

Management 238: Organizational Behavior, Fall 2019

Professor: Adam Grant
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Course Description and Objectives

Although skills in finance, accounting, marketing, operations, and strategy are crucial for achieving success at work, the ability to manage an organization, its groups, and its individuals is equally important. In your career, you will depend on people to accomplish tasks, goals, and projects; you will need to work *for* other people, work *with* other people, and *supervise* other people. An understanding of the human side of management is an essential complement to the technical skills you are learning in other courses.

Although we will focus primarily on work, you will find that the course concepts have applications to a variety of organizations, including non-profits, athletic teams, social clubs, and religious and political groups.

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts and topics in organizational behavior (OB) and management. The course focuses on OB at three levels: individual, interpersonal, and collective. We will cover decision-making, relationships, motivation, personality, influence, and groups.

The course is designed to accomplish three main goals:

- Increase your knowledge of OB concepts so that you can understand and analyze how organizations and the people within them work.
- Develop your leadership, management, and collaboration skills by providing you with opportunities to apply OB concepts to real-world problems.
- Build a diverse and inclusive learning community.

Instructional Methods

To meet these goals, 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 handed out in class throughout the semester. **It is important that you have completed 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:

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| • Book Club | (35 points—7%) | September 23 |
| • Best Self Exercise | (15 points—3%) | October 14 |
| • Diagnosis Paper | (125 points—25%) | October 28 |
| • Podcast | (100 points—20%) | November 18 |
| • Final Exam | (150 points—30%) | |
| • Class Participation | (75 points—15%) | |

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

Book Club (35 points—7%): To enrich your learning, the MBA mentors will host discussions of books based on OB and psychology research. You will choose one of the books below and submit a 2-page double-spaced commentary answering three questions: (1) What did you find most fascinating, and why? (2) Where do you disagree? (3) What insights will you apply to your life—and how?

- Decision-making: [Mistakes Were Made](#); [Superforecasting](#); [Thinking, Fast and Slow](#) (first half)
- Personality: [Give and Take](#); [Me, Myself, and Us](#); [Quiet](#)
- Leadership and change: [Lean In](#); [Originals](#); [The Culture Code](#)

Best Self Assignment (15 points—3%): You will complete the Reflected Best Self Exercise. Submit your portrait, explain what you discovered about your strengths, and meet with your MBA mentor group in class to discuss your insights.

Diagnosis Paper (125 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. The objective of the diagnosis paper is to give you some practice in looking at your life through an OB lens. For this assignment, you will reflect on an organizational problem that you experienced. I use the term “organizational” quite broadly; you can write about an experience at a summer job, on a sports team, a school work group, or any other situation in which you worked with other people for the purposes of completing a collective task. Once you have selected a work or organizational challenge from your past, you should 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 deal with the situation 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—20%): Pairing up with one classmate, you will have the chance to record a mini-podcast about a new idea in OB. The audio recording should include (1) a story or example, (2) a finding from OB or psychology 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 OB and psychology 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.*

The podcast should focus on a surprising or counterintuitive insight about behavior at work—advocate for an idea that goes against the grain of conventional wisdom, question a fad, or tell us something we would not have expected. You are welcome to challenge principles that we have covered in class, provided that you can back up your argument with evidence. You should interview at least one character or expert for your podcast, and the recording must be a maximum of 5 minutes in total. The podcast will be evaluated on the rigor of the evidence, the interestingness of the idea, the relevance of the story, the practicality of the recommendation, and how engaging the overall delivery is (which is about the emotion you evoke, not the technical skills you bring to production). Be bold: I applaud originality in content and delivery.

Final Exam (150 points—30%): The exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, covering material from class and the readings throughout the semester. For more on my grading philosophy, see my *New York Times* article on [why we should stop grading students on a curve](#).

