LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Class meetings:  
Office hours: I’m at Stern all the time, feel free to contact me to make an appointment that is convenient for you

Office: Tisch 7-18 (Mailbox: Tisch, 7th floor) 
Teaching Asst:

Note: We will utilize NYU Classes site. All lecture slides will be posted, as will additional course materials. We will also use it for important communication.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help you develop skills to effectively analyze and navigate your current and future organizational lives. It is based on the premise that, regardless of your position within an organization, leadership opportunities and challenges present themselves every day and that it is to your advantage to recognize and make the most of these opportunities. It is also based on the premise that effective leadership requires an in-depth understanding of how organizations work, and an in-depth understanding of how to work with and through other people.

Given these goals and premises, the key issues we will tackle in this course include:

1. What is leadership and how do effective leaders influence, motivate, build, and create change?
2. How can you more effectively analyze and diagnose your team(s) and your organization…and strategize accordingly?
3. In what ways are you a leader, and what are the key obstacles to you being a leader?

These issues cannot be wholly separated from one other, and for any given day or topic we will address at least one, if not all, of these issues.

By the end of the course, I hope that you will be more knowledgeable about how organizations work (or don’t work), be more conscious of your leadership-related choices and actions, and better appreciate the consequences prompted by those choices and actions. Achieving these learning goals will enhance your effectiveness as well as your long-term career success.

READINGS & MATERIALS

1) Course syllabus.
2) Course reading packet. Most readings and cases are available in digital format through the Harvard Business School Publishing website. Further information will be sent to all students.
3) Additional readings, cases and exercises. Will be available online or distributed in class.
GRADING

Your grade will consist of 4 components:

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual case analyses</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Contribution to learning environment</td>
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<td>Final assignment</td>
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For each class session, you will read and analyze a case (or two) before coming to class, and we will then discuss the case(s) together. These cases, and the readings that accompany the case each week, are the critical foundation for our discussion and for your learning.

What you can infer from this is that, from my point of view, your primary task in this class is to keep up with the cases and the readings. This doesn’t mean skimming them for highlights just prior to class, but rather reading them deeply and letting them simmer in your minds. I hope that this will prompt a spirited conversation in class, in which we dissect, extend, and challenge the ideas raised in the cases and readings.

**NOTE:** Since cases are discussed in class, late papers CANNOT be accepted!!! No exceptions.

**Project (30%)**

The goal of the project is for you to apply material from the course to help understand an actual organization. This may be an organization that is new to you or one that you are familiar with. In either case, the project is intended to give you practice in using the new “lens” for analyzing and understanding organizations that you will develop in this class. That is, my hope is that the project will give you important practice in putting course concepts into action, i.e., taking the knowledge that you develop in the class and doing something actionable with it.

You will complete the group project in groups.

The gist of the assignment is for you and your team to go out and get a “read” of a real organization, and then to analyze what you learn about the organization using course concepts. The focus of the project is purposely broad: what you choose to focus on will depend somewhat on what you find once you start learning more about the organization. That said, in the planning stages you should target a few key issues that are of interest to you and which seem like they might be promising, given any prior insights you might have about the organization.

To complete this assignment, you need to conduct interviews with several members of a given organization. Your goal is to probe about course-relevant topics in a manner that is accessible and understandable to non-MBAs and to use what you learn to analyze the organization.

There are several steps to doing this assignment.

1 – Decide on your organization and who within the organization you will use a resource for gaining insight about the organization. You will interview **at least 3** people, though more is better. Tap into your network or expand your network. Of course, they have to agree to participate; you are asking them for an interview of 45-60 minutes in length in which the focal topic will be their experience in their organization. Try to choose people who you believe will be candid and insightful. If you are having trouble coming up with an organization, please come see me and we can figure it out. By the way, you are welcome to use an alias for your organization and interviewees in the written work, though I may ask you to verbally disclose the identity to me directly. I strongly
recommend that you and your group start this step early, with the goal of securing agreement from at least some interviewees (who may offer you more names at the end of the interview) BEFORE XXX.

