

Management 238: Organizational Behavior, Fall 2017

Professor: Adam Grant
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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 career, 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 courses. Although we will focus primarily on work, you will find that the course concepts have 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.

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:

• Book Club	(20 points—4%)	September 20
• Best Self Exercise	(10 points—2%)	October 2
• Diagnosis Paper	(100 points—20%)	October 9
• TED Talk	(80 points—16%)	November 8
• Group Project Report	(80 points—16%)	December 6
• Final Exam	(150 points—30%)	December 15
• Class Participation	(60 points—12%)	

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

Book Club (20 points—4%): To enrich your learning, the MBA mentors will host discussions of books based on OB and psychology research. You will choose one of the books below and submit a 2-page commentary answering three questions: (1) What did you find most fascinating, and why? (2) Where do you disagree? (3) What insights will you apply to your life—and how?

- Personality: [Me, Myself, and Us](#); [Mindset](#); [Mistakes Were Made \(But Not By Me\)](#); [Quiet](#)
- Relationships and influence: [Influence](#); [Lean In](#); [Originals](#); [The Emotionally Intelligent Manager](#)
- Motivation: [Drive](#); [Finding Flow](#); [Grit](#); [Switch](#)

Best Self Assignment (10 points—2%): You will complete the Reflected Best Self Exercise. Submit your portrait, explain what you discovered about your strengths, and meet with your MBA mentor group in class 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 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.

TED Talk (80 points—16%): Pairing up with one classmate, you will have the chance to film a mini-TED talk about a new idea in OB. The video 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. *Please also submit a works cited list for the research that informed your talk.* The talk 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 4-5 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 (80 points—16%): The goal of this assignment 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%): 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. For more on my grading philosophy and approach, see my *New York Times* op-ed “[Why we should stop grading students on a curve.](#)”

Class Participation (60 points—12%): 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 and prepared. 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. 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.

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.

Academic honesty is expected in this course. In other words: don't be a cheater. 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 Saul P. Steinberg Professor of Management and Psychology. As an organizational psychologist, he studies how we can find motivation and meaning, and lead more generous, creative, and productive lives. He has been recognized as one of the world's 25 most influential management thinkers, *Fortune*'s 40 under 40, and Oprah's Super Soul 100. He has been the top-rated teacher in the MBA program for six straight years and has received the Excellence in Teaching Award for every course he has taught at Wharton.

He is the author of three *New York Times* bestselling books that have sold over a million copies and been translated into 35 languages. *Give and Take*, on why helping others drives our success, was named one of 2013's best by Amazon, the *Financial Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. *Originals*, on how to champion new ideas and fight groupthink, was a #1 bestseller praised by J.J. Abrams, Richard Branson, and Malcolm Gladwell. *Option B*, with Sheryl Sandberg, is on facing adversity and building resilience.

Adam's speaking and consulting clients include Facebook and Google, the NBA, the Gates Foundation, BCG and McKinsey, Goldman Sachs, and the World Economic Forum, where he has been honored as a Young Global Leader. He received a standing ovation at TED in 2016, and his TED talks have been viewed more than 9 million times.

Adam writes on work and psychology for the *New York Times* and features new insights in his monthly newsletter, GRANTED. He has earned awards for scientific contributions from the American Psychological Association, the Academy of Management, and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. He is a passionate feminist who serves on the Lean In Board and the U.S. Department of Defense Innovation Board.

At Penn, Adam is the founder and host of the Authors@Wharton series and co-director of Wharton People Analytics. He received his B.A. from Harvard University with Phi Beta Kappa honors, and completed his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in less than three years. He was profiled in the *New York Times* magazine cover story, "Is giving the secret to getting ahead?"

He is a former junior Olympic springboard diver and magician. As the proud father of two daughters and a son, he tried—and failed—to convince his wife to name them after Superman characters.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
August 30	Introduction to OB	
September 6	Decision-Making I: Rationality	“Evidence-based management” (1)
September 11	Decision-Making II: Heuristics & Biases	Fill out survey, print your scores: www.decisionpulse.com/assessment/
September 13	Decision-Making III: Choice at Work	“Carter racing” (2) and “Hidden traps in decision-making” (3)
September 18	Relationships I: Give and Take	“Good returns” (<i>Give and Take</i> chapter 1 to be distributed)
September 20	Relationships II: Networks	Book commentary due; “The peacock and the panda” (<i>Give and Take</i> chapter 2 to be distributed)
September 25	Guest Speaker: Simon Sinek	
September 27	OB Book Club	
October 2	Best Self Feedback	Best Self assignment due; “How to play to your strengths” (4)
October 4	Relationships III: Feedback	
October 9	Relationships IV: Emotional Intelligence	Diagnosis paper due; “The emotionally intelligent manager” (5)
October 11	Personality I: The Big Five	Fill out Big Five personality scale, print your scores: www.outofservice.com/bigfive/
October 16	Personality II: Traits in Action	“The adaptable leader” (6)
October 18	Personality III: Selection and Hiring	Bring your resume to class
October 23	Influence I: Social Capital	“Donna Dubinsky” (7) and “Heidi Roizen” (8)

October 25	Influence II: Persuasion	“Harnessing the science of persuasion” (9); “How to pitch a brilliant idea” (10)
October 30	Guest Speaker: Tal Ben-Shahar	
November 1	Influence III: Speaking Up	“Out on a limb” and “Goldilocks and the Trojan horse” (<i>Originals</i> chapters 3 and 5 to be distributed)
November 6	Guest Speaker: Angela Duckworth	
November 8	Special Topics	TED talk due (email a Dropbox or YouTube link before 9am)
November 13	Guest Speaker: Barry Schwartz	
November 15	Motivation I: Expectancies and Values	“Hausser Foods” (11)
November 20/22	No class: Happy Thanksgiving!	
November 27	Motivation II: Goal-Setting	“Goal-setting at GE & Goldman Sachs” (12) and “How customers can rally your troops” (13); Watch http://vimeo.com/13677854
November 29	Groups I: Team Creativity	“Sports teams as a model for workplace teams” (14); “Improving the creativity of organizational work groups” (15)
December 4	Guest Speaker: Kat Cole	
December 6	Groups II: Culture	Group projects due; “Leading by leveraging culture” (16)
December 11	Wrap-up and Reflection	Complete course evaluations
December 15	Final Exam (9-11am)	To be confirmed

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