

**LEADING WITH GRIT:  
HOW TO INSPIRE PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE FOR LONG-TERM GOALS**

**Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania OIDD 705**

**Professor Angela Duckworth, Rosa Lee and Egbert Chang Professor,  
[aduckworth@characterlab.org](mailto:aduckworth@characterlab.org)**

WEDNESDAYS 3:30PM to 6:30PM ET, Room SHDH 351 (3620 Locust Walk).

- Paolo Terni, Duckworth Lab, course designer and coordinator
- Class email to which you can email all questions, both substantive and procedural: [leadingwithgrit@gmail.com](mailto:leadingwithgrit@gmail.com)

**TAs:**

- Kartik Shastri, MBA '24 (Real Estate), [kshastri@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:kshastri@wharton.upenn.edu)
- Laura Yin, MBA '24 (BEES & Business Analytics) [laurayin@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:laurayin@wharton.upenn.edu)
- Wenjia You, MBA '24 (Operations, Information & Decisions), [ywj@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:ywj@wharton.upenn.edu)
- Heling Zhao, MBA' 24 (Finance) [heling@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:heling@wharton.upenn.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS**

The aims of Leading with Grit are two-fold: (1) to equip you with generalizable knowledge about the science of passion and perseverance; (2) to help you apply these insights as a leader.

At the heart of this course are cutting-edge scientific discoveries about how to foster passion and perseverance for long-term goals, in yourself, in others, and in organizations.

Attendance is essential and expected, except in the case of religious or secular holidays, as long as you contact the teaching team **within the first week of class (by September 6th)**. Exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

**Staying enrolled in this course is contingent upon attending the first class on Wednesday, August 30th, and completing a 250-word statement of interest by Wednesday, August 30th, at 2:59PM.** Failure to do either of these will result in an administrative drop.

No auditing is permitted.

The class is for MBA students only.

TYPICAL WEEKLY SCHEDULE

When	What
<b>By Tuesday at 11:59PM EST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete the assigned activity and suggested readings, and upload on Canvas the requested items.</li> </ul>
<b>By Wednesday August 30 at 2:59PM ET</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Statement of interest due</li> </ul>
<b>On varied dates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Essays due by Tuesday at 11:59PM EST (see <a href="#">Schedule of Topics</a> below for details)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Essay #1: September 26</li> <li>○ Essay #2: November 7</li> <li>○ Essay #3: December 5</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Wednesday, 3:30PM to 6:20PM EST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3:30 to 3:45: staircase thoughts</li> <li>● 3:45 to 4:45: lecture</li> <li>● 4:45 to 5:00: break</li> <li>● 5:00 to 6:00: discussion (questions submitted via PollEv before break and upvoted during break; <u>this post break segment is where most of the grading of participation occurs</u>)</li> <li>● 6:00 to 6:10 kaizen and preview of next class</li> </ul> <p>Note: after the first 2 lectures we will revisit the class structure and change it if needed, based on students' feedback.</p>
<i>Wednesday 1:45PM - 2:15PM (optional)</i>	Open office hours with Professor Duckworth (optional), Huntsman 561

## FAQ

### WHAT WILL CLASSES BE LIKE?

**Attendance is required.** Note that 20% of your grade comes from in-class activities. If you have plans that do not allow you to attend a lecture, please let your TA know within one week of the start of the class (by September 6th). If you have previous commitments that prevent you from attending three or more lectures, we recommend considering other courses in order to leave a spot to someone who can attend more consistently.

**Participation is highly encouraged and will be part of your grade.** This is a large class, still we want each of you to contribute as much as possible and your voice to be heard. You're encouraged to ask questions, share your perspective and life experience, respectfully challenge the perspectives of others (including your professor), integrate course readings, and tie current content to prior classes.

In case of a medical or personal emergency that would prevent attendance, please email [leadingwithgrit@gmail.com](mailto:leadingwithgrit@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

Students with disabilities who require accommodations can go [here](#) for Penn resources and need to contact [leadingwithgrit@gmail.com](mailto:leadingwithgrit@gmail.com) by September 6th at the latest.

Penn's Code of [Academic Integrity](#) applies to Leading with Grit.

### WHAT IS THE TECHNOLOGY POLICY?

Our technology policy is designed to avoid distracting yourself and others.