2 - Develop an interview guide that is customized to the individuals you will be interviewing. Your goal is to get an understanding of some key issues in this organization, issues that can be better understood via application of concepts from our course. Integrate the full range of key concepts from this course and use all possible sources of information about the organization to be well prepared in advance. When you ask questions, you should NOT use the vocabulary of this course, but speak in plain English. So, in other words, a bad interview question would be “Tell me about a time when you felt a lack of alignment in your organization?”; a better question would be “Tell me about a time when you felt that the culture of your organization was not supporting your strategy”. Some sample questions will be posted on BB to help get you started. You will be including your interview guide in your paper as an appendix. You will want to hone in on topics of particular relevance to the organization and context that you select.

3 - Conduct your interviews. Do not worry if you do not ask everything on your interview guide. In fact, you should develop a guide that is “too long” as some questions will typically end up being dead ends. When you conduct your interview, strive to create psychological safety between you and the interviewee so that they might speak freely about their organization. In an ideal world, your interviewee would emerge from the interview with learnings from the reflective process as well (you may want to ask them to articulate these interview-based learnings at the end of your interview). You are welcome to set these up as one on one interviews, or to have your whole team attend each interview; at your discretion. Each interviewee should be interviewed separately though, do not interview >1 person at a time.

4 – Meet as a group to discuss your interview learnings. What have you learned? What (in)consistencies do you see between the people you interviewed? What might underlie any inconsistencies? What would you recommend? Here, your goal is to explicitly tie your interviews to the concepts of this course and you should use the vocabulary of this course. Simply summarizing what the interviewees told you in a “play-by-play” format is NOT the goal. Rather, you want to answer questions like “why is problem X occurring in this organization?”, “what recommendations can be made for this organization”, “what ramifications are there from action Y that the organization took last year?”, and “what did we learn from our research on this organization—and these individuals—that is good advice for me and my classmates”. Be sure to explain things rather than merely describe them. Analysis is the goal. Where appropriate, outside research can be conducted to shed additional light on the organization and the information you learn in your interviews.

5 – Write your final report, which is due no later than XXX.

A comment on working in teams

A problem that is sometimes associated with group projects is a team member who does not do his/her share of the job. Everyone is expected to carry an equal share of the teamwork load. I will not supervise the process any more closely than would most managers in similar circumstances. Rather, you are expected to manage each other and the team. Keep in mind that groups often ignore problems wishing that they will go away. Most often they don’t; rather they get worse. Try to set up clear processes regarding how the team cases will get done and address problems head-on before they escalate. You should try to resolve problems within the group, but if you can’t, let me know and I will do my best to help. If I am convinced that someone has not carried a fair share of work, I will reduce that person’s team grade as far as I assess is warranted, down to 0, or even negative points.

**Final projects should be approximately 8-10 pages, not including any appendices. Please submit a hard copy and duplicate via NYU Classes.

I am available to discuss these projects with you at any point. Do not hesitate to contact me with questions, particularly as you are starting out and wondering if you are headed down the right path.

**Individual case analysis (2 @ 15% each = 30% total)**
You are expected to read ALL cases that are listed on the syllabus; the cases are an integral part of our learning and it is essential that everyone read all of the cases prior to class. PRIOR to reading a case, please review the case discussion questions that are posted to NYU Classes. They are designed to orient your reading towards the critical aspects of the case.

For two cases you will write up an individual case analysis. I will not be reminding you to fulfill this requirement—you will receive a 0 for each assignment less than 2 that you submit. So please be sure to submit two cases.

Individual case analyses should be approximately 3-4 pages. These analyses should focus on addressing the case preparation questions for the respective case. Individual case analyses should NOT involve any outside research. Given that these are somewhat short papers, you can choose to emphasize just a subset of the case preparation questions for your analysis.

I will evaluate the team case analyses based on the quality of the analysis and application of course concepts (60%), the quality and justification of the recommendations (30% of the grade), and the quality of writing and presentation (10% of the grade; though more in the case of a serious problem in this area). Be sure to carefully read the “Guide to Case Analysis” in this syllabus. Assignments will be evaluated based on how well the case preparation questions have been addressed (these questions are posted to NYU Classes). This includes evaluating how well you have used course material (i.e., the readings & prior lectures) to support your arguments. Keep in mind, however, that your analysis should be an integrated report, not a sequential set of answers to the questions. Also, make sure that the recommendations you provide at the end follow clearly from your analysis. If you have questions about how to approach the case analysis, feel free to contact me.

