

BUS INST 303: Leadership in Organizations

2:00 PM to 4:50 PM

Class Format: In Person

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Office Hours: Very happy (really!) to meet by appointment. Please send an email to set a time.

TA: TBD

Draft Syllabus: Subject to change

Overview

The goal of this course is to help you understand what an organizational leader does and to help you develop skills to be an effective leader. The course draws on theories and empirical work from psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior relating to organizational dynamics, motivation, teams, power and culture. The course is based around the idea that a leader does not need formal power or authority to lead. Rather, leadership arises from the ability to mobilize people around a particular challenge and commitment to take action.

In addition to developing skills, as students of the world, we want to have a lens that helps us evaluate the contributions and consequences of leaders. Sadly, not all leaders are effective, and given the wrong motivations or circumstances, leaders can be quite destructive. Thus, as we go through our weekly readings, I will often ask you to reflect on particular leaders and assess what they did well or not so well. Leaders assemble the skills, talents, and resources of individuals and groups into combinations that best solve those organizational challenges. Effective leaders are able to solve these challenges, improve their teams, cultivate new leaders, accomplish organizational goals, and (hopefully) improve society in the process. In order to accomplish so many things, they must be able to diagnose 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. We will particularly develop your understanding by confronting how leaders are dealing with issues at forefront of the “future of work.”

Grading and Student Output

Late assignments will receive a 10% penalty for every day they are late.

Item	Weight
Participation	20%
Leadership Challenge Exercises	40%
Debate	5%
Final Exam	35%

A) **Participation:** 20%

- a. **20%:** Your class participation will rely upon measures of reading assessment quizzes, peer-grading, punctuality, attendance, and the relevance/insight of class participation.

I will frequently ask you to work in groups to present your analysis to the leadership challenges assigned for each week.

We will take attendance at the beginning of each class and take note of participation, both volunteering to be part of the class discussion and insightfully answering cold calls. Email the TA for excused absences in advance. If you miss a class, you are responsible for submitting your responses to the class assignments within the same due date/timeframe.

Participation grades are awarded on the basis of quality as opposed to quantity. Quality discussion comments typically possess one or more of the following actions:

- Offer a relevant perspective on the issue
- Provide careful analysis
- Apply the theory and concepts offered in the readings and lectures
- Move the discussion forward by building on previous contributions with new insights (not only repeating points already made)
- Asking good questions (good questions are rarer than good answers) in class and to speakers

- b. **Leaving class early unexcused will result in forfeiting your class participation grade.**

B) Debate: 5%

- a. You will be required to submit responses to both perspectives of your assigned debate topic with <500 words total. We will grade the quality of the responses.

C) Final Exam: 35%

- a. The exam will primarily cover what we discuss in-class. Note, material from the required readings is also fair game. The exam will consist of multiple choice and free response questions and will be administered via Canvas.

Grade Distribution: Up to 40% of the class will receive an “A”, up to 50% of the class will receive an “B”, and up to 10% of the class will receive an “C.”

Preparation

Preparing for class discussion means more than passively reading the assigned materials. Much of our class time will be spent in discussion of articles describing contrasting viewpoints. Think carefully about the underlying assumptions undergirding the arguments. For instance, pay careful attention to whether the author implicitly conceptualizes the technology from a deterministic or social constructivist lens (these lenses/perspectives will be explained in the first class).

Your participation will be graded on quality, not frequency. You should provide insights, observations, inferences, or conclusions that not only express your viewpoint, but *also* explain

your reasons. Your comment should be relevant to the topic at hand, and should advance the discussion. A simple opinion or viewpoint is not very valuable without any justification. I value comments that respond to, elaborate on, lend support to, contradict, or correct a comment by one of your classmates. Counter-productive comments include opinions without a justifying argument, pure repetition of previous point, and rambling, vacuous or disparaging comments.

Discussion constitutes a large portion of our class time; you will have ample opportunity to participate. **I will cold call in class**, both to give you an incentive to prepare for class, and to make sure the discussion does not collapse to a handful of students. At a minimum, everyone should be prepared to answer all of the preparation questions provided in advance.

