

Course Syllabus for  
**Mgt. 503, ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES**  
Summer Session, 2008  
July 11-12, 18-19, and 25-26

“Knowledge does not lie within my head, but in conversations between people.”

-- Karl Weick

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**Overview and Course Content**

This course is designed to assist students in understanding organizational behavior and organizing processes by presenting knowledge and experiences from the organization sciences discipline. The purpose of the course is to increase individual effectiveness managing the day-to-day issues in the lives of managers and administrators. Individual, group, intergroup, organizational behavior, and their interaction with one another will provide the general course topics. Emphasis will be placed on helping students to be better prepared to face the realities of organizational life. Special attention will be given to developing practical managerial and organizational skills, understanding organizational processes, expanding self-awareness, developing group diagnostic skills, and increasing effective leader behaviors. These skills will be developed through class exercises and simulations, individual readings, case analysis, group exercises/projects, etc.

**Course Objectives**

The general objectives for this course are threefold. First, the class should help you in the mastery of course material so that you can competently discuss issues of organizational behavior. Second, the class will develop your skill in applying course concepts to organizations in which you are a member. And the third general objective of this course is to create a forum for personal introspection. Class activities will push you to examine your organizing and life assumptions that you seldom think about and that many of us are unaware. Course material may suggest new views that could be utilized to design organizations and how these different assumptions may create new organizational forms as well as very different experiences for members of these groups

**Course Activities**

We start with the assumption that the learning process is highly complex. Different

methods of learning work better for different people, and different methods are appropriate for the objectives set out above. The course will therefore involve a combination of the following methods: readings, lecture, case analyses, simulations, examinations, short writings, team presentations, etc.

It is also assumed that learning is not solely a one-way process; that is, from instructor to student. Individual comments, questions, discussions, and experiences should comprise a great deal of class time. Ultimately, responsibility for learning in this course rests with each individual. Individuals are encouraged to let their needs be known so that they can achieve conditions optimal to their learning.

## **Components of the Course**

### **Learning Teams**

The primary structure around which this course is designed is the team and team learning. All class participants will be assigned to a learning team. The team will be a semi-autonomous structure in which you will engage in many of the course requirements. Fellow team members will help you to master course material and concepts, work with you on in-class exercises, listen to your analyses and applications, provide support and feedback to you, etc. The majority of the learning from this course will be generated through discussions and exercises with your learning team. You will need to develop strong working relationships with your team members so that you can teach and learn from each other. There are two major tasks that your learning team will perform: (1) prepare and ready all team members for a mid-course examination; and (2) conduct an organizational excellence research project that your team will present to the class as well as provide a written report. More information on the organizational excellence exercise will be provided as we progress.

Three major class activities are designed to assist your learning: in class activities and exercises; course readings/learnings and examinations; reflected best-self exercise, and personal learnings paper; and team organizational excellence research.

### **In Class Activities and Exercises**

Class sessions will be designed more like workshops than traditional class lectures. A typical class will involve you and your team in an experiential exercise, ask you to reflect on that experience with your team, and then help you identify useful concepts and ideas related to organizational practice. A major emphasis of these sessions will be increasing your self-insight as well as your managerial/interpersonal skills. In particular, one managerial skill that will be emphasized in the course will be how to create an effective team. You will need to be actively engaged in class in order to learn from these classroom experiences.

### **Course Readings/Understandings and Examinations**

All participants are personally responsible for reading class assignments, understanding the material, and demonstrating their knowledge/understanding of course material via an

in-class mid- course examination and a final take home examination. The primary reading for the course will be the required Weisbord book; although from time to time there will be other class handouts and readings

The learning team will also play a central role in developing your understanding of course material. The mid-course exam is structured so that you will write the exam individually. An additional reward (grading) structure will also be added that reflects the knowledge that rests in your team. You will receive an individual grade on your examination, but, in addition, you will also receive a team grade (the average examination score for individuals in your team). This reward structure is intended to create a cooperative team learning environment where you are not only concerned about your individual performance, but also the performance of other team members. This reward structure encourages you and your team members to engage in activities that help your team perform at a high level. This structure simulates organizational designs that manage performance by creating a concern for both individual and team performance. To achieve the highest team score you will need to teach others, learn from them, and create the necessary cooperative team environment in which you and your team can excel.

