MGB 267: Teams and Technology
Spring 2013
Graduate School of Management
University of California, Davis

Professor Beth Bechky
3302 Gallagher Hall
Phone: 752-0911
E-mail: babechky@ucdavis.edu
Office hours: Tuesday 3-4 pm or by appointment

Course Objectives

MGB 267 is a course on the theory and practice of managing groups and teams. It has three primary goals. The first goal is to provide conceptual guidelines for analyzing and diagnosing group dynamics and determining one's strategic options as a manager. The second goal is to understand how technological change affects team processes in organizations. Finally, this course will impart practical interpersonal skills for implementing effective strategies for group situations. The course is intended for students who seek greater understanding of teams and who wish to increase their competence in managing and working effectively in these contexts.

Although effective managers have always relied on influence and consensus building, management theory has often portrayed the executive as a solitary planner, removed from the fray, whose directions are automatically followed by subordinates. Management education has therefore emphasized topics such as individual decision-making. Although a competence in these topics remains essential, contemporary organizations increasingly put managers in roles that require a different set of competencies. Managers increasingly find themselves working in and with groups, teams, and networks, sometimes without a clear chain of command or a stable leader. In these more fluid and dynamic management roles, effective performance requires frameworks for analyzing collaborative (as opposed to individual) decision making and facilitating successful informal relationships (as opposed to formal organizational structures).

The primary goal of MGB 267 is to provide a model of managing groups and teams that complements more traditional models of management. To this end, we will be developing frameworks for analyzing groups' goals and options. This involves determining how to choose group members, how to structure decision-making teams, and how to manage the conflict that sometimes arises in group contexts.

A second goal of MGB 267 entails understanding the effects of technology on teamwork and managing teams. In the past several years, new communication technologies have enabled new forms of working and organizing – virtual worlds that seem significantly different from traditional forms of doing business. However, at the core of these new

forms are the people who use the technologies and the contexts in which they are using them. We will explore how teams, and their members, are influenced and constrained by such new technologies.

Finally, the approach of the course is based on the belief that a conceptual understanding of optimal management strategies is of little use without the behavioral skills required to implement these strategies. To this end, I have designed MGB 267 with an emphasis on cases and exercises that afford the opportunity to apply the concepts concretely. You will analyze cases that illustrate dynamic social interaction processes that can either facilitate or impede success. Furthermore, you will participate in several in-class exercises that simulate challenging problems, followed by class discussions of how your experiences reflect relevant theoretical constructs. These exercises are designed to provide a forum in which to hone one's team skills and management abilities.

Course Format

The course is designed to provide you with a thorough understanding of the dynamics of team-based work settings and their effects on group performance. As a result, *students will be assigned to groups* that will exist throughout the quarter and will provide a context for experiencing and learning about the effects of group membership first hand.

Important note on this format: Working interdependently with your assigned group is paramount for learning in this course. You will be expected to regularly meet face-to-face with your group outside of class. **If you are not able to do this, please do not register for the class!**

Group discussion periods, written assignments, and activities will provide many opportunities for students to discuss, reflect on, and explain their group's functioning. In addition, each group will collaborate on a final group project described below. The primary teaching method in this course is inductive, experiential, and case-based. Relatively little class time will be devoted to standard lectures.

Required readings:

Textbook:	Larson, C.E. & LaFasto, F.M.J. 1989. Teamwork: What must go right/what can go wrong. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. *(Abbreviated LL throughout syllabus)*
Course packet:	The course packet will be available through Study.net. *(Abbreviated CP throughout syllabus)*

Grading:

Active learning	20%
Personal reflection memo	10%
Group ORTF case analysis	15%
Group meeting comparison paper	15%
Final group project/presentation	40%

(1) Active learning through participation (20% of final grade):
Class participation is an essential part of the learning process in this course. You must attend on the first day to be enrolled in the class. Attendance is critical for your learning in this class, particularly on days when exercises are scheduled. If you cannot attend class, make sure to notify me at least 24 hours in advance via e-mail. If you are absent for more than two sessions, you will fail the class. If you anticipate missing more than two sessions due to other demands on your time, please do not enroll in the course.

What you learn in this class will depend not only on completing the readings and listening to lecture but also on student discussion. Spirited, informed discussion of the readings, cases and exercises is a critical component of the course. In evaluating class participation, I will attend to both the quantity and quality of comments, but quality is ultimately the most important. Because class time is limited, each time a student is called upon is an opportunity to advance the discussion in a way that enhances everyone's learning. I will occasionally "cold call" students in class. The point of the "cold calls" is not to embarrass anyone, but to ensure that all students are invited to contribute, and to keep the discussion from becoming unbalanced, with a few students doing most of the talking.

What constitutes a quality comment? Here are some general guidelines.