**Contribution to learning environment (10%)**

Learning in this course is a collaborative enterprise. You will not only learn from the readings, cases, and me (hopefully!), but it is expected that you will also learn from one another. This will occur through our in-class discussions and exercises. As a result, a component of your grade is tied to the contribution you make to our overall learning environment.

Participation in class discussion is certainly one key component of our learning environment, since this is an essential part of our shared pedagogical experience. The quality of your participation is more important than the quantity. Given our limited amount of time together, talking without positively contributing to the discussion is not helpful. However, I want to stress that positive contributions are not necessarily “right” answers. I encourage you to experiment and take risks. “Wrong” answers can also be instructive, and debate is often a good way to learn. Positive contributions are those that advance the discussion by presenting new ideas or insights, or by building on others’ comments, or by presenting a counterpoint to others’ comments in a respectful way.

In class, you must pay attention to what others say. A good case discussion is a guided conversation, and responding to a classmate’s comment enhances the conversation. Repeating what others say, or weighing in on a topic we have already left, is not productive and shows that you are not following the discussion.

All that said, your contribution to our learning environment is more than just your participation in class discussion. Your active engagement in the various exercises we will conduct in class, helping one another with the course material, making suggestions about the course, etc. are all also critical aspects of your contribution to the learning environment. Two final critical elements of your contribution to the learning environment are a) your attendance, since you cannot contribute if you are not present, b) your behavior during class. With regard to the latter, anything that has potential to distract your classmates and/or me (e.g. technology, arriving late, private conversations during class) or that I view as unprofessional can impact your contribution to the learning community, as far down to zero or negative points (please read that again: if your behavior is egregiously
disrespectful or harmful to the learning environment, I reserve the right to give you negative points for this component of your grade). You should know that I am particularly distracted by students focused on their laptops, phones, ipads, etc. during class…and these are distracting not only to me but also to other students. The same is true for private conversations among students during class time.

NOTE: Some people are uncomfortable with presenting viewpoints in a large group setting. However, contributing to discussions is an important part of your development as a manager and as an MBA student. I will cold call IF I feel there is an imbalance in participation developing in our course. If you are unprepared for class on a given day, please let me know in advance, and I will not call on you. If there is anything that may interfere with your ability to contribute on an ongoing basis, let’s discuss it sooner rather than later. I am happy to work with you off-line to develop a strategy for deepening your comfort and performance in class participation.

**Final assignment (30%)**

More information about the final assignment will be provided during the semester.

**A final comment on grades…**

It is fully understandable that students are concerned about their grades, but I also often see students letting their grades get in the way of their learning. Don’t make this mistake. Five years from now, I’m certain you will not remember the grade you received in this class. I do think, however, that you will recall and/or have benefitted from at least a few of the insights you have gleaned from the course material. So, please focus on your learning, not on your grades.

In terms of grading itself…please know that I take the responsibility that I have to provide each and every study with a fair, accurate, and unbiased evaluation of their work very seriously. If at any point you have questions or concerns about your grades, please feel free to approach me. Before doing so, however, do ask yourself whether you are approaching me because you are disappointed or because you feel your work has not been evaluated fairly. While I am sympathetic to your disappointment, it obviously does not have an appropriate place in my consideration of your grade.

**EXPECTATIONS & STERN HONOR CODE**

Out of respect to everyone, class will start on time, so please be punctual for the start of class. We will do our best to ensure that your breaks occur at the designated time, but on some dates our class discussion may require some modification to the timing.

Regarding attendance…I don’t “take attendance” in this class. I recognize and respect that Langone students lead complicated lives, and that you have many work and school obligations. Thus my assumption (and hope!) is that you will make every effort to come to class and moreover to actively contribute to our learning environment, but circumstances may prevent you from making it to every single class session. If you do a miss class session, please try to speak to a classmate about the material we covered and please feel free to call on me if there is anything that is unclear or that you would like to discuss from the session. Of course, repeated absences will make it difficult to contribute to our class environment, which is a part of your course grade.