Occasional lack of preparation: *I know that you are juggling work and other commitments. If for some reason you are not prepared for class, I expect you to let me know before class (by email). You don't need to give me an explanation. However, if you haven't told me otherwise, then you have implicitly committed to be ready to contribute to the class if I should call on you.*

Missing classes: *Learning to articulate your arguments and to evaluate and respond to the arguments of others is an important part of what you will learn in this class. If you miss class, you will miss this, and there isn't a way to "make it up." As a result, you should make every effort not to miss class. If you miss class or are late more than twice, it will lower your class participation grade. (Northwestern provides exceptions for religious holidays, funeral attendance, and student/dependent hospitalization.) If you must miss class, you should do the readings, prepare and turn in the assignments on time (late assignments will not be accepted), and arrange to get notes from a friend about what you missed in class. Recall that I will post the presentation slides (and anything else that I hand out in class) to the Canvas website after each lecture. Excessive absences will affect your final grade.*

Student Resources: *Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being on the NU help [website](#) and [app](#).*

Technology Policy: Use of technology during class lectures and discussion is strictly prohibited, including tablets. Laptops and tablets may only be used during designated group activities. Failure to comply with this policy could result in removal from class and lowering your class grade.

Disclaimers: This class or portions of this class will be recorded by the instructor for educational purposes. 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.

Class Schedule and Course Readings

All readings are available through links on the syllabus or through canvas.

Week 1

Introduction, Class Overview, and Existing Perspectives on Leadership

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Seriously, read the syllabus and come with questions!
- Listen to podcasts “Why are there so many bad bosses” ([link](#)) and “Six Levels Down” ([link](#))

Optional Preparation:

- How Will AI Change Work? Here Are 5 Schools of Thought ([link](#)) Singhel, Tapan, et al. (2019). HBR Ascend

Week 2

Leadership Challenge: If you were in charge of an organization, how would you integrate large language models and generative artificial intelligence? What are the pros and cons of this approach?

Required Pre-Class Reading:

- [Thought Experiment in the National Library of Thailand.](#) ([link](#)) Bender, E. M. (2023, May 27). Thought experiment in the National Library of Thailand. *Medium*.

Optional Preparation:

- What We Learned from a Year of Building with LLMs ([link](#)) Shankar, E. Y., Bryan Bischof, Charles Frye, Hamel Husain, Jason Liu, Shreya. (2024, May 28). *What We Learned from a Year of Building with LLMs (Part I)*. O’Reilly Media.
- [The Big Trade-off at the Heart of Generative AI](#) ([link](#))_Jessica, L. (2023, November 1). *The Big Trade-off at the Heart of Generative AI*. Kellogg Insight.
- NYC AI Chatbot Touted by Adams Tells Businesses to Break the Law ([link](#)) Lecher, C. (2024, March 29). *NYC AI Chatbot Touted by Adams Tells Businesses to Break the Law*. THE CITY.
- Researchers say an AI-powered transcription tool used in hospitals invents things no one ever said ([link](#)) Burke, G., & Schellmann, H. (2024, October 26). *Researchers say AI transcription tool used in hospitals invents things no one ever said*. AP News.
- A Student’s Guide to Not Writing with ChatGPT ([link](#)) Perret, A. (2024, November 14). *A Student’s Guide to Not Writing with ChatGPT*. Arthur Perret.
- [Generating Medical Errors: GenAI and Erroneous Medical References.](#) ([link](#)) Wu, K., Wu, E., Ho, D. E., & Zhou, J. (2024, February 12). *Generating Medical Errors: GenAI and Erroneous Medical References*. Stanford University Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence.

