

BUS INST 303: Leadership in Organizations

Spring 2020

Section 20

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Office Hours (online): Wednesdays 10am – 11am; 8pm – 9pm (all US Central Standard Time)

Office Hours (on campus): after class, or, if needed, by appointment

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Course Overview

The goal of this course is to enhance your skills on analyzing organizations. The course is designed to prepare you to analyze teams and organizations so that you can lead them to be high-performing.

A key leadership task is to assemble the skills, talents, and resources of individuals and groups into combinations that best solve the organizational problem at hand. You must manage people, information, and processes to accomplish organizational goals; you must make things happen, often under conditions or timeframes that are not of your own choosing. You must also understand how to introduce their own skills and abilities into your teams. Successful leaders are able to diagnose external and internal problems, make effective decisions, influence and motivate others, manage diversity, tap into and motivate the human and social capital of organizational members, optimize cross-functional teams, and drive organizational change.

This course will be the first step toward achieving these objectives. The course provides tools from social scientific research that will improve your ability to analyze organizational dynamics and take robust action.

Course Format in light of Online/Remote Instruction due to COVID-19

Wow, did it escalate quickly (and do we wish that we as an organization, country, and the world were better prepared). Obviously, this class will be offered online, most likely using Zoom, at least for the first few weeks. The online class will be offered *asynchronously*, meaning that the class will be video-recorded before the official class time and you can watch it at any time you want before the quarter is over. Even though the class works better when there are active interactions between you and me as well as amongst you all, I have decided to go with asynchronous recordings for three reasons. First, some of you may be in a different time zone than that of Evanston (US Central Time Zone), which might make it difficult for you to watch the lecture synchronously. Second, some of you may not always have a reliable online access from where you are. Third, it is a stressful time already: Much of your “normal” college life has been upended by all the arrangements implemented to prevent further infection of COVID-19, and I do not want this class to add to that stress.

All this said, even though some activities and assignments have been modified to work in asynchronous video lectures, some of them will be awkward and do not help achieve the goal as well. If you have any suggestions on how things can get better with alternative arrangements, any comments and suggestions are welcome. We are learning this together, and I am happy to learn from you. After/if we get to return to campus and do this class in-person, it will be a much more conventional class with active class participation.

In general, each day we will focus on a particular set of topics that can translate into leadership skills and organizational management. Our goal will be to distinguish between effective and ineffective management practices and strategies. We will accomplish this by going over key theoretical concepts and analyzing related cases.

This course reflects a dual focus on practical and conceptual training. The course readings introduce key concepts and useful ways of thinking about common situations in complex organizations. Case studies and class exercises provide opportunities to view and assess your own natural tendencies in leadership challenges that require problem definition and problem solving.

You should come to class prepared to engage in a challenging leadership exercise that you have never seen or experienced before. You should also come to class with key points from the day's readings in mind. As you complete each reading, ask yourself:

- What is the basic argument the author makes?
- What are the key concepts/principles?
- So what? Why should we care about this?
- What are the implications for the kinds of challenges I face as a leader?
- How can I apply this to my firm, my job and my career?

In addition, I will hold designated office hours when we are remote/online: Wednesdays 10am and Wednesdays 8pm, both CST. Office hours will be the only time when you and I get to interact in real time, so if you have any questions that require real-time responses, office hours will be a good time to ask those questions. The Zoom link for office hours will be set up on Canvas. Note that, as any office hours go, "coming" to office hours is optional and will not affect your participation grades. Office hours are for asking any substantive and/or clarification questions about class as well as get feedback on various assignments.

Once we return to in-person class, we expect that you act professionally both inside and outside of class. The notion of being professional is very important. This course should provide you with the skills and intuition necessary to lead a variety of teams in a variety of organizations in a professional way: and you will be in a professional position after you graduate. We would like to accentuate this in this course. To do this, we need to teach you about management. Thus, we will engage in a series of management challenges and we will read and discuss theory and research on organizational management.

Thus, an essential contribution we ask each of you to make to this course once we return to in-person class is to be professional in your actions in the class and your interactions with your instructors and your classmates. In particular, **treat our exercises seriously**. This does not mean you have to be stern and not enjoy the exercises. Instead, it means that you should take your roles in the exercises seriously and strive to accomplish the objectives given to you. You should try to do well and you should never demean either the exercises or the people you are interacting with after the exercises are over. You should think about your strategies and work hard to make sure they are appropriate and effective. You should consider the consequences of your actions within the framework of the exercise and what they might be in other situations. You should do as well as you can within the constraints of the situation.