You will be required to keep your cell phone on mute and out of sight except when asked to respond to Poll Everywhere prompts.

Laptops are not permitted in this class except for accessibility reasons, in which case you are asked to please write to [leadingwithgrit@gmail.com](mailto:leadingwithgrit@gmail.com) **within the first week of class (by September 5)** for permission. On the other hand, you are allowed to use a tablet in class for note taking purposes only.

*ChatGPT and other generative AI tools* represent a once-in-a-generation technological advance. While we recognize that many students will use these tools for editing/refining their essays, **we discourage doing so for generating them de novo**. Why? Three reasons. First, this cheats you. You won't learn from assignments completed wholesale by a bot—and outsourcing independent thinking and creativity means you will not benefit from the exercises. Second, this cheats other students. Relying on a bot, rather than yourself, is unfair, particularly when access to tools is not universal. Third, in our experience, relying uncritically on a bot is unlikely to produce the very best work (and the highest grades). Why? Because the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic.

You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. For each essay, you will state, in one sentence at the very end, if and how you used ChatGPT or analogous tools. This requirement is analogous to citing your sources, which assigns credit appropriately—including credit to yourself for whatever innovative ways you've used technology in order to craft a better final essay.

### **PollEverywhere**

Throughout the semester, we will be using Poll Everywhere to interact with you in class. Furthermore, PollEv participation confirms class attendance and **it is a measure of graded class participation.**

So **register in advance (before August 30) by going to [pollev.com/gritlab](https://pollev.com/gritlab)**. Follow the registration prompt to create a Poll Everywhere student account right there. If you encounter problems, please email [leadingwithgrit@gmail.com](mailto:leadingwithgrit@gmail.com)

### **WHAT DO WE DO OUTSIDE OF CLASS?**

- Each week, you are encouraged to try out an activity aimed to help cultivate passion or perseverance and sometimes to write a short reflection on it. **These activities and, when it applies, the related reflections, unless otherwise specified, are required and graded.**
- There are three essays asking you to integrate what you've learned especially in view of your future leadership roles. Refer to Canvas for the specific prompts. **These essays are required and graded.** The essays will be graded on three criteria:
  - Integration with course content: The essay applies and extends concepts covered in the class (40%).
  - Personal insight: The essay includes and expands on personal reflections based on one's own life story and weekly assignments (40%).
  - Rhetorical Style: The essay is inspirational and shows a cohesive structuring of concepts and ideas (20%).
- **Weekly readings** (one chapter of the book *Grit* and occasionally a scientific paper that will be mentioned and expounded upon during the lecture) are highly recommended, so you can reap the full value out of the course, but not required. Note that we are not reading the book chapters in order.

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- **Office hours** consist of a 30-minute period shared with other students. Office hours are held weekly on Wednesdays from 1:45PM to 2:15PM in Huntsman 561. Office hours are optional but might be taken into account to determine borderline grades.

**HOW DOES GRADING WORK?**

	<b>Grading Details</b>	<b>% of Final Grade Point Breakdown</b>
<b>Weekly activities &amp; weekly reflections</b>	Weekly activity materials or reflections need to be submitted before the deadline, <u>always the Tuesday before class by midnight (11:59PM ET)</u> , to be graded. There is no (full or partial) credit for late assignments.	<b>20%</b>  <i>120 points (20 points per assignment, we will drop the 2 lowest scoring weekly activities)</i>
<b>Essay #1: “As a Leader, This I Believe”</b>	<b>Writing Assignment Grading Rubric</b>  These written assignments must be turned in by the deadline to receive full credit. Late assignments will be penalized 5 points for each day past the deadline.	<b>20%</b> <i>120 points</i>
<b>Essay #2: “Culture book”</b>		<b>20%</b> <i>120 points</i>
<b>Essay #3 “Tribute, obituary, or letter to future self”</b>		<b>20%</b> <i>120 points</i>
<b>Class participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Class attendance</li> <li>- Poll Ev participation</li> <li>- Exit ticket</li> <li>- Questions and comments during class</li> </ul>	<b>20%</b> <i>120 points</i> <i>Each lecture: 6 points for attending, up to 2 points for exit ticket, up to 4 points for questions and comments in class, contribution to discussion in group</i>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b> <i>600 points</i>



## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

**Statement of interest** due on **Wednesday, August 30, at 2:59pm** (250 words): **What life experiences have led you to be interested in grit? Reviewing the syllabus, what are you most excited about?**

*Note: Students who fail to submit a statement of interest and/or do not attend the first lecture without letting the teaching team know by 2:59PM on Wednesday August 30 will face an administrative drop, which means the Registrar's Office will remove them from the roster.*

### Welcome to Leading With Grit, *Wednesday August 30*

- a. Suggested readings:
  - i. [Grit Preface and Chapter 1: Showing Up](#)
  - ii. Lee, T.H., & Duckworth, A. L. (2018). Organizational grit. *Harvard Business Review*, 96(5), 98-105.
- b. Topics: Why do some people and some organizations pursue long-term goals with sustained passion and perseverance? What is the opposite of gritty culture? How is grit different from talent? What are contrary perspectives to “grit is good”?

## CHOOSE EASY

2. Exploring your interests, *Wednesday September 6*
  - a. Pre-class activity (required, due by Tuesday September 5 at 11:59PM EST): Take the O\*NET Interest Profiler linked in Canvas and upload your score.
  - b. Suggested readings:
    - i. [Grit Chapter 6: Interest](#).
  - c. Topics: How do you develop interest, and how do you foster it for members of your team/organization? Bloom's three stages of development, sampling, and the science of curiosity.
3. Affirming your values, *Wednesday September 13*
  - a. Pre-class activity (required, due by Tuesday September 12 at 11:59PM EST ): do the 10-minute values affirmation [exercise](#) and upload the answer to the prompts

- b. Suggested readings:
    - i. Grit Chapter 8: Purpose.
  - c. Topics: What priorities orient us as a leader? Values, values affirmation, and purpose.
4. Racing your strengths, *Wednesday September 20*
- a. Pre-class activity (required): Have a 20-minute [curiosity conversation](#) with a leader whose character and talents you admire. Write a brief written reflection on it (between 150 and 300 words), due on Tuesday September 19 at 11:59PM EST.
  - b. Suggested readings:
    - i. Grit Chapter 2: Distracted by Talent
    - ii. HBR article <https://hbr.org/2005/01/how-to-play-to-your-strengths>
  - c. Topics: What is talent and why does it matter? What are character strengths and why do they matter? When to quit and when to grit?

## WORK SMART

5. Goal hierarchies, *Wednesday September 27*
- a. Required pre-class activity: Write your **Essay #1: As a Leader, This I Believe** (between 300 and 500 words, due on **Tuesday September 26** at 11:59PM EST)
  - b. Suggested readings:
    - i. Grit Chapter 4: How Gritty Are You?
    - ii. Höchli, B., Brügger, A., & Messner, C. (2018). How focusing on superordinate goals motivates broad, long-term goal pursuit: A theoretical perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1879.
  - c. Topics: When to quit and when to grit? Goal hierarchies and “callings”.
6. Goal setting and planning, *Wednesday October 4*
- a. Pre-class activity (required): Choose a goal you have for the rest of the semester and do a [WOOP](#) plan. We will discuss this goal setting and planning tool in class.
  - b. Suggested readings:
    - i. Grit Chapter 5: Grit Grows



- ii. Oettingen, G. (2014). Stop being so positive. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(10), 9299.
- c. Topics: How do I get from intentions to results? What are the best practices for goal setting and planning? How do I build a goal hierarchy for myself and my organization?

**No class on October 11 and on October 18**

7. Deliberate practice and feedback, *Wednesday October 25*

- a. Pre-class activity (required): Using the IWEW and NTT prompts on Canvas, seek feedback about something you can iteratively improve within the week. What something? It's up to you! You could practice a presentation, revise a writing assignment, or even ask your roommate about ways you could be easier to live with! When you get your IWEW and NTT feedback, try again...then get one more round of IWEW and NTT feedback. Bonus points for more iterations. Alternatively, do these cycles of practice but in the role of the feedback giver (i.e., the coach) for someone else!
- b. Suggested readings:
  - i. Grit Chapter 3: Effort Counts Twice.
  - ii. Grit Chapter 7: Practice.
  - iii. How to love criticism. [Apple](#) | [TED](#)
  - iv. Maybe failure is not the best [teacher](#)
- c. Topics: What limits how good you will get at what you do? How do you practice like an expert? How can I receive feedback optimally? How can I give feedback optimally?

