

New York University
Leonard N. Stern School of Business
Department of Management & Organizations
Syllabus
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Becoming You: Crafting the Authentic Life You Want and Need

MGMT-GB.2107 — Spring 2024

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Course Description and Objectives

“**Becoming You: Crafting the Authentic Life You Want and Need**” provides a transformational methodology that guides students through the profound, exhilarating, and sometimes surprising journey of discovery to their authentic purpose, a career rich with meaning. In short, “Becoming You” is designed to help students uncover the best, most thoughtful answer to the often elusive question, “What should I do with my life?”

The methodology at the center of “Becoming You” grows out of the premise that the most fulfilling (and thus, happiest) lives are those lived in one’s “**Area of Transcendence**,” the intersection of our our deepest and most authentic values, our most unique skills and aptitudes, and the economy’s most rewarding and personally interesting spheres of opportunity.

It might be said that Becoming You process lands us at a place where we are doing what we *want* to be doing, what we *should* be doing, and what the world *needs* us to be doing.

Just that!

Through lectures, readings, exercises, activities, videos, workshops, and assessment tests, “Becoming You” is an intense journey that takes many students from a place of *order*, through the *disorder* of self-searching and reflection, and finally, to *reorder* again. That is to say, for some, “Becoming You” impels total reinvention. For others, it is a journey that is less about reinvention – and more about career tweaking or *confirmation*. It is not unusual, for instance, for a student to discover, over the course of the class, that they are headed in exactly the right direction. Still others change their career plans just enough to make them sigh with relief, “Now that feels more like me.”

Broadly speaking, the class is broken into three parts.

- First, students first work to identify their specific, granular, personal **values**. (Weeks 1 and 2).

Whether you're young or old, the world often crowds in, offering opinions on what we should value and how we should live our lives. Parents, teachers, friends, celebrities, and politicians – they all tend to be in the business of suggesting what we should and shouldn't care about, not to mention how we should and shouldn't live, work, and feel. Some of such advice is important and meaningful; it's a fit for our authentic selves. But sometimes we absorb the values of those around us almost automatically, until that day, sometimes years into our careers, we look up and ask, "Wait, how did I get here? Whose life was I living?" The few two weeks of "Becoming You" are designed to make sure you set out from business school living in accordance with your own true values. Reaching this objective entails a thorough exploration of our beliefs and desires around lifestyle and workstyle, family and relationships, happiness and success. To be clear, our goal with this survey of personal values is not just to assess how much work-life balance you seek – although we will go there – but also to pinpoint what we will call your "Unedited Dream of a Life." We will come clean with ourselves about some topics that can sometimes be quite hard to talk about aloud: How much money, for instance, we really want to make, and how much we do or don't want children. On the premise that too many career decisions are made based on unarticulated or otherwise sublimated values, we will leave no stone left unturned, surfacing our values around exercise, faith, food, entertainment, service, hobbies, and even our pets.

- Next, in Week 3, the class delves into **opportunity**. (The class does not move immediately onto aptitudes, as might feel intuitive, in order to accommodate a multi week aptitude assessment test. Just FYI)

In the class movie "The Graduate," the protagonist returns home from college after graduation, lost about his future, only to be set upon by a friend of the family, a corporate big with an urgent message. "Plastics," he tells him repeatedly, "That's the future." The year was 1961, and the advice was indeed prescient, although the scene was played for laughs. In this section of Becoming You, we go in search of our era's "Plastics" admonishment, not just in terms of industries, but sectors, countries, and job functions.

More specifically, we explore:

- 1) Technological, demographic, geopolitical, and sociodemographic megatrends of note.
- 2) Industries "hiding in plain sight."
- 3) The feasibility of jobs and careers we've edited out of our thinking.
- 4) Job skills and functions that are in growing demand.

This class often includes guest speakers, depending on availability.

In addition, an hour of this class is devoted to a survey of the four skills every business person will need to thrive in the future, no matter the specifics of sector, industry, or function.

