Management 2950: Synchrony at Work

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Fall 2024, Q2:	Mondays 3:30-6:30pm

Course Description and Objectives

One of the great barriers to success and happiness is being out of sync. When individuals and groups fail to get on the same page about their missions, values, and routines, their performance and satisfaction suffer. In your career, your progress will depend on your ability to adapt yourself to tasks and cultures— and adapt the context around you to suit your strengths and goals. The purpose of this course is to enrich your knowledge and skills for achieving individual, interpersonal, and collective alignment.

The content is evidence-based, and the learning method is experiential. In a diverse and inclusive learning community, you will be challenged to question your assumptions and test your ideas. The focus is on synchrony across a wide range of work settings—not only businesses, but also governments, sports teams, and nonprofits.

Instructional Methods

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 in class. 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:

- Diagnosis Paper   (100 points—25%)   November 18
- Podcast   (100 points—25%)   December 9
- Final Exam   (140 points—35%)   TBD
- Class Participation   (60 points—15%)

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

Diagnosis Paper (100 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. For this assignment, you will reflect on synchrony challenge that you experienced. 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 reach alignment 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—25%): Pairing up with one classmate, you will have the chance to record a mini-podcast about a new idea for achieving synchrony. The audio recording should be a maximum of 5 minutes in total, including (1) a story or example, (2) a finding from 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 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.*

You are welcome to challenge principles that we have covered in class, provided that you can back up your argument with evidence. You are also welcome to interview an expert or feature the voice of a friend, colleague, manager, mentor, or family member. The podcast will be evaluated on the rigor of the evidence, the persuasiveness of the idea, the relevance of the story, the practicality of the recommendation, and the quality of the delivery (which is about the emotion you evoke, not the technical skills you bring to production). Be bold: we applaud originality in content and form.

Final Exam (140 points—35%): The exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, covering material from class and the readings. For more on my grading philosophy, see my *New York Times* article on [why we should stop grading students on a curve](#).

Class Participation (60 points—15%): I believe that the best way to learn 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 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 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 <u>not</u> 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 class. 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*. 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 integrity and AI

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.

To stimulate your thinking and enrich your writing, you are welcome to use generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Khanmigo. However, be mindful of the fact that large language models have a tendency to fabricate information and references. Any content that is inaccurate—or offensive or otherwise unethical—that you submit is your responsibility, regardless of where you originally obtained it. Further, if you use an AI tool, you must acknowledge its contribution in your submission.

The university's policy on plagiarism still applies to any uncited or improperly cited use of work by other human beings, or submission of work by other human beings as your own.

Policy for Late Assignments

As in the real 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 few weeks, 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 course. 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
October 21	Aligning Decisions	Read: The Abilene paradox
October 28	Interpersonal Synchrony	Watch: Are you a giver or a taker?
November 4	Emotion and Personality Regulation	Read: "The adaptable leader" Watch: The puzzle of personality Listen: "Emotions" Apple | Spotify | Transcript
November 11	Feedback and Conflict Resolution	Read: *Think Again* chapter 4 (to be distributed) Listen: How to love criticism. Apple | Spotify | Transcript
November 18	Opening Closed Minds	**Diagnosis paper due** Read: "How to pitch a brilliant idea" Read: *Think Again* chapters 6 and 8
November 25	Getting Buy-in for Change	Read: GlobalTech
December 2	Aligning Culture	Read: "Leading by leveraging culture" Listen: Is it safe to speak up at work? Apple | Spotify | Transcript
December 9	Wrap-Up	**Podcast due**
TBD	Final Exam	To be scheduled by the registrar

Supplemental sessions will be arranged with the MBA mentors.