8. Rethinking failure and stress, *Wednesday November 1*

- a. Pre-class activity (required): Make a copy of your current resume, then turn it into a failure resume and upload it on Canvas. Due by Tuesday October 31 at 11:59PM EST.
- b. Suggested readings:
  - i. Grit Chapter 9: Hope
- c. Topics: What is the stress response, and how can you help people you're leading deal with it? Coping with failure and how that relates to purpose, perseverance and goal hierarchies

9. Rules, rituals, and habits, *Wednesday November 8*

- a. Pre-class activity: **Essay #2:** As a google slide deck (or google doc or any other format of your choice), create a **Culture Book** (minimum 5 slides or 500 words) for a present or future organization. Due on **Tuesday November 7** at 11:59PM EST. For inspiration, see:

- [https://characterlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Culture-Book\\_Digital\\_01-11-2021.pdf](https://characterlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Culture-Book_Digital_01-11-2021.pdf)
- <https://jobs.netflix.com/culture>
- [https://www.valvesoftware.com/company/Valve\\_Handbook\\_LowRes.pdf](https://www.valvesoftware.com/company/Valve_Handbook_LowRes.pdf)  
<https://blog.hrpartner.io/best-employee-handbooks>

- b. Suggested readings:

- i. Grit Chapter 11: The Playing Fields Of Grit
- ii. Wood, W., & Neal, D. T. (2016). Healthy through habit: Interventions for initiating & maintaining health behavior change. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 2(1), 71-83.

- c. Topics: How do you scaffold grit? The process model of behavior, your brain on autopilot, why immediate temptation beats long-term goals, and turning personal rules into habits.

**PAY IT FORWARD**

10. Learning from and leaning on other people, *Wednesday November 15*

- a. Pre-class activity (required): Write a gratitude letter to someone you've never properly thanked. Record a video of you reading it and send it to them or, take a deep breath and actually read it to them in person. Upload your gratitude letter and your video on Canvas by Tuesday November 14 at 11:59PM EST.

- b. Suggested readings:

- i. Grit Chapter 10: Parenting for Grit

- c. Topics: How do you grow grit with and for other people? Role models, mentoring styles, and cultures of grit.

**No class on Wednesday November 22**

11. Paying it forward, *Wednesday November 29*

- a. Pre-class activity (required): Challenge: how many of these good deeds can you do in one week ( November 15 through November 22)? Submit a list of the good deeds done and a written reflection (between 150 and 300 words) by Tuesday November 28 at 11:59PM EST.

- b. Suggested readings:
  - i. Grit Chapter 12: A Culture of Grit
  - ii. Frankl, V. E. (1966). Self-transcendence as a human phenomenon. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 6(2), 97-106.
- c. Topics: For what and for whom? The basic human need to contribute, self-actualization, and self-transcendence.

## 12. Concluding Lecture, *Wednesday December 6*

- a. Pre-class activity (required): Write **Essay #3**: Your choice—1) write the **tribute speech** that will be delivered at the end of your illustrious career as a leader, OR 2) write your WSJ or NYT **obituary**, OR 3) **write a letter to your future self** about what you learned in *Leading With Grit* and what you hope you'll remember and apply. In addition to posting on Canvas, you can—if you want to—register it on [www.futureme.org](http://www.futureme.org) (500 to 750 words). Upload your essay by **Tuesday December 5** at 11:59PM EST.
- b. Suggested readings:
  - i. Grit Chapter 13: Conclusion
- c. Topic: Highlight reel of *Leading With Grit*.