- We Tested an AI Tutor for Kids. It Struggled With Basic Math. ([link](#)) Barnum, M. (2024, February 16). *We Tested an AI Tutor for Kids. It Struggled With Basic Math*. The Wall Street Journal.
- Excuse me, but the industries AI is disrupting are not lucrative. ([link](#)) Hoel, E. (2023, December 8). *Excuse me, but the industries AI is disrupting are not lucrative*. The Intrinsic Perspective.
- Evaluating LLMs is a minefield. ([link](#)) Narayanan, A., & Kapoor, S. (2023, March 20). *Evaluating LLMs is a minefield*. AI Snake Oil.
- The Uneven Impact of Generative AI on Entrepreneurial Performance. ([link](#)) Otis, N. G., Clarke, R., Delecourt, S., Holtz, D., & Koning, R. (2023). *The Uneven Impact of Generative AI on Entrepreneurial Performance*. OSF.
- AI is fast. Automation is slow. Can they meet?. ([link](#)) Beane, M. (2024, February 27). *AI is fast. Automation is slow. Can they meet?* Wild World of Work.
- Beware the ‘botshit’: why generative AI is such a real and imminent threat to the way we live. ([link](#)) Spicer, A. (2024, January 3). Beware the ‘botshit’: Why generative AI is such a real and imminent threat to the way we live. *The Guardian*.
- Six Strategies for getting better results with ChatGPT. ([link](#)) *Six Strategies for getting better results with ChatGPT*. (n.d.). OpenAI Platform.
- Generative AI and Resource Consumption. ([link](#)) Heikkilä, M. (2023, December 1). *Making an image with generative AI uses as much energy as charging your phone*. MIT Technology Review.
- GPT-4 Can't Reason. ([link](#)) Arkoudas, K. (2023). *GPT-4 Can't Reason* (No. 2023080148). Preprints.
- AI was asked to create images of Black African docs treating white kids. How'd it go?. ([link](#)) Drahl, C. (2023, October 6). *AI was asked for images of Black African docs treating white kids. How'd it go?* NPR.
- "Jailbreaking" LLMs. ([link](#)) Zeng, Y., Lin, H., Zhang, J., Yang, D., Jia, R., & Shi, W. (n.d.). *How Johnny Can Persuade LLMs to Jailbreak Them: Rethinking Persuasion to Challenge AI Safety by Humanizing LLMs*. Persuasive Jailbreaker.

Week 3

Leadership Challenge: If you were in charge of an organization, would you implement an AI service for assessing job applicants’ resumes and/or interviews? Use the “Framework for Understanding Unintended Consequences of Machine Learning” to explain under what circumstances you would or would not implement such an AI system.

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Suresh, H., & Gutttag, J. (2019, January 28). *A Framework for Understanding Unintended Consequences of Machine Learning*. Cornell University. ([link](#))
 - Read the following sections: “Introduction,” “Machine Learning Overview,” “A Broad View,” and “Six Sources of Harm in ML
- Withers, R. (2023, May 22). *AI has infiltrated the hiring process — and it's making it miserable to find a new job?* Business Insider. ([link](#))

Optional Preparation:

- Schellmann, Hilke. “Finding It Hard to Get a New Job? Robot Recruiters Might Be to Blame.” *The Guardian*, 11 May 2022, ([link](#))
- Dastin, J. (2018, October 10). *Amazon scraps secret AI recruiting tool that showed bias against women*. *Reuters*. ([link](#))
- Consumer-goods giant Unilever has been hiring employees using brain games and artificial intelligence — and it's a huge success. Feloni, Richard (2017). *Business Insider*. ([link](#))
- Vincent, J. (2021, September 6). *Automated hiring software is mistakenly rejecting millions of viable job candidates*. *The Verge*. ([link](#))
- Sloane, M., Moss, E., & Chowdhury, R. (2021). *A Silicon Valley Love Triangle: Hiring Algorithms, Pseudo-Science, and the Quest for Auditability*. ([link](#))
- Wall, S. (2021, July 13). *We tested AI interview tools. Here's what we found*. MIT Technology Review. ([link](#))

Week 4

Leadership Challenge: Would you use an AI surveillance tool **to** monitor employee productivity? Use the Tetrad framework to explain under what circumstances you would or would not implement such an AI system.