One more thing about our classroom sessions once we return to in-person class: in our debriefs, we will discuss what happened and why. We'll discuss strategies that worked and strategies that did not. If you should use a strategy that did not work, I will ask you about it and expect you to be open and willing to discuss it. These exercises will probably be new to everyone. Thus, people may not choose completely optimal strategies in all of the exercises. By delving into the thinking that led to a particular strategy, we can better understand our thinking and behavior and adjust them in future leadership challenges. So we are not picking on you when we ask you about your strategies. To learn as much as we can in this class, we need to discuss not just what happened but why. These discussions will show how important post mortems are to future leadership strategies; they also provide us with an opportunity to not only learn a lot about leadership but also about ourselves.

Emailing the Instructor and/or TA

Given the circumstances, I will be on high alert for any emails related to class and try to respond within 24 hours. Please feel free to email me about any concerns, comments, questions, or any other things that pertain to the class, and even if I cannot answer your email, I will triage and forward it to the relevant contact. FYI, on matters related to administration, grading, and/or assignments, I might reply to you CC'ing various contacts (e.g., administrator, TA, and/or grader).

Academic Integrity

All of your conduct related to this course is governed by Northwestern's course policies, rules for student conduct, and academic integrity. These are especially important in light of the fact that our class is run remotely/online during the first few weeks. Northwestern's standards of academic integrity are available through the link below, and address such topics as: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, obtaining an unfair advantage, aiding and abetting dishonesty, falsification of records and official documents, unauthorized access to computerized academic or administrative records or systems.

Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the University. For more information on this, see: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/academic-integrity-guide-september-2019.pdf>

And

<https://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/courses-registration-grades/integrity/>

We'll expect you to be familiar with proper attribution of sources in your work, including material gleaned from websites. The link below is a useful starting point to learn more about proper citations: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/how-to-avoid-plagiarism.html>

One of the highlights of these policies is that all written assignments must be your original work. You may not use others' materials containing solutions or partial solutions to any assignment (including solutions prepared by current and former students). If your analysis contains information from outside sources, then you must properly cite the sources.

If you have any uncertainties or questions, don't hesitate to ask! Better to be safe than sorry.

Course Requirements and Assignments
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Your final grade is composed of:

1. Course Citizenship & Participation	45% when online; 30% when in-person
2. Critical Summaries	0% when online; 15% when in-person
3. Midterm	25%
4. Final	30%

Course Citizenship & Participation (45% when online; 30% when in-person)

When we are online/remote: Unfortunately, making this course asynchronous when online does not make real-time class participation suitable. Thus, I will replace class participation with “class memo.” The idea of class memo is to make sure that you have done the class reading, watched the lecture, reflected on it, and put down *your own thought* that builds on the class reading, lecture, and your reflection. A good class memo (no more than two pages) will be:

- Incorporate at least one reading from class
- Incorporate at least two separate “points” from lecture
 - The “points” can be essentially about anything from the lecture, e.g., something I mentioned in class, something that was on the slides, etc.
- Incorporate at least one independent reflection from you based on readings and lecture

You will need to submit the class memo online, to the assignment tab “critical summaries.” You can turn in the class memo any time you want within two weeks of the lecture. That is, the class memo for the first class (April 8th) is due 11:59pm US CST of April 22nd.

When in-person: As a member of this class community I expect good citizenship, which includes showing respect for one another and your ideas, engaging in constructive dialogue and debate, preparation before each class by reading and thinking about the material, engagement with class activities and exercises, and being thoughtful of the time of others. That includes (but is not limited to) your regular attendance of class and showing up on time during breaks. Each class will have a 15-minute break. Always let the instructor and our TA know at least 24 hours in advance if you will miss a class so that we can make arrangements for any in-class exercises to be certain that your classmates do not suffer from your absence. Absences that are not notified ahead of time will automatically result in a grade penalty. Students who are absent for two or more sessions will likewise experience an automatic grade penalty.

The other portion of this grade will be given based on quality and quantity of your participation and contribution to class discussion. You will be required to have a name card, and our TA will track your participation as well as attendance throughout the quarter.

