need to use a device because of a language or disability issue, you need to secure permission at the beginning of the class. The misuse of an electronic device (e.g., surfing the web or texting) will adversely affect your class participation grade.

Recitation Participation (24 points—5%): To enrich your learning, the MBA mentors will host discussions of the readings. You can choose two in September, two in October, and two in November.

Additional grading information: Written assignments will be graded on five criteria:

- *Depth of analysis*: The paper demonstrates thorough research and reflection, and compelling insight.
- *Integration with course content*: The paper uses, applies, and extends concepts covered in the class.
- *Creativity and insight*: The material is presented in an original, engaging, and interesting manner.
- *Organization and structure*: The paper employs a logical framework.
- *Style*: The paper is professionally written, using appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Don’t be a cheater: academic honesty is expected in this course. With the exception of the group project and TED talk, all assignments in this class must be completed independently.

Policy for Late Assignments

As in the business world, work must be received on time in order to receive full credit. If you are late on an assignment, your grade on that assignment will be reduced by 25% for each day it is late. You are always welcome to hand in an assignment before its due date if you know that you will be busy as the due date approaches. If you think that you will not be able to complete an assignment by the stated due date, please speak with me in advance to make alternative arrangements. My policy on late assignments will depend on the specific circumstances surrounding the problem, and thus may differ from student to student. Providing advance notice about a late assignment will minimize the penalty you receive on that assignment, but does not guarantee that there will be no penalty for turning the assignment in late.

Feedback and Questions

I am committed to making this course a valuable learning experience for you. After the first month, we will spend part of a class session evaluating our progress, and I will make any necessary changes to keep us on track. However, I welcome your feedback at any time in the semester. It is easiest to reach me by email or during office hours, but I am always happy to set up an appointment. Additionally, if you have a disability that requires special accommodation, please let me know ASAP so that I can be helpful to you.

Instructor Biosketch

Adam Grant is the Wharton Class of 1965 Professor of Management and Psychology. He has been the top-rated professor in the MBA program for the past four years, and has received the Goes Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Teaching Award and Excellence in Teaching Award for every course that he has taught at Wharton. He has been recognized as one of HR's most influential international thinkers, *BusinessWeek's* favorite professors, and the world's top 40 business professors under 40.

Adam's consulting and speaking clients include Google, Goldman Sachs, BCG, McKinsey, Disney Pixar, Facebook, the NFL, Johnson & Johnson, MTV, GE, JP Morgan, Warner Bros., Merck, Estee Lauder, Teach for America, the U.S. Army and Navy, and the World Economic Forum, where he has been honored as a Young Global Leader. He is the author of [Give and Take](#), a *New York Times* bestseller that has been translated into 27 languages and named one of the best books of 2013 by Amazon, the *Financial Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*—as well as one of *Oprah's* riveting reads and *Harvard Business Review's* ideas that shaped management. It was praised by Malcolm Gladwell, Arianna Huffington, Ashton Kutcher, John Legend, the prime minister of Finland, and Adam's mom.

Adam is a contributing writer for the *New York Times*, where his op-eds include “Raising a moral child”—which was shared online over 300,000 times—and “Madam C.E.O., get me a coffee” with Sheryl Sandberg. He has won numerous distinguished scholarly achievement awards and published extensively in top management and psychology journals on generosity, championing new ideas, motivation and meaningful work, personality traits like introversion-extraversion, and leading collaboration and organizational change. He has designed experiential learning activities in which students have raised over \$325,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Prior to graduate school, he worked at Let's Go Publications, where he set multiple company records for advertising sales and won the Manager of the Year award.

He received his B.A. from Harvard University, magna cum laude with highest honors and Phi Beta Kappa honors, and his Ph.D. in organizational psychology from the University of Michigan, completing it in less than three years. He is a former junior Olympic springboard diver and performed for a decade as a professional magician. He was profiled on the Today Show and in the *New York Times* magazine cover story, “Is giving the secret to getting ahead?” He is the proud father of two daughters and a son, and he tried—and failed—to convince his wife to name them after Superman characters.

CLASS SCHEDULE

| Date | Topic | Readings & Assignments |
|-----------|--------------------|------------------------|
| August 26 | Introduction to OB | |

Level 1: Individual

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| August 31 | Decision-Making I: Rethinking Rationality | “Evidence-based management” (1) |
| September 2 | Decision-Making II: Heuristics and Biases | Fill out survey, print your scores: www.decisionpulse.com/assessment/ |
| September 9 | Decision-Making III: Choice at Work | “Carter racing” (2) and “Hidden traps in decision-making” (3) |
| September 14 | Motivation I: Expectancies and Values | “Hausser Foods” (4) |
| September 16 | Motivation II: Goal-Setting | “Goal-setting at GE & Goldman Sachs” (5) and “How customers can rally your troops” (6); Watch http://vimeo.com/13677854 |
| September 21 | Guest Speaker | |
| September 23 | Motivation III: Feedback | Best Self assignment due; “How to play to your strengths” (7) |
| September 28 | Personality I: The Big Five | Fill out Big Five personality scale, print your scores: www.outofservice.com/bigfive/ |
| September 30 | Personality II: Traits in Action | “The adaptable leader” (8) |
| October 5 | Personality III: Selection and Hiring | Diagnosis paper due; Bring your resume to class |

Level 2: Interpersonal

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| October 7 | Relationships I: Give and Take | “Good returns” (handout); get rated at www.giveandtake.com |
| October 12 | Relationships II: Networks | “The peacock and the panda” (handout) |

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| October 14 | Guest Speaker | |
| October 19 | Guest Speaker | |
| October 21 | Influence I: Social Capital | “Donna Dubinsky” (9) and “Heidi Roizen” (10) |
| October 26 | Influence II: Persuasion | Interpersonal challenge due; “Harnessing the science of persuasion” (11) |
| October 28 | Influence III: Speaking Up | “How to pitch a brilliant idea” (12) |
| November 2 | Influence IV: Emotional Intelligence | “The emotionally intelligent manager” (13) |
| November 4 | Special Topics | TED talk due |

Level 3: Collective

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| November 9 | Groups I: Team Effectiveness | “Sports teams as a model for workplace teams” (14) |
| November 11 | Groups II: Creativity | “Improving the creativity of organizational work groups” (15) |
| November 16 | Guest Speaker | “Company vision” (16) |
| November 18 | Organizations I: Dynamic Environments | “Process consultation” (17) and “Reaching and changing frontline employees” (18) |
| November 23/25 | No class: Happy Thanksgiving! | |
| November 30 | Organizations II: Culture | Group projects due; “Leading by leveraging culture” (19) |
| December 2 | TBD | |
| December 7 | Wrap-up and Reflection | Complete course evaluations |
| December 18 | Final Exam (9-11am) | |

Supplemental sessions will be arranged with me and the MBA mentors.