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Adam, I., 2016. What Would McLuhan Say about the Smartphone? Applying McLuhan's Tetrad to the Smartphone. *Glocality*, 2(1), p.3. ([link](#))
 - Skim the introduction and pay particular focus starting from section 2 (“The Tetrad Model”) onwards
- Douglas Heaven, W. (2020, June 4). *This startup is using AI to give workers a “productivity score.”* MIT Technology Review. ([link](#))
- Gurley, L. K. (2021, September 20). *Amazon's AI Cameras Are Punishing Drivers for Mistakes They Didn't Make*. *Vice*. ([link](#))

Optional Preparation:

- Geiger, G. (2021, March 1). *How a Discriminatory Algorithm Wrongly Accused Thousands of Families of Fraud*. *Vice*. ([link](#))
- Albergotti, R. (2021, August 12). *He predicted the dark side of the Internet 30 years ago. Why did no one listen?* *Washington Post*. ([link](#))

Week 5

Leadership Challenge: One of the most important challenges leaders face is predicting the impact AI and new technology will have on the economy. Use the “occupational” framework to predict the impact AI and new technology will have on the profession you are currently planning to pursue.

Required Pre-Class Reading:

- Rahman, Hatim A., Ece Kaynak, and Michelle T. Lee. 2025. “An Occupational Framework for Assessing the Impact of Modern Artificial Intelligence Technologies on Work.” *Working Paper*.

Discussion Questions:

- Use the search tool from this reading: Frank, M. R., Cebrian, M., Youn, H., Sun, L., & Rahwan, I. (2019, May 11). *How Will Automation Affect Different U.S. Cities?* Kellogg Insight. ([link](#)) to find your job title (or another job title you are familiar with). What is the automation risk score for the job title?
- Use the Occupational framework to discuss why the automation risk is too inflated, deflated, or justified.

Optional Preparation:

- Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation Autor, David H. (2015). *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 3-30. ([link](#))
- Manjoo, F. (2022, October 7). Opinion | In the Battle With Robots, Human Workers Are Winning. *The New York Times*. ([link](#))
- Yes, robots will steal our jobs, but don't worry, we'll get new ones Jones, Michael (2016). *The Conversation US, Inc.* ([link](#))
- Can Robots Be Lawyers? Computers, Lawyers, and the Practice of Law Remus, D. & Levy, F. S. (2016). ([link](#))
- Brown, S. (2019, October 31). *The lure of “so-so technology,” and how to avoid it.* MIT Sloan. ([link](#))
- Katya Klinova and Anton Korinek. 2021. AI and Shared Prosperity. In Proceedings of the 2021 AAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society (AIES) ([link](#))

Week 6

Leadership Challenge: If you were in charge of Tesla how would you develop and market its autonomous vehicle technology?

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Read “Elon Musk, Self-Driving, and the Dangers of Wishful Thinking” ([link](#))

Optional Preparation:

- Read Chapter 7 in “Artificial Unintelligence” Broussard, Meredith (2018). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. *Chapter will be available on Canvas.*
- Despite High Hopes, Self-Driving Cars Are ‘Way in the Future’. Boudette, Neal E. (2019). *The New York Times*, July 21, 2019, Section BU, 1. ([link](#))
- Shwartz, S. (2021, June 14). *Are Self-Driving Cars Really Safer Than Human Drivers?* The Gradient. ([link](#))
- Boudette, N. E. (2021, September 1). *Tesla Says Autopilot Makes Its Cars Safer. Crash Victims Say It Kills.* The New York Times. ([link](#))
- Ewing, J. (2021, July 15). *How Germany Hopes to Get the Edge in Driverless Technology.* The New York Times. ([link](#))

Week 7

Leadership Challenge: If you were in charge of Facebook, Twitter or a social media platform, would you use contractors to train AI models?

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Anatomy of an AI System. Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, *AINow Institute and Share Lab*, (September 7, 2018) ([link](#))
- A.I. Is Learning from Humans. Many Humans. Meta, Cade (2019) *The New York Times, Section BU, Page 1*. ([link](#))

Optional Preparation:

- The invisible labor that makes our technology run. Chen, Angela (2019). *Vox Media, Inc.* ([link](#))
- Dzieza, J. (2020, February 27). *How Hard Will the Robots Make Us Work?*. The Verge. ([link](#))

Week 8

Leadership Debates

- This class will be reserved for “debate” that will help recap the major themes and questions of the class. I will provide more information closer to the last class, but I will divide the class into groups. The broad guidelines for the debate, include:
 - Each side has 5 minutes to present their arguments
 - Then, each presenting team has 2 minutes rebuttal
 - Class votes on who “won” the debate for each topic

Week 9

Class Recap and Final Exam