- In its third section, *Becoming You* explores each student’s unique skills, competencies, and personality traits – which we lump together and call **aptitudes**. (Weeks 4 and 5).

Just by dint of being at Stern, we can assume that the students in “*Becoming You*” are pretty good at most everything: problem-solving, collaboration, communicating, decision-making. But sometimes such high-level general competence stands in the way of us understanding what we are *truly, uniquely* good at – our “competitive advantage” so to speak. This phenomenon explains why so many careers seem accidental in hindsight – you’re moved to a role in, say, operations, because you’re capable at logistics, and so your career progresses up the operations ladder. It looks like success from the outside, except that sometimes, years later, you come to understand that your greatest (and most valuable) competency is actually persuasion in pressure situations, or, say, leading through change. Had you known what really made your brain special, what other opportunities might have you pursued? Might they have led to work that felt more fulfilling and had more impact?

The final two weeks of “*Becoming You*” will deploy a variety of tools to identify our “good-enough,” “solidly good,” and “uniquely good” skills and competencies. Some of this process will be a matter of guided self-reflection and analysis, but we will also take three tests that identify both our hard (cognitive) skills, and our soft (emotional and social) skills, including an assessment of the many vectors of emotional intelligence. Each student will also partake in a 360 Feedback Evaluation to identify our defining personality traits and to pinpoint how we see ourselves – and, as importantly, how that compares to how the world experiences us..

Part of understanding what you are very good at is coming to terms with what you are not. Thus, another goal of the final two weeks of “*Becoming You*” will be to identify not just your “superpower(s)” but your “restricting weakness,” the skills deficit(s) that may, at some point, keep you from the life and career you desire.

- In its sixth and final session, *Becoming You* students synthesize the data and learnings gathered over the class to create their personal “Area of Transcendence,” and to imagine (and plot) the journey to reach it, now and as the future unfolds.

Overall, the primary learning objectives of the course are to:

1. **Identify personal values:** Students will learn to articulate and prioritize their personal values through a series of exercises and workshops.
2. **Identify individual aptitudes:** The course aims to help students understand their strengths, competencies, and traits, leading to a clear grasp of what they are uniquely “good” at.
3. **Identify areas of economic opportunity:** Students will gain insights into major megatrends and explore emerging opportunities in different industries and job functions.

4. **Identify their Area of Transcendence:** Through group and individual activities, students will learn how to synthesize the data gathered over the course of the semester in order to identify their "Area of Transcendence."
5. **Chart the first draft of their life narrative:** With our AOT in hand, what does the journey head look like? Students will be asked to tell that story as part of their "Becoming You" Capstone Project.

Class Structure

Each class includes a lecture, discussion, videos, exercises, and occasionally, guests. There is one 10-minute break per session.

Course Materials

Students will be required to take three online assessments as part of the Becoming You curriculum. There is a fee (~\$200) associated with the aforementioned assessments. The cost of these course materials will appear as a fee on your NYU Bursar account after the last day to drop the course with a 100% refund.

Course Conduct

Occasionally, students have a misconception about "Becoming You," that the material is somehow kinder and gentler and/or more touchy-feely than other classes, and inasmuch, it is somewhat "woo woo."

While "Becoming You" is probably kinder and gentler and more touchy-feely than, say, corporate finance – and all props to corporate finance! – it is decidedly not woo-woo.

Attendance is required. There are only six classes. Missing one for a family or health emergency can happen, but the emergency needs to be real, and the TA and I must be contacted beforehand, and you can be sure a make-up assignment you don't like very much will be organized. Over-sleeping because of a "late night" is not a health emergency, incidentally. It is how life and business school go. Needing to miss a class because your grandmother is sick will require you to provide a note from your grandmother; I'm sorry, it's just that so many grandmothers seem to get sick right before or after the holiday. I cannot believe I have to write this! Also, I love you!