- An "exceptional" comment provides some fundamental structure to the conversation either by distilling an underlying theme from disparate comments or by critiquing a set of comments. An exceptional comment will change the way people view some important part of the case.
- A "good" comment advances the conversation, by making an analytical point and referring to supporting data, by asking a good question, by offering a thoughtful critique of previous comments, or by expanding on previous comments. Supporting data may come from readings, from other cases, or from personal experience.
- A "fine" comment provides some information that adds to the discussion.
- A "poor" comment is one that seems to indicate a lack of preparation and/or a lack of attention to the "flow" of the conversation (for example, making a point that has already been covered earlier).

I will be taking notes on your individual participation at the end of each class session. Additionally, active learning in the class is unlike that in any other class you take at the GSM. This is a TEAMS class, which means that not only are you expected to participate in the discussion, but also to actively participate as an interdependent member of your assigned team. Teams will therefore evaluate their members' contributions to the group as well.

(2) Personal Reflection Memo (10% of final grade)
As an individual, write a memo (no more than three pages) describing (1) your most effective and (2) your most ineffective group experience. This memo should incorporate your own team experiences with theoretical insights from the readings. Therefore the memo should use concepts from the readings to explain on what dimensions you feel the group was effective or ineffective (e.g., performance relative to external standards, group satisfaction, individual growth, or organizational gains). Why was the effective group successful? What could have been done to make the ineffective group more successful?
Due: April 5

(3) Group ORTF Case Analysis (15% of final grade)

As a group, write a 5-page paper that answers the following questions: Given ORTF's composition and purpose, what should Williams expect at the first meeting of the task force? How should he prepare for that meeting, and how, specifically, should the first meeting be conducted? What, if any, discussion format or procedures should be implemented? Be sure to justify your answers using concepts from this week's readings.

Due: April 19

(4) Group dynamics across modalities paper (15% of final grade)
As a group, you are to compare and contrast at least three forms of team interaction and dynamics: face-to-face, teleconference, online (with or without video). This, of course, requires that your team have interactions using these different modalities over the course of the quarter. Analyze your group's process and effectiveness using each of the forms, discuss any problems encountered, and relate these to the concepts, theory, and readings from the course. Some questions you might consider: How was conflict resolution accomplished within the different forms? How did the modalities differ in terms of your ability to communicate? In terms of the types of tasks you accomplished? In terms of design, leadership or creativity? Were there differences in the way you felt about the team process or one another? Your comparison should be 5 pages and you should come to class prepared to present and discuss it.

Due: **May 17**

(5) Final group paper (25% of final grade)
This project should be completed in your assigned groups (assignments will be given in class). Each group will choose a real group or working team (not a sports team!) to observe and analyze its performance using the concepts learned in the course. You should use observation and personal interviews from several sources to obtain information for your analysis. An 8-10 page report on the findings of your assessment and your recommendations is due at the end of the semester. The report should contain an analysis of the group's performance and effectiveness, any problems encountered, and recommendations for improvements (a concrete action plan) using the concepts, theory, and readings from the course. Be sure to cite appropriately. I am happy to meet with you to discuss your paper topics.

The paper will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Theory/application: How well do you understand and apply the concepts learned in the course and the readings? How well do you incorporate examples from the group you studied?

Analysis: How clear and insightful is your analysis of the group? How well do you integrate the theory to create a coherent and logical argument? How well do your recommendations correspond to the conclusions of your analysis? How "actionable" are your recommendations?

Organization: How clearly written and organized is the paper? Be sure to check spelling and grammar.

Peer evaluation: How do the other members of your group evaluate your contributions to the group's performance? Evaluation forms will be distributed the last day of class (this evaluation will be factored into your class participation grade).

Final Group Presentation (15% of final grade)
In class, as a group you will give a brief professional presentation of your findings. The presentation will be evaluated with the same criteria as the paper, and in addition:

Professionalism: How well organized is the presentation? Does the group manage time well? How do you handle questions from the class?

Both Due: May 31st

Note! For all written assignments:

1. I do not accept late papers.
2. Please adhere to all page limits, using 12 point font size and a minimum line spacing of space and a half (and no fiddling with margins, either!). Otherwise the paper will lose half a letter grade.
3. Remember to cite appropriately, even when drawing on the readings I've assigned. Otherwise, how will the reader know what reading you are referring to?

4. A good paper:

Is clear and effective at getting your point across

Directly demonstrates that you have learned something from the class:

- Specifically refers to course concepts
- References appropriately
- Provides specific, detailed evidence to support your points

Academic Integrity: All students who take this course are governed by the University of California's standards of ethical conduct for students, in particular, the sections on academic conduct and integrity. These sections set forth the responsibilities of students and faculty to maintain a spirit of academic honesty and integrity at U.C. Davis. It is essential that you are aware of this code of conduct and the disciplinary actions that may be taken in the event of a violation. A copy of the Code of Academic Conduct may be found in your student handbook or at: http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/CAC.pdf. Further details may be obtained from the GSM Associate Dean or the Office of Judicial Affairs.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

April 5th

1st Session: Introduction to teams and team building

Readings: LL: Introduction and Chapter 1

In Class: Introduction to the course
Team exercise

2nd Session: Group Performance and Creativity

Readings: CP: HBS CASE: A note for analyzing work groups (Merit Case)
Thompson, Leigh. (2000). Making the Team. Chapter 2: Performance and Productivity. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
LL: Chapters 2 & 3

In Class: Case discussion: Merit Corporation

How effective is the NPD group at the end of Part IV of the case? What factors contributed to its effectiveness? How did the effectiveness change at the end of Part V? What might account for these changes?