Regarding norms for our classroom…please be respectful of your classmates and of me. If you have to step in or out of the room during class, please do so discreetly. Please don’t speak to your neighbor during class. **PLEASE REFRAIN** from the use of laptops, cell phones, blackberries, & other electronic devices during class unless you have consulted with me about their use. These technologies tend to have a disruptive effect on your attention and on the attention of those around you. This in turn is disruptive to my attention. A quick glance at a text message is understandable, prolonged attention to your electronic device is less so. If it is important to you to use your laptop to take notes—and if you have the willpower to only use the laptop for note taking—then please
speak with me. I will approve it, though I may ask that you sit in the back row so others are not distracted by the note taking that appears on your screen.

I take Stern’s honor code very seriously, and expect that you will too. Here are some important ways in which the honor code applies to this course (but not the only ways!):

- Team-based work must reflect only the inputs of the group members (i.e., you cannot obtain input from anyone who is not a member of your group).
- Do not view anyone else’s analysis for the cases prior to writing your own, or discuss cases with students who have already analyzed the case in class (e.g. in a prior section of the class).
- The final exam must reflect only your own work. Any attempt to represent the work of others as your own will be considered an honor code violation.

Please see me if you are uncertain about what represents an honor code violation.

Honor Code violations will be dealt with very seriously.

If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation during this course, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD, 998-4980) and provide me with a letter from them verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend.
Many students find case analysis to be difficult due to the relative lack of structure of most management problems. No correctly answered list of questions or mechanical process will lead to the “right” answer. In fact, there is no “right” solution to most managerial problems. When analyzing a case, remember that there are many possible approaches and solutions. The goal is not to figure out “the answer” but to sharpen your analytic, problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership skills. The following steps outline the basic approach that you should follow when analyzing a case, whether for class discussion or in preparation for a written analysis.

First, read the assigned reading material and review the relevant documents if any have been posted. The material in the reading and accompanying documents will likely play some role in your analysis of the case. Remember that case analysis in this course is cumulative. Thus material from earlier classes may be relevant and should be applied even if it means using concepts that were not discussed for several weeks.

Second, read the case and the assignment questions on the syllabus. Take notes about the important issues that the case raises and the text material that seems to apply. The questions provided should be considered a guide to issues that you must consider but you will need to go beyond merely answering the questions.

Third, analyze the case. You should be able to identify outcomes in the case and/or issues that the organization faces. These outcomes may be bad (e.g., shrinking market share, hostile employees, conflict among departments, inability to control operations), or they may be good. There may be numerous problems and issues. The goal of analysis is to explain the underlying mechanisms that are producing the outcomes or problems that you see in the situation. This process will require you to distinguish between symptoms and causal mechanisms. Consider the following example: You go to the doctor with the “problem” of a cough or a fever. It may be easy for the physician to treat the cough or fever with a number of medicines much like we could treat worker dissatisfaction by paying higher wages. However, it is important for the physician to determine the causes of the problem. If the cause of the cough is tuberculosis then only treating the cough is apt to lead to serious long-run consequences because the underlying disease process will still be at work. Clearly the cough is just a symptom of a deeper underlying problem, the disease of tuberculosis. Good analysis cleverly weaves symptoms into a causal map that gets to the underlying root of the situation. What I look for in the case analysis is the cogency of your explanation of the process leading to the symptoms. At the outset you are likely to struggle with this. It is a difficult and time-consuming process to develop clinical skills.

Remember that specific cases are assigned because they present good opportunities to practice using frameworks we will be developing in the course. Therefore, you know in every instance that some theory in the assigned chapter and possibly other theories from earlier chapters must be applicable to the case. You will likely find the frameworks and ideas we examine in the course to be helpful in supporting your analysis. You should view the theories as a way to explain the underlying causal mechanisms contributing to the outcomes in the case, and as a way to organize and justify your arguments. Avoid the tendency to throw in course terminology merely as “buzzwords.” If it does not advance your analysis, don’t use the ideas.

Recognize that some cases do not have problems as such. The organization may be doing quite well. Cases are situations, not necessarily examples of bad or even good management. Don’t make up problems when none exist. Take the situation for what it is rather than approaching it with a point of view. Be alert for the danger that some information in some cases is coming from biased participants and therefore must be taken with a grain of salt.

