

Management 238: Organizational Behavior, Fall 2020

Professor: Adam Grant
TA: Tim Kundro



Course Description and Objectives

Although skills in finance, accounting, marketing, operations, and strategy are crucial for achieving success at work, 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—not only businesses, but also governments, non-profits, athletic teams, social clubs, and religious 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 cover decision-making, relationships, motivation, personality, influence, and groups.

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.
- Develop your leadership, management, and collaboration skills by providing you with opportunities to apply OB concepts to real-world problems.
- Build a diverse and inclusive learning community.

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 who will help you reflect on course content and its implications for your career.

Readings

The coursepack is available on Study.Net. A few readings and exercises are not in the coursepack, and these will be distributed throughout the semester. Please complete 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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| • Book Club | (35 points—7%) | September 21 |
| • Best Self Exercise | (15 points—3%) | October 12 |
| • Diagnosis Paper | (125 points—25%) | October 26 |
| • Podcast | (100 points—20%) | November 16 |
| • Final Exam | (150 points—30%) | |
| • Class Participation | (75 points—15%) | |

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

Book Club (35 points—7%): 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 double-spaced 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?

- Decision-making: [Mistakes Were Made](#); [Superforecasting](#); [Thinking, Fast and Slow](#) (first half)
- Relationships: [Biased](#); [Difficult Conversations](#); [Give and Take](#); [Together](#)
- Motivation and personality: [Grit](#); [Joyful](#); [Me, Myself, and Us](#); [Quiet](#)
- Leadership, culture, and change: [Originals](#); [The Culture Code](#); [The Fearless Organization](#)

Best Self Assignment (15 points—3%): 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 to discuss your insights.

Diagnosis Paper (125 points—25%): 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 OB 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 a work or organizational challenge from your past, you should describe and diagnose the situation 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.

Podcast (100 points—20%): Pairing up with one classmate, you will have the chance to record a mini-podcast about a new idea in OB. The audio recording should include (1) a story or example, (2) a finding from OB or psychology research that this course does *not* cover, 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 podcast.* You can search for relevant studies in Google Scholar, PsycArticles, EBSCO, or these OB and psychology journals: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Organization Science*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Psychological Science*, *Psychological Bulletin*, *Psychological Review*.

The podcast 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. You should interview at least one character or expert for your podcast, and the recording must be a maximum of 5 minutes in total. The podcast 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 (which is about the emotion you evoke, not the technical skills you bring to production). Be bold: I applaud originality in content and delivery.

Final Exam (150 points—30%): The exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, covering material from class and the readings throughout the semester. For more on my grading philosophy, see my *New York Times* article on [why we should stop grading students on a curve](#).

Class Participation (75 points—15%): 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 *enriching the learning of your classmates by contributing thoughtfully to class discussion and exercises*. We value quality, not quantity; you do not need to speak up multiple times per class to receive an excellent participation score. That said, not speaking at all throughout the entire semester will hurt your score, as it means we are all missing out on your insights. Here are my expectations for your participation:

- *Enrich the conversation.* There are at least five ways to participate effectively: (1) ask a thought-provoking question, (2) share an example of a course concept from your experience, (3) stimulate debate by respectfully challenging a point made, (4) build on a prior comment to deepen understanding, and (5) integrate course readings insightfully.
- *Show up.* If you’re not here, you can’t contribute to class discussion. Attendance in the first class is mandatory. After that, missing a class will mean having 15 points deducted from your participation grade—unless you are absent for a medical, religious, or technological reason, or for official university business. Of course, I realize that in some cases unforeseeable emergencies arise. If you will be absent for a predictable reason, please notify us at least 48 hours in advance to make arrangements for in-class exercises and obtain relevant materials from your MBA mentor. Please note: a job interview is not an acceptable reason to miss class.
- *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 considerate 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 or me. Open debate often leads to the most thoughtful and informative class discussions, as long as you do it respectfully.
- *Be engaged.* Normally, this class is unplugged, but that doesn’t exactly apply since we’ll be virtual. Engagement means (1) arriving on time, (2) having your camera on, (3) giving your full attention (not multitasking), and (4) participating by raising your voice and/or sharing your perspective in the chat.

Additional grading information: Academic honesty is expected in this course. In other words: don't be a cheater. With the exception of the podcast, all assignments in this class must be completed independently. 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.

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 submitting the assignment 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 any time during 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 Professor of Psychology at Wharton. 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 10 most influential management thinkers and *Fortune's* 40 under 40. He has been the top-rated MBA professor for seven straight years and has received the Excellence in Teaching Award for every course he has taught.

Adam is the author of four *New York Times* bestselling books: *Give and Take*, *Originals*, *Option B*, and *Power Moves*. They have sold over 2 million copies and been translated into 35 languages, and been praised by J.J. Abrams, Richard Branson, Bill and Melinda Gates, Malcolm Gladwell, and Malala Yousafzai. His TED talks have been viewed over 25 million times, and he hosts the chart-topping TED podcast WorkLife. His speaking and consulting clients include Google, the Gates Foundation, the NBA, Bridgewater, McKinsey, Goldman Sachs, and the World Economic Forum, where he has been honored as a Young Global Leader. He has received awards for scientific contributions from the American Psychological Association, the Academy of Management, and the National Science Foundation.

Adam serves on the Department of Defense Innovation Board, writes on work and psychology for the *New York Times*, and features new insights in his monthly newsletter, GRANTED. At Penn, he 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 and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. 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
September 14	Decision-Making I: Rationality	Read: (1) Evidence-based management
September 21	Decision-Making II: Heuristics & Biases Guest Speaker: Barry Schwartz	Due: Book commentary Read: (2) Carter racing, (3) Hidden traps in decision-making
September 28	Relationships I: Giving & Taking	Read: <i>Give and Take</i> chapters 1 and 2 (to be distributed)
October 5	Relationships II: Social Capital Guest Speaker: Kat Cole	Read: (4) Donna Dubinsky, (5) Heidi Roizen
October 12	Motivation I: Feedback	Due: Best Self assignment Read: (6) How to play to your strengths Listen: WorkLife, How to love criticism: Apple Other devices
October 19	Motivation II: Values and Goals Guest Speaker: Angela Duckworth	Read: (7) Hausser Foods, (8) Goal-setting at GE & Goldman Sachs Watch: http://vimeo.com/13677854
October 26	Personality I: The Big Five	Due: Diagnosis Paper Save your Big Five personality scores: www.outofservice.com/bigfive/
November 2	Personality II: Selection & Hiring Guest Speaker: Stephanie Lampkin	Have your resume ready Read: (9) The adaptable leader

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
November 9	Influence I: Emotional Intelligence Guest Speaker: Alison Levine	Read: (10) The emotionally intelligent manager
November 16	Influence II: Persuasion and Voice Guest Speaker: Rachel Botsman	Due: Podcast Read: (11) Harnessing the science of persuasion, (12) How to pitch a brilliant idea, <i>Originals</i> chapters 3 and 5 (to be distributed)
November 23	Groups I: Teams and Organizational Culture	Read: (13) Sports teams, (14) How diversity makes us smarter, (15) Leading by leveraging culture Listen: WorkLife, The Creative Power of Misfits: Apple Other devices
November 30	Groups II: Leading Change	Read: GlobalTech
December 7	Wrap-Up and Reflection	
TBD	Final Exam	To be scheduled by the registrar

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