To continue in this draconian manner:

Showing up late is not OK. If you arrive from 1-10 minutes late, it will be reflected in your grade. If you are more than ten minutes late, you will be marked absent. Sorry not sorry; I am always on time, and your future boss will be too.

Coming into class on time or late with your lunch and dinner and eating during class is also 100% not OK. That's what break is for. If you want to bring in coffee, make sure you bring one for everyone, especially me. I drink it iced, with two Splenda.

Homework is required. I repeat, homework is required. That goes for reading assignments, video assignments, and writing assignments. There are no exceptions, and putting "N/A" in Brightspace as a

homework answer is not acceptable.

Like most classes at Stern, “Becoming You” is a phone and laptop-free zone, unless instructed for specific class exercises. Please don’t ask if you can take notes on your computer. I tried that a few times, and what you get is a class full of people...on their computers. This is not the environment conducive to the “Becoming You” experience.

Finally, “Becoming You” has a list of less traditional requirements, and they include: honesty, respect, authenticity, and vulnerability in the classroom. This class can only succeed if we, as a group, are able to talk about our true experiences, dreams, fears, and hopes. We need to learn from each other – to challenge productively and to support each other.. Students must come to class not just prepared to speak and listen, but to share and hear. OK with that? (I know you are.)

Grading and Assignments

Again, with grading, there is nothing touchy-feely about “Becoming You.” Students will be graded as per other Stern classes. I realize much of the content of the writing assignments and the Capstone in “Becoming You” are personal in nature. But I don’t care about the *content* of your “Area of Transcendence,” per se. You can decide to be an investment banker or a zookeeper. You can want to be the president of Bolivia or a bartender. “Becoming You” is a judgment free zone like that. I care about the *process* you used to arrive at your thinking, how well you have absorbed and synthesized our learnings, the energy and rigor you have put into all of your work, and about the intensity and sincerity by which you show up in class for discussions and activities.

Homework: 25%

All homework assignments will be graded on a scale from 0 (not submitted) to 3 (excellent.) In general, these assignments are graded by the TA based on a rubric prepared by the professor (moi.)

I occasionally spot check homework assignments for students who are doing particularly well or poorly in class. If you need or want me to look at homework assignments for any particular reason, please let me know by email.

Class Contribution: 20%

This part of your grade reflects the quality and quantity of your comments in class, and (importantly) the quality of your participation in our many class exercises and activities. I realize that there are not a lot of class sessions and there are too many students to allow for making a comment in every class. That is why the energy, commitment, and sincerity you put into class activities is also being graded here.

The scale again is 0 (no contribution) to 3 (excellent contribution.)

I realize that many students are doing deep internal work during “Becoming You” and sometimes want to “check out” of class in order to reflect. If this is your situation, please alert me. Otherwise, I will

assume you have checked out.

YouScience Engagement: 5%

It is very hard to do a good “Area of Transcendence” analysis without completing your YouScience assessment on time. This part of your grade reflects doing exactly that, as scheduled, **and without reminders and prodding. You will not receive full credit for this portion of your grade if your YouScience report is late or if you were issued a reminder.**

Enneagram 5%

Similarly, it is very hard to do a good “Area of Transcendence” analysis without completing your Enneagram on time. This part of your grade reflects doing exactly that, as scheduled, **and without reminders and prodding. You will not receive full credit for this portion of your grade if your Enneagram report is late or if you were issued a reminder.**

360 Evaluation Engagement: 15%

Here we go one last time. One of the lynch pins of “Becoming You” is a multi-week exercise which culminates in a report on each student’s strengths and areas for growth. This “360 Evaluation” requires students to source raters and conduct a self-assessment. The instructions for everything you have to do are clear and timely. **Thus, you will not receive full credit for doing your 360 unless it is completed without extension and without reminders and prodding.**

Capstone Project: 30%

“Becoming You” culminates in a Capstone Project that is the synthesis of everything learned in the class. The Project has two parts, both of which will be presented, unless the student asks not to (which is fine.) The first is an explication and exploration of one's individual “Area of Transcendence,” and the other is four slides with milestones from the next 40 years of the life leading up to that AOT.

