

# ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

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*Course website:* <http://webspace.ship.edu/nwgoates/OB/ob.htm>

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## OBJECTIVES

Organizational behavior is about people, about how people interact with each other in (work) organizations, and also about organizations themselves.

General learning objectives in this course include:

- Gaining a broad understanding of some central concepts of psychology, economics, and sociology as they relate to work life.
- Improving analytical abilities in understanding the behavior of individuals and groups within organizations.
- Presenting thoughtful analysis of organizational problems and dilemmas, and suggesting well-reasoned recommendations for action.
- Negotiating team roles and division of labor in the timely completion of group projects and presentations.

Other learning outcomes, which will be evaluated with specific case assignments, include:

- Able to appropriately apply a motivational theory to a realistic motivational problem in an organizational context; able to provide management recommendations consistent with theory.
- Able to demonstrate an understanding of the five conflict styles (Rahim) by explaining the appropriateness (advantages, disadvantages) of a particular style to a specific context.
- Understand what is meant by “organizational culture,” and able to conduct an organizational cultural assessment.

This perfunctory (and hopefully not entirely unhelpful) statement of learning objectives notwithstanding, my priority as instructor will be to facilitate discovery (of ideas) over coverage (of content); critical thinking over content mastery.

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## READINGS

The text for this course comes from two general sources:

- (1) A collection of readings and audio presentations are accessible online through the course website and the library's electronic reserve. The course website is located at the following url:

<http://webspace.ship.edu/nwgoates/OB/ob.htm>

All articles you should have no difficulty accessing through any computer with an internet connection, on or off campus (instructions for accessing password protected files are given on the course website).

These readings have been chosen carefully and are assigned because they discuss and/or illustrate important ideas in organizational behavior. Some of the readings represent the "best of," or seminal works within the field of organizational behavior and articulate ideas you will likely return to throughout your careers.

- (2) A textbook which you can purchase at The University Store or your favorite online book seller:

McShane, S.L. & Von Glinow, M.A. (2008). *Organizational Behavior: Emerging Realities for the Workplace Revolution, 4th ed.* Boston: Irwin/McGraw Hill.

ISBN: 978-0-07-304977-9

The textbook is important primarily to give you an overview of the various OB topics we will cover and as a reference in writing your papers. We will sometimes also use the cases therein to facilitate class discussion. The textbook is required.

You are responsible for the content of all assigned readings though your contributions to class discussion, in written work, and in-class quizzes.

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## GROUND RULES

Considerable emphasis in this course is placed on in-class discussion, simulations, and other exercises as vehicles for providing you with opportunities to provide thoughtful analysis of organizational phenomena and practice presentation skills. This necessitates some fundamental ground rules for students taking the course. Herewith, the CACTUS rules:

- **Commitment:** You must make a personal commitment to prepare for each class. The quality of class discussion and the educational experience of one or more other students involved in group exercises or simulations is directly linked to what you do and how you prepare.
- **Attendance:** In class we will often run simulations or conduct other exercises. If you miss a class, you adversely affect the educational experience of other students assigned to interact with you in these exercise. Class discussions are also hampered by your absence. Your consistent attendance is expected.

That said, I understand that you have complicated lives and that other things (job interviews, school organizations, family emergencies, etc.) may require you to miss class. If you know that you will miss class (and have a reasonable excuse for doing so), please let me know before the fact so that I can prepare accordingly.

- **Preparation for Cold-calls:** In an effort to jump-start class discussion, or simply to evaluate your preparation for class (which is a component of your class participation grade), I reserve the right

to cold-call students at any time during a class discussion to ask for (1) a brief summary of something you were assigned to read, (2) your critique (feelings, sentiments) of a principle we are discussing or have read about, (3) or just about anything else related to course work or a class activity.

My intention with this policy is not to be punitive or churlish. I am also not necessarily looking for a particular “right” answer. I am more interested in *your* ideas and *your* thoughts. If you have reviewed the readings and completed required exercises prior to class and given them some thoughtful consideration you need not be concerned. More on this in class...