Class Participation (75 points—15%): I believe that the best way to learn, especially about OB, 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 throughout the entire semester 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 are 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.
- *Be in class on time and come prepared.* If you’re not here, you can’t contribute to class discussion. Missing a day of class will mean having 15 points deducted from your participation grade—unless you are absent for a medical or religious reason, or for official university business. Please note: a job interview is not an acceptable reason to miss class. If you need to miss class for a predictable reason, please notify us at least 48 hours in advance so that we can make arrangements for any in-class exercises and so that you can obtain the materials distributed during the class from your MBA mentor. Of course, I realize that in some cases unforeseeable emergencies arise.
- *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 semester. 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.* This class is “unplugged.” 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: 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. 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.

Policy for Late Assignments

As in the business 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 month, 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 semester. 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.

Instructor Biosketch

Adam Grant is the Saul P. Steinberg Professor of Management and Professor of Psychology at Wharton. As an organizational psychologist, he studies how we can find motivation and meaning, and lead more generous, creative, and productive lives. He has been recognized as one of the world's 10 most influential management thinkers and *Fortune's* 40 under 40. He has been the top-rated MBA professor for seven straight years and has received the Excellence in Teaching Award for every course he has taught.

Adam is the author of four *New York Times* bestselling books: *Give and Take*, *Originals*, *Option B*, and *Power Moves*. They have sold over 2 million copies and been translated into 35 languages, and been praised by J.J. Abrams, Richard Branson, Bill and Melinda Gates, Malcolm Gladwell, and Malala Yousafzai. His TED talks have been viewed over 20 million times, and he hosts the chart-topping TED podcast WorkLife. His speaking and consulting clients include Google, the NBA, the Gates Foundation, Bridgewater, McKinsey, Goldman Sachs, and the World Economic Forum, where he has been honored as a Young Global Leader. He has received awards for scientific contributions from the American Psychological Association, the Academy of Management, and the National Science Foundation.

Adam serves on the Department of Defense Innovation Board, writes on work and psychology for the *New York Times*, and features new insights in his monthly newsletter, GRANTED. At Penn, he is the founder and host of the Authors@Wharton series and co-director of Wharton People Analytics. He received his B.A. from Harvard University and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He is a former junior Olympic springboard diver and magician. As the proud father of two daughters and a son, he tried—and failed—to convince his wife to name them after Superman characters.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
September 16	Decision-Making I: Rationality	Read: (1) Evidence-based management
September 23	Decision-Making II: Heuristics & Biases	Due: Book commentary Read: (2) Carter racing, (3) Hidden traps in decision-making
September 30	Relationships I: Giving & Taking	Read: <i>Give and Take</i> chapters 1 and 2 (to be distributed)
October 7	Relationships II: Emotional Intelligence Guest Speaker: Angela Duckworth	Read: (4) The emotionally intelligent manager
October 14	Motivation I: Feedback Guest Speaker: Annie Duke	Due: Best Self assignment Read: (5) How to play to your strengths Listen: WorkLife, How to love criticism: Apple Other devices
October 21	Motivation II: Values and Goals	Read: (6) Hausser Foods, (7) Goal-setting at GE & Goldman Sachs Watch: http://vimeo.com/13677854
October 28	Personality I: The Big Five	Due: Diagnosis Paper Print your Big Five personality scores: www.outofservice.com/bigfive/
November 4	Personality II: Selection & Hiring	Bring your resume to class Read: (8) The adaptable leader

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
November 11	Influence I: Social Capital	Read: (9) Donna Dubinsky, (10) Heidi Roizen
November 18	Influence II: Persuasion and Voice	Due: Podcast Read: (11) Harnessing the science of persuasion, (12) How to pitch a brilliant idea, <i>Originals</i> chapters 3 and 5 (to be distributed)
November 25	Groups I: Teams and Organizational Culture	Read: (13) Sports teams and (14) Leading by leveraging culture Listen: WorkLife, The Creative Power of Misfits: Apple Other devices
December 2	Groups II: Leading Change	Read: GlobalTech
December 9	Wrap-Up and Reflection	
December 17	Final Exam	To be confirmed

Supplemental sessions will be arranged with me and the MBA mentors.