Examples of excellent Capstone Projects from previous semesters will be shared to give students a concrete idea of deliverables and expectations.

Class Schedule

*Class dates are subject to change. Refer to Brightspace for the latest information.

Due day before Class One (due DATE: 3/25)

- Resume or LinkedIn profile (submit on Brightspace)
- Guided Question (written assignment, see Brightspace)

Class One: 3/26

Overview of class and concepts. Lecture, discussion. Two Values Assessment exercises. Videos.

Homework for next class, (4/2):

- Complete “Pre-Class” assignments in Brightspace, if you have not already.
- Guided question about learnings in Class 1.
- Watch video assignment, link in BS.
- Reading Assignment, with guided question.
- Identify and contact more than six 360 Evaluation raters. Due date posted in BS. Remember,

timely participation in this activity is graded.

- *Optional: Class feedback and/or reflections.*

Class Two: 4/2

Lecture, discussion, video, four values assessment exercises.

Required homework due for next class, (4/9) :

- Guided question about Class 2 learnings.
- “Unedited Dream of a Life” written assignment, instructions on BS.
- Read bio Dan Roth, Editor of LinkedIn. Submit question for him on BS.
- Megatrends reading assignment (TBD).
- *Optional: Class feedback and/or reflections.*

Class Three: 4/9

Lecture, guest, class activities on Understanding Opportunity.

Required homework due for next class, (4/16) :

- Guided question about Session Three’s learnings.
- Read bios for Betsy Wills and Rasanath Das. Submit one thoughtful question for each.
- Take your Youscience test by **4/15 at midnight**. Bring results to next class.
- Take your Enneagram test by **4/15 at midnight**. Bring results to next class.
- *Optional: Class feedback and/or reflections.*

Class Four: 4/16

This class will feature an exploration of your results on both assessment tests (YouScience and Enneagram) with expert guest speakers presenting and conducting a Q&A on each.

Required homework due for next class, (4/23) :

- Guided question about Class 4 learnings.
- Reading assignment to prepare for 360: Receiving Feedback.
- *Optional: Class feedback and/or reflections.*

Class Five: 4/23

Review and analysis of your 360 Feedback reports. Class exercises. Preparation for Capstone. Group exercise.

Required homework due for next week, 4/30:

- Submit Capstone Project.

Class Six: 4/30

Capstone Project Presentation

In our final week together, those who feel comfortable will present their Capstone Project to the class.

There is also a final lecture.

Additional Information

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity and honesty is central to our mission as an educational institution. The MBA Code of Conduct, which all students sign, therefore places particular emphasis on academic integrity. Notably this includes refraining from any method or means that provides an unfair advantage in exams or papers, and clearly acknowledging the work of others in your own work. As a reminder, the entire Code of Conduct is available here. To help ensure the integrity of our learning community, prose assignments you submit to NYU Classes will be submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin will compare your submission to a database of prior submissions to Turnitin, current and archived Web pages, periodicals, journals, and publications. Additionally, your document will become part of the Turnitin database.

Student Accessibility

If you will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, please notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980, mosescsa@nyu.edu) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. For more information, visit the CSA website:

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html>

Student Wellness

The NYU Wellness Exchange offers mental health support. You can reach them 24/7 at 212 443 9999, or via the “NYU Wellness Exchange” app. There are also drop in hours and appointments. Find out more at <http://www.nyu.edu/students/health-and-wellness/counseling-services.html>

Name Pronunciation and Pronouns

NYU Stern students have the option to include their pronouns and name pronunciation in Albert. Please utilize this link for additional information: [Pronouns & Name Pronunciation](#)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

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. If you will need to take an exam at the CSD, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form to them at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation.

Additional course and syllabus guidelines can be found by visiting the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning site: <http://www.stern.nyu.edu/portal-partners/center-innovation-teaching-lear>.