Cardboard box and INSITE! Creativity Exercise

Handout: Team contract

Due: Personal reflection memo

April 19th

3rd Session: Creativity and conflict

Readings: CP: Thompson, Leigh (2000) Ch. 8: Creativity, in Making the Team. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
Gladwell, Malcolm. The Bakeoff. The New Yorker, Sept 5, 2005.
Weingart, Laurie and Karen Jehn (2009) Ch 18: Manage Intra-team conflict through collaboration. In Handbook of Principles of Organizational Behavior, 2nd Edition, Edwin Locke (ed.).
HBS CASE: Suzy Wetlaufer. The team that wasn't.

LL: Chapters 4, 5, & 6

In class: Debrief of creativity exercise

Case discussion: The team that wasn't
How effective is the Fireart team? What are the sources of the team's problems? How would you recommend Eric handle the next meeting? What should he do about Randy?

4th Session: Managing Meetings and Information Sharing

Readings: CP: HBS CASE: The Overhead Reduction Task Force (ORTF)
Whetton, D. and Cameron, C. (1995) Principles for managing meetings in Developing Management Skills, pp. 454-476. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
Cosier, R.A., & Schwenk, C.R. (1990). "Agreement and Thinking Alike: Ingredients for Poor Decisions," *Academy of Management Executive, Vol.4, No.1*, 69-74.

In class: Case discussion: The Overhead Reduction Task Force
Murder Mystery Exercise

Handout: Words in Sentences instructions

Due: Group ORTF Case analysis (questions in the assignment section, page 4)

May 3rd

5th Session: Group Design

Readings: CP: Okhuysen, G.A. and Bechky, B.A. 2009. Coordination in Organizations: An Integrative Perspective. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 3:463-502
Fayard, A. and Weeks, J. 2011. Who Moved my Cube? Harvard Business Review, July/Aug 2011.
LL: Chapters 7 & 8
Words in Sentences Instructions (handed out last week)

In class: Words in Sentences Production Exercise

Handout: Leadership Assessment Questionnaire

6th Session: Leading in the Team Environment

Readings: CP: Huey, J. (1994) The new post heroic leadership, Fortune, February 21, 1994, pp. 43-50.
Hackman, J.R. (2002) Expert Coaching. Ch 6 in Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
LL: Chapters 9 & 10

In class: Tanagram Production Exercise

May 17th

7th Session: Virtual Teams: Trust and Organizational Issues

Readings: CP: Kirkman, Rosen, Gibson, Tesluk and McPherson. (2002) "Five challenges to virtual team success: Lessons from Sabre, Inc." Academy of Management Executive, 16, pp. 67-78.
Orlikowski, W. (1993) "Learning from Notes: Organizational Issues in Groupware Implementation" Information Society, 9, pp. 237-250.
Turkle, Sherry (2012) The Flight from Conversation, New York Times, April 21, 2012.
HBS CASE: Maruca, R.F. How do you manage an off-site team?

In class: Technology Implementation Exercise

Case discussion: How do you manage an off-site team?
How is the team performing? What are the sources of the conflict on the team, and how does technology play a role? What do you recommend that Craig do next, both with respect to Penelope and Allison and with respect to his team as a whole?

8th Session: Communicating within and across group boundaries

Readings: CP: Ancona, D. and H. Bresman. X-Team Principle 1: External Activity - Achieving High Performance by Managing Teams Across Their Boundaries.
CASE: Metropolitan Crime Laboratory

In class: Discussion of group dynamics comparisons
Case discussion: Metropolitan Crime Laboratory

How should the top management team of MCL respond to this crisis? What internal and external constituencies do they need to consider, and how should they manage their boundaries?

Handout: Qualitative feedback exercise

Due: Group dynamics comparison paper

May 31st

9th Session: Building a team-based organization

Readings: CP: CASE: "How I Learned to Let My Workers Lead," Ralph Stayer, *Harvard Business Review* November-December 1990, p. 66-83.

In class: Case discussion: Building a team-based organization - Johnsonville Sausage

> This case involves the reorganization of the plant into self-managed teams. Over time, critical design decisions are made regarding (1) top management team composition, (2) task requirements, (3) reward structures, (4) leadership, and (5) training. What are the consequences of these decisions? Should Stayer have let the workers vote on acquiring a new plant?

Qualitative Feedback Exercise

Final Session: Wrap-up

Readings: NONE!

In class: Group Project Final Presentations

Due: Final group paper