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**Summary of Key Dates of Leading With Grit 2.0**

Due Date	Deadline	Event	Topics/Task
Wed Aug 30	2:59 PM	Statement of Interest	(250 words) What life experiences have led you to be interested in grit? Reviewing the syllabus, what are you most excited about?
Wed Aug 30	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 1	Grit Preface and Chapter 1: Showing Up Lee, T.H., & Duckworth, A. L. (2018). Organizational grit. Harvard Business Review, 96(5), 98-105.
Wed Aug 30	3:30 PM	Lecture 1	Why do some people and some organizations pursue long-term goals with sustained passion and perseverance? What is the opposite of gritty culture? How is grit different from talent? What are contrary perspectives to "grit is good"?
Tue Sep 5	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 2	O*NET interest profiler
Wed Sep 6	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 2	Grit Chapter 6: Interest.
Wed Sep 6	3:30 PM	Lecture 2	How do you develop interest, and how do you foster it for members of your team/organization? Bloom's three stages of development, sampling, and the science of curiosity.
Tue Sep 12	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 3	This I Believe
Wed Sep 13	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 3	Grit Chapter 8: Purpose.
Wed Sep 13	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 3	What priorities orient us as a leader? Values, values affirmation, and purpose.
Tue Sep 19	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 4	Curiosity Conversation
Wed Sep 20	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 4	Grit Chapter 2: Distracted by Talent. HBR article <a href="https://hbr.org/2005/01/how-to-play-to-your-strengths">https://hbr.org/2005/01/how-to-play-to-your-strengths</a>
Wed Sep 20	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 4	What is talent and why does it matter? What are character strengths and why do they matter? When to quit and when to grit?
Tue Sep 26		Essay #1	As a leader, This I Believe
Tue Sep 26	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 5	Grit Chapter 4: How Gritty Are You? Höchli, B., Brügger, A., & Messner, C. (2018). How focusing on superordinate goals motivates broad, long-term goal pursuit: A theoretical perspective. *See note in syllabus
Wed Sep 27	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 5	When to quit and when to grit? Goal hierarchies and "callings".
Tue Oct 3	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 6	WOOP
Wed Oct 4	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 6	Grit Chapter 5: Grit Grows. Oettingen, G. (2014). Stop being so positive.
Wed Oct 4	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 6	How do I get from intentions to results? What are the best practices for goal setting and planning? How do I build a goal hierarchy for myself and my organization?
<b>No class on October 11</b>			
<b>No class on October 18</b>			

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Tue Oct 24	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 7	Feedback (IWEW / NTT)
			Grit Chapter 3: Effort Counts Twice.
			Grit Chapter 7: Practice.
			How to love criticism [link in syllabus]
Wed Oct 25	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 7	Maybe failure is not the best teacher [link in syllabus]
Wed Oct 25	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 7	What limits how good you will get at what you do? How do you practice like an expert? How can I receive feedback optimally? How can I give feedback optimally?
Tue Oct 31	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 8	Failure Resume
Tue Oct 31	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 8	Grit Chapter 9: Hope
			What is the stress response, and how can you help people you're leading deal with it? Coping with failure and how that relates to purpose, perseverance and goal hierarchies
Wed Nov 1	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 8	
Tue Nov 7	11:59 PM	Essay #2	Culture Book
			Grit Chapter 11: The Playing Fields Of Grit
			Wood, W., & Neal, D. T. (2016). Healthy through habit: Interventions for initiating & maintaining health behavior change. Behavioral Science & Policy, 2(1), 71-83.
Tue Nov 7	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 9	
			How do you scaffold grit? The process model of behavior, your brain on autopilot, why immediate temptation beats long-term goals, and turning personal rules into habits.
Wed Nov 8	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 9	
Tue Nov 14	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 10	Gratitude Letter
			Grit Chapter 12: A Culture of Grit.
Tue Nov 14	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 10	Grit Chapter 10: Parenting for Grit
Wed Nov 15	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 10	How do you grow grit with and for other people? Role models, mentoring styles, and cultures of grit.
<b>No class on November 22</b>			
Tue Nov 28	11:59 PM	Pre-Class Activity: Lecture 11	Good Deed
			Grit Chapter 12: A Culture of Grit
			Frankl, V. E. (1966). Self-transcendence as a human phenomenon. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 6(2), 97-106.
Wed Nov 29	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 11	
			For what and for whom? The basic human need to contribute, self-actualization, and self-transcendence.
Wed Nov 29	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 11	
Tue Dec 5	11:59 PM	Essay #3	Tribute Speech or Letter to Future Self
Wed Dec 6	3:30 PM	Readings: Lecture 12	Grit Chapter 13: Conclusion and Afterword
Wed Dec 6	3:30 PM	Class: Lecture 12	Highlight reel of Grit Lab.