The final take-home exam will be structured solely as an individual activity and will be due before grades are due.

### **Reflected Best-Self Exercise and Personal Learnings Paper**

All class participants will also engage in two research/writing activities of a personal nature:

Reflected Best-Self Exercise. Each individual will collect data on their best-self, analyze this information, write a reflected best-self portrait, and hand in a written report on these activities. The assignment is due our first weekend meeting. A handout is provided with further details.

Personal Learnings Paper: Each individual will write a concise paper documenting what they have learned about organizational behavior and themselves from participating in this course. In this paper you will also need to assess your skills as a productive team member. More specifics on this assignment will be given as the semester proceeds. This assignment will be due before grades are due.

### **Team Organizational Excellence Research**

As mentioned above, a project will involve your team in conducting research on organizational excellence. Your team will select an organization to study (from a list provided), research this company, assess and determine the basis and reason for its excellence, develop a rich case study that will be presented to the class and written up in a report, propose a detailed model of organizational excellence, and identify your

learnings. A more detailed handout on this project will be provided in the near future.

## **Evaluation and Grading**

### **Grading components (percentage)**

Mid-Course Individual Exam (10 percent)  
Mid-Course Team Exam (10 percent)  
Final Individual Exam (15 percent)  
Reflected Best-Self Report (5 percent)  
Personal Learnings Paper (10 percent)  
Team Organizational Excellence Report (50 percent)

Although individual contributions to class sessions will not formally be assigned a grade, the instructor reserves the right to raise or lower any participant's grade based on in-class attendance and participation.

### **Required Text**

Weisbord, M. R. (2004). Productive Workplaces Revisited: Dignity, Community, and Meaning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## **Some Thoughts on the Course**

The course is designed for those individuals who are or aspire to be members of formal organizations, especially those in managerial positions. The goal is to help you as a manager to more fully utilize the resources of any group or organization with which you are working.

This course will demand a fair amount of work from you! My expectations are very high. You will be challenged to discuss your beliefs and values in the context of organizational situations and to appreciate sufficient levels of complexity that are not easily understood with the limitations of ordinary human cognitive processes. You will lose points with me if you miss class or fail to actively engage in discussions. You will not lose points for contributing half-baked ideas, asking philosophical questions, or challenging teaching approaches.

The style of teaching in this course may be significantly different from what you've experienced in other courses. Much of my time will involve designing processes and structures in which this class can successfully accomplish learning objectives. I will provide the structure through a sequence of activities that will expose you and your classmates to particular organizational dynamics or intellectual inquiries. These activities include discussions, lectures, questions and answers, and exercises that place the lessons to be learned in context. As an instructor I have the responsibility for controlling the rate and degree of conceptual input through assigned readings, lectures, and interventions. In addition, it is my role to model leadership and, as a part of the learning process in the course, may (or may not) choose to share my thinking processes. I may lecture a little, but most of our time I will try to facilitate your learning the discover of new insights.

All students are expected to attend all class meetings and to come prepared to fully participate in the activities that have been scheduled. Preparation includes reading and writing assignments in advance with enough depth and concentration so you can develop

the background and concepts needed in order to contribute effectively. Since the medium of learning in this course is interaction, you are expected to participate actively in all events and to attempt to influence others as well as to allow yourself to be influenced. As a student you are expected to challenge the instructors as well as peers when there are differences of opinion, and to ask for clarification and explanation when necessary. Students are expected to recognize the resources in the class and to ask for help from those who can give it. If unavoidable absences occur, you are expected to take steps to see that activities planned for the date of the absence can be carried out as scheduled. This may require notification to the people concerned and affected, substitution by other persons, or other measures as appropriate.