- **Timeliness:** When you are asked to prepare for an in-class exercise or simulation or to turn in results, it is crucial that you meet the deadline. Everyone in the class is engaging in the simulation and debriefing the results simultaneously, so lateness is unacceptable.
- **Understanding/Empathy:** Related to the rule below, I expect and hope that you will at times disagree with your text, the authors of the various other readings, your classmates, and me. I encourage you to voice your dissent, but to do so with respect, seeking first to understand the point of view of the person or persons with who you disagree before voicing your own thoughts. As the saying goes, seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- **Safe:** In order to maintain a discussion-oriented learning environment, everyone must feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings. While I encourage you to bring up alternative points of view from that expressed by other students, the professor (me), and the authors of the papers we will be reading, please do so courteously. We need not all think alike, but we must leave each day with respect for those who think differently than us, and provide everyone with equal opportunity for the expression of their ideas.

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Class Participation (15% of course grade)

I will evaluate each student's contribution to class discussions, simulations, activities, and exercises over the course of the semester. I expect students to take the time to ponder readings and exercises critically, and come to class prepared to participate actively. In evaluating participation, I view the *quality* of your contribution as far more important than the *quantity* (although admittedly some the latter is necessary to assess the former). Students are encouraged to disagree with each other and with the professor (me) in ways that enlighten and move the discussion forward. The class participation grade may also reflect my judgment of the seriousness of your preparation for and participation in class discussion and exercises.

Some in-class assignments/exercises may be collected and graded. These grades will also factor into your class participation grade.

### In-Class Quizzes (15% of course grade)

Several (5-10) short, unannounced quizzes will be given in class. The quizzes will cover the content of readings assigned between the time of the present quiz and the previous quiz. The average of your six highest quiz scores will make up this portion of your overall grade. No make-up quizzes will be given for absences (except school-excused absences).

### Written Deliverables (70% of course grade)

- **Personality Assessment and Thought Paper** (10% of course grade)

You are required to complete online assessments of several personality types and discuss the results in a thoughtful paper. You should provide an analysis of the results of the tests (including,

if you choose, a critique of personality tests in general or particular), including a discussion of how you believe you will interact with others in your project group, given what you know of your personality and theirs.

Specific details as to where (online) to take the tests, what to report, and expectations for length and quality of paper will be given later.

- **Case Analysis Papers** (10% x 3 = 30% of course grade)

Three cases will be distributed in class. These cases will describe some organization or some organizational problem. You are required to write an analysis of the organization or organizational problem and, where appropriate, provide recommendations for what, in your informed opinion, should be done to manage the problem. It is essential that in writing case analysis papers you integrate into your analysis concepts discussed in class and contained in the readings.

These cases will be written in groups of two. You are responsible for choosing your own partner and may work with the same partner or a different partner for each case assignment.

Specific case analysis assignment details will be made available in class.

- **Research Paper Summaries** (5% of course grade)

You are required to find and summarize two scholarly-type articles or book chapters on an organizational behavior topic which is related to the content of your group paper (see below). Summaries need be no longer than one page, double spaced.

Help on distinguishing between scholarly-type literature and that from other sources will be given in class. The following website may also be of some help:

<http://www6.wittenberg.edu/lib/research/schol-pop.php>

- **Group Paper and Presentation** (25% of course grade, with peer evaluation adjustment)

In groups of 4-5 you will produce a written paper analyzing an actual organizational problem that has been in the news or discussed in some other context. Select an incident that is sufficiently complex and intricate to provide interesting data for analysis. Your paper should include (1) a succinct description of the problem, including relevant history, (2) a detailed analysis of the situation using concepts developed in this course, but *not without the use and citation of relevant sources which move beyond the textbook and assigned readings*, and (3) well-reasoned recommendations for action. You may think of yourselves as consultants for the firm or organization you are discussing and write your paper as if it were a presentation to the decision-makers at that firm.