A characteristic of cases is that you never have all the information that you want and there is often considerable information that is irrelevant, trivial or even obfuscating. The absence of essential information may force you to make one or more assumptions. Assumptions should always be clearly labeled and explicitly state as such, they must be necessary and they must be realistic.
Assume that I have read the case and that I am aware of all the facts. If the assignment is a written analysis (as with the group analysis or final exam), do not describe events in your written analysis. This is merely a waste of space. Rather, you should use material in the case to support your analysis or to provide examples to back up your arguments. Remember, your objective is to explain, not describe or report.

At the conclusion of each case analysis, you will need to offer recommendations or an action plan, or a recommendation for how the situation could have been better handled. The action plan part of the analysis is often where students falter the most. My sense, over the years, is that students spend most of their time analyzing the situation, but then give limited space to their plan of action. Remember that analysis is meaningless if it cannot be translated into a plan of action. This view has two implications. First, you should give as much time to developing an action plan as you do to developing your analysis. Second, the action plan should flow directly from the analysis. In other words, every issue you discuss in terms of implementing an action plan should flow directly from your analysis of the problems the organization is facing. This last point is very important: it makes no sense to analyze and diagnose a problem and then make a set of recommendations that do not relate directly to that analysis. Also keep in mind that recommendations typically have both positive and negative consequences. For example, a solution may eventually work but be very costly, difficult to implement and take a long time to have a significant impact. You should develop the recommendation that has maximum positive impact and minimum negative consequences. Recommendations should logically follow from the analysis and they should be feasible. For example, firing the boss and replacing her/him with a better manager may be a good “theoretic” solution but it may not be feasible in a given set of circumstances. Recommendations must be effective and efficient. Killing a fly with a bomb is effective but not efficient.

Finally, if you are working on a written analysis, make sure that your paper is well-written, clearly organized, and has a logical flow. It usually helps to provide a brief summary statement and “roadmap” at the beginning of the analysis to orient and guide the reader. Also make sure that any recommendations you provide follow directly from your analysis of the problem, and that your overall conclusions are consistent with your analysis.

PARTICIPATING IN CASE DISCUSSIONS
1) Keep in mind that there is usually more than one right answer. A case is a problem-solving situation, and managerial effectiveness often depends upon seeing different solutions.
2) Offer your ideas, substantiating them with facts from the case and course material.
3) Adopt an open-minded stance, entertain new ideas from others and consider how your recommendations might change in light of these new insights.
4) Listen to your classmates and build on what they have to say. Resist the impulse to focus so strongly on what you want to say next that you lose track of where the discussion has moved.
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<th>CASE/EXERCISE</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Mt. Everest</td>
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<td>• What leaders really do</td>
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<td>• Managerial problem-solving: A congruence approach</td>
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<td>• Note on org structure</td>
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<td>laptops!)*</td>
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<td>Duane Morris</td>
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<td>• What is an organization’s culture?</td>
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<td>• Leading by leveraging culture <em>(optional)</em></td>
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<td>Teams</td>
<td>Leslie Brinkman</td>
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<td>• Leading teams note</td>
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<td>PB Technologies *(in class)</td>
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<td>• Let’s hear it for B-players <em>(optional)</em></td>
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<td>• Do financial incentives drive company performance?</td>
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<td>Zero-wage increase</td>
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<td>• Employee motivation: A powerful new model <em>(optional)</em></td>
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<td>Ethical decision</td>
<td>Martha McCaskey</td>
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<td>• Blind spots</td>
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<td>Change</td>
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<td>• Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail</td>
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<td>• Heath video <em>(link will be posted on NYU Classes)</em></td>
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<td>Power &amp; Politics</td>
<td>Caroline Regis</td>
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<td>• Power play</td>
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<td>Thomas Green</td>
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<td>• Don’t forget your boss</td>
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<td>• Complete on-line survey <em>(on NYU Classes)</em></td>
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<td>Rob Parsons&lt;br&gt;Feedback exercise <em>(in class)</em></td>
<td>• Set up to fail syndrome&lt;br&gt;• Feedback reading <em>(TBD—will be distributed)</em></td>
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<td>Career management</td>
<td>Carla Ann Harris</td>
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<td>Integration &amp; Wrap-up</td>
<td>Erik Peterson at Biometra&lt;br&gt;Joe White <em>(in class)</em></td>
<td>• How resilience works&lt;br&gt;• TED.com video: Dan Gilbert <em>(Why are we happy?)</em></td>
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