Finally, we expect you to be engaged in the classroom experience. **Phones and laptop computers are not allowed during class lectures, unless we tell you otherwise.**

Three Critical Summaries (0% when online; 15% when in-person) – Due 5pm the day before class (Tuesdays)

Only when in-person: Throughout this quarter, you are required to submit critical summaries of readings. **The exact number will be determined once we know when we return to in-person class.** Critical summaries entail brief summaries of readings and other assignments for the class but not just those: They should also include your critical evaluation of those materials. Your evaluation may be based on your background knowledge, personal experience, other readings from class, concepts and theories you learn in class, and other sources of information and inspiration. All Critical Summaries should be submitted via Canvas website.

Midterm: Team Analysis Paper (25%) - Due at 5pm of May 1st (Friday of the 5th week)

For the Midterm, you will write a brief study based on a team with which you have recent experience (for example: a work team, a sports team, a musical ensemble), and to identify an issue relating to the team's performance and dynamics that you would like to better understand and explain. You will then be asked to analyze that group from 3 different perspectives, or "lenses", that are introduced in your readings and class lectures. The goal of the paper is to show how an analytical tool such as the 3 lenses can help reveal more than a "common sense" analysis of a team and how using all 3 lenses provides a more complete picture of the team and its dynamics than any single lens. The paper should be limited to 2500 words: In fact, the more concise, the better! Midterms should be submitted via Canvas website.

Final Exam: Short Answers (30%)

(More relevant when we come back to campus). For the Final Exam, we will ask you to sit down and answer some short answers. We will give you 6-8 questions, and you will be able to choose 4 questions to answer. Hopefully, we will be back to in-person class then, and you will be able to use your laptop to write down your answer; or, you can choose to handwrite your answer as well. Please let us know if you have trouble securing a laptop. The exam will involve using concepts from class readings and lectures. The exam is expected to take two hours. Please let us know at least by the 7th week if you need different arrangements (e.g., longer time due to personal needs). **If we do not come back to in-person class by then, let's worry about that when we have to.**

Date(s) for the Final Exam

(More relevant when we come back to campus). We understand that you may be participating in internships that start in the week of final exams, given Northwestern University's quarter system. If you absolutely cannot adjust your internship start date to be later than the week of

final exams, we will allow you to take the final exam at the end of the 9th week. That said, we generally discourage taking the final exam early given some pedagogical costs, since it deprives you of the opportunity to review the material during Reading Period. Lastly, questions for this early exam may be different from questions for the final exam that happens on the regular date. **If we do not come back to in-person class by then, let's worry about that when we have to.**

Previous Knowledge of Cases and Class Exercises

If you are familiar with a case or a class exercise, please do not discuss your prior knowledge with other students as this can ruin their learning experience. Telling other students about your experience with cases and exercises is an honor code violation. If you are concerned that your prior experience with a case will be an issue, please let us know before class.

Recordings, Postings, Blogging, Tweets, Social Media, etc.

For online/remote sessions, please do not copy, distribute, and/or circulate any audio or visual recordings from the class either. The class is meant to be available for students in class and students in class only.

This class or portions of this class will be recorded by the instructor for educational purposes. These recordings will be shared only with students enrolled in the course and will be deleted at the end of the end of the Spring Quarter, 2020 course. Your instructor will communicate how you can access the recordings.

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University's Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Also for in-person sessions, no audio or visual recordings can be made of the class without permission of the instructor and, in many cases, the students in the class (exceptions below). In addition, exercises and their solutions are confidential per the Kellogg Honor Code. They are all copyrighted and cannot be circulated, blogged about, or posted in any form on social media. If you are unsure as to the application of these rules, please see us and ask.

Course Materials

The course packet contains a few of the assigned readings. Additional readings not in the course packet can either be found on the Canvas website or will be sent to you by the TA. Please note that assignments for each class are subject to change by the class a week before, so be on the lookout.

Team Assignments

(This is relevant only when we are doing in-person sessions). In many classes, you will be assigned to a team of 3-5 people in which you will carry out different class exercises. Some of the exercises will involve discussing readings with fellow teammates; and others will involve doing exercises that are relevant to the class. Team assignments will be random and will change every class.

A Note about Reading Academic Research Articles

It is important that you see examples of how social scientists motivate their questions, theorize to answer those questions, operationalize different concepts, and design empirical research in areas of the course material. That said, we realize the methods sections, in particular, may be challenging. We expect you to try and work through the entire article, but do not expect you to have a solid understanding of the methods. We do, however, expect you to be conversant and have thought about the merits and flaws in the theory, main findings, and explanation(s) for those findings.