The text of the paper (excluding cover page, exhibits, references, etc.) should not exceed 12 double-spaced pages (assuming 12-point font and 1" margins), but certainly may be shorter if you can write precisely. The assignment is due on the last day of class. Submit papers in hardcopy form.

In conjunction with your final paper you and your group will also orally/visually present your analysis and recommendations to the class. Your presentation should be of professional quality, engage the audience, and demonstrate the involvement of all team members. Your group will have 15 to 20 minutes to give the presentation.

Groups are welcome to propose an alternative project leading to a paper of similar length. For example, you could develop a simulation exercise or activity that could be used in a future

organizational behavior class, or conduct a more in-depth research paper on an organizational topic you are interested in. See me if you wish to pursue one of these or another possibility.

At the end of the semester, each student will be asked to complete a peer evaluation of group member contributions to the project so that weight-pullers can be rewarded and slackers can receive their just desserts.

A more detailed description of this assignment will be made available later.

**All Deliverables for Team Project** (check class schedule for due dates)

- Group roster.
- Topic approval.
- Research paper summaries (described above).
- Oral presentation (12.5% of course grade).
- Written presentation (12.5% of course grade).

**Note on grading:** I will not be using Blackboard to post grades. If you're unsure about your class participation or overall grade at any time, please email me.

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**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WRITTEN WORK**

Papers for this class should be precise, organized, logical, and appropriately supported. High grades are reserved for well-written papers that demonstrate a clear, in-depth, and sophisticated understanding of key concepts. Here is a guide to what grades mean (pluses and minuses are used to shade evaluations upward or downward):

- A = Superior analysis, conceptual fluency, organization, and expression; sophisticated discussion of theories and/or models which relate to the assignment topic and application of those theories and/or models into a coherent argument; novel insights.
- B = Sound conceptual understanding of relevant theory and/or models to paper topic; reasonable integration of course concepts (theories, models, etc.) into argument.
- C = Limited fluency with concepts and/or application, or rather weak expression; weak integration of course concepts into argument.
- D = Inadequate but capable of improvement, given effort; sloppy presentation; superficial integration of course concepts into argument.
- F = Weak, incomplete, or perfunctory

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the resources available through the Shippensburg University Learning Center in preparing your written deliverables. Their website ([www.ship.edu/~learning](http://www.ship.edu/~learning)) has links to various writing aids including citation rules and strategies. Appointments can be made with a writing tutor by phone (477-1420).

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## POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are bound by the Policy on Academic Dishonesty as stated in Swataney (<http://www.ship.edu/~senate/studentHandbook.htm>) for all work completed in this course. I draw your attention to some specific guidelines related to Mgt. 305.

- Individual tasks are completed without the assistance of others.
- For the group project, I expect all members of the group will have contributed.
- Since there are multiple sections of Mgt. 305, with some exercises and other experiential activities used across sections and across semesters, I regard the following as additional breaches of academic honesty:
  - sharing information about experiential exercises in Mgt. 305 with other students who may take this course in the future.
  - obtaining information about exercises used in Mgt. 305 from current students, former students, or others who have taken part in these exercises in the past.
- For formal written work, appropriate citations (in some consistent format, though I prefer APA) should identify contributions to arguments and analyses that draw on the work of others.

For help with citing sources, I refer you to the following style guides:

<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

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## A NOTE ABOUT RESEARCH

The outcomes of the activities and simulations like those undertaken in this class have contributed to the on-going development of theory in organization studies. The exercises assigned in this class are not experiments, but there is potential research use for this data, and those of us who teach courses similar to this sometimes archive simulation results for possible future research use. Only aggregate, statistical information would ever be published. Complete anonymity is guaranteed, and personal information is never involved. I hope that you are comfortable with this. If not, let me know and I will ensure that your data are removed from any archived results that might subsequently be used for research.