We will try to give specific guidelines for each academic article a week before you have to read them. If you have any uncertainties or questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Introduction & Seeing Organizations through the Strategic Lens

Class 1

Assignment:

This American Life Episode on Harper High School

Part 1: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/487/harper-high-school-part-one>

Part 2: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/488/harper-high-school-part-two>

Objectives:

- Introduction to the course and social scientific (especially sociological) inquiry
- Introduction to “Three Lenses” approach
- Learning the strategic-lens approach to analyzing organizations

Seeing Organizations through the Political Lens

Class 2

Assignment:

Burt, Ronald S. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1.

Caro, Robert A. 1982. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Chapters 31 & 32.

Thomas Green case

Objectives:

- Learning the political-lens approach to analyzing organizations
- Introduction to network analysis

Seeing Organizations through the Cultural Lens & Discrimination
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Class 3

Assignment:**On cultural lens:**

Van Maanen, J. 1989. "The Smile Factory: Work at Disneyland." In P. J. Frost et al (eds.) *Reframing Organizational Culture*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 58-76.

["Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace."](#) *The New York Times*, August 15, 2015

Zappos case

On discrimination:

Becker, Gary. 1957. *The Economics of Discrimination*. University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-4 (skip the equations, just get their ideas)

Objectives:

- Learning the cultural-lens approach to analyzing organizations
- Understanding what social scientific "mechanisms" are

Discrimination (continued)**Class 4****Assignment:**

Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. "Discrimination in a low-wage labor market: A field experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74(5): 777-799.

["Harvard Business School Case Study: Gender Equity"](#) *The New York Times*. September 7, 2013

Cui, Ruomeng, Jun Li, and Dennis J. Zhang. 2019. "Reducing discrimination with reviews in the sharing economy: Evidence from field experiments on Airbnb." *Management Science*. 66(3):1071-1094.

Castilla, Emilio. 2015. "Accounting for the Gap: A Firm Study Manipulating Organizational Accountability and Transparency in Pay Decisions." *Organization Science* 26(2): 311-333.

Objectives:

- Understanding when and why discrimination happens
- Understanding when and why discrimination may disappear

How to get a good employee, how to get a job, how to get a job done (Network II)**Class 5****Assignment:**

Granovetter, Mark. 1973 "Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360-1380.

Fernandez, Roberto, Emilio Castilla, and Paul Moore. 2000. "Social Capital at Work: Networks and Employment at a Phone Center." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(5): 1288-1356.

Heidi Roizen case

Objectives:

- Learning how networks are used for work and organizations

Ecological Model of Competition (Strategy I)

Class 6

Assignment:

Porter, Michael S. 1980. *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. Free Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Christensen, Clayton S. and Michael E. Raynor. 2003. *The Innovator's Solution: Creating and Sustaining Successful Growth*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, Chapter 2.

Christensen, Clayton S. 1997. *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, Chapter 10

Uber Case

Objectives:

- Introduction to corporate/organizational strategy

Managing Capabilities and Commitments (Strategy II)
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Class 7

Assignment:

Siggelkow, Nicolaj. 2001. "Change in the Presence of Fit: The Rise, the Fall, and the Renaissance of Liz Claiborne." *Academy of Management Journal* 44.4: 838-857.

Porter, Michael E. 1996. *What Is Strategy?* Harvard Business School Publishing.

This American Life Episode on NUMMI (<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/561/nummi-2015>)

Trader Joe's case

Optional:

Ghemawat, Pankaj. 1991. *Commitment*. Simon and Schuster. Chapter 2 and 3.

Objectives:

- Understanding when, why, and how organizational change for the better is feasible (and not feasible)
- Understanding the role of organizational capabilities and commitments

How to Succeed in Competition Without Really Trying (Strategy III)

Class 8

Assignment:

Podolny, Joel P. 2005. *Status Signals: A Sociological Study of Market Competition*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-3, 5.

Espeland, Wendy. N., and Michael Sauder. 2007. Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds. *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):1-40.

Objectives:

- Understanding structural bases for advantage

Authentic Leadership

Class 9

Assignment:

Watch the documentary on Theranos and Elizabeth Holmes

Hahl, Oliver, Minjae Kim, and Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan. 2018. "The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue: Proclaiming the Deeper Truth about Political Illegitimacy." *American Sociological Review* 83(1):1-33.

This American Life episode on "Good Guys" (<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/515/good-guys>)

Objectives:

- Understanding when and how leadership can be authentic (for better or worse)
- Recap: Why do we care about what we learned from previous classes with respect to leadership?