

Spring 2006



Syllabus  
Organizational Behavior 70:311  
TTh 9-10:20AM  
TTh 10:30 11:50 AM  
SH222

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

You have spent most of your life in organizations (from schools, to sports and/or community activities). Your work life will involve working with, in, or for organizations, and, very likely at some point, creating your own business enterprise and/or a service organization to help your community. The purpose of this course is to help you understand how people and organizations function, based on the latest social science research on work, workers, and organizations.

The goals of this course are:

1. to help you learn how to ***effectively manage your relationships*** with coworkers, managers, subordinates, clients and customers
2. to begin ***acquainting you with the ever-growing body of evidence*** that will be available to you throughout your career regarding effective organizations and management practice
3. so that you can ultimately become a literate, well-informed professional, able to ***make decisions that reflect best available evidence regarding effective practice.***

## **READINGS:**

### **Required Text**

1. Stephen P. Robbins, *Essentials of Organizational Behavior*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. (Pearson/Prentice Hall 2005)
2. I will also provide additional readings and cases throughout the course as indicated in the class schedule below. (Note, from time to time I may modify an aspect of the schedule as we learn together what works well for this class. I promise that no changes will be made without discussion.)

### **Supplementary Resources**

For the "Get the Evidence" assignment and your own professional development, I encourage you to become familiar with other sources, especially those available electronically through ABIInform, ProQuest, and Web of Science. Relevant social science journals include the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Organization Science* and *Personnel Psychology*.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

There are five deliverables upon which your grade is based: Learning Logs, the Best Self Exercise, Get the Evidence, and Persuasive Paper, and Class Participation. (There are no written exams.) In addition there is an *optional 1 point* additional extra credit for participating in a research study through Tepper's behavioral lab. (Your participation is voluntary.). All assignments are due on their scheduled dates. **No assignment will be accepted late. If you must miss class on a due date, please email the assignment early.**

**Learning Logs:** I will collect these logs twice, once on March 2 and again on April 27. Each of them centers around your reflections on the course, the readings, and its relevance to you, your future career, and the development of your expertise in managing people and organizations. A set of questions to guide Learning Log I will be provided next week. Similarly, a set of guiding questions for the 2<sup>nd</sup> log will be distributed after Spring break.

**Best Self Exercise:** This exercise, inspired by (i.e. shamelessly copied from) the University of Michigan Reflected Best Self Exercise (Roberts et al., 2005 "Composing best-self portrait..." *Academy of Management Review*, see course website) is designed to reveal your unique competencies and skills, that is, the special capabilities you bring to your work and others. You will seek input from other people who know you in order to more deeply understand your personal, interpersonal, and managerial strengths.

1. Identify 15-20 People Who Know You Well. These may be coworkers or fellow students (former or current), friends (old or recent), professors, or anyone else who has had extended contact with you. The more diverse this list is the better. Since people are often busy and this assignment is due early in the course, note that everyone may not respond in time. A minimum of 10 respondents is needed to complete the assignment. It is important to choose people who will give you an honest opinion.

2. Create a Feedback Request Form and email it to the 10-20 people you selected in step 1. Although this request may feel awkward or difficult, many people have participated in this exercise previously and found it a profound learning experience, and one that significant others are quite willing to assist with.

3. Interpret Your Feedback, by reading it all and making notes on the key insights you develop. Look for common ideas across the responses you received and create themes that you can illustrate with several examples.

4. Compose the Reflected Best-Self Portrait by writing a description of your BEST SELF (1 pg) that reflects the insights you acquired from the feedback, appending copies of the emails to the portrait you turn in. For example, a self portrait might indicate what you do when you are at your best, how you solve problems or communicate with others effectively, and the ways in which you help other people.

Sample:

"I am outgoing and enthusiastic, which leads me to connect with many different kinds of people. This helps me build good collaborations, something that other people appreciate because it helps them work better with others.

People know that I am open to a lot of ideas and encourage them to speak their minds. By being very interested in what others have to say and positive about the contributions they make, I encourage creativity and tolerance. I am able to deal with people from many different backgrounds.

By recognizing the good intentions and ideas that other people have I am able to help manage conflict between people. I also build confidence in others that they have something to contribute."

In class we will discuss the implications of these best-self portraits for the development of managerial competencies, effective rewards and motivating work experiences.

**Get the Evidence:** Throughout your career you will face tough, challenging decisions regarding how to deal with individuals, work groups, or your organization generally. Making important decisions takes time because it is worthwhile to obtain the best evidence in determining the proper course of action to produce a quality result. I will give you a managerial challenge and it is your task to evaluate relevant and best available social science research and to identify the best approach based upon that evidence. The criterion for grading this assignment is how effectively you marshal the best evidence from the array of relevant research. Best evidence refers to evidence-based research, including:

- Meta-analyses of research studies (Highest Quality)
- Systematic reviews of research articles
- Randomized controlled intervention studies
- Quasi-experimental
- Outcomes studies
- Non-experimental & Qualitative (Lowest Quality)

Note that the following non-research-based sources are not evidence-based 1) Expert opinion, 2) Case studies, and 3) Standard, popular or common practices.

**Persuasive Paper--Using the evidence to persuade somebody**

**else:** You are to prepare a short (2-3) page persuasive paper in which you attempt to convince your (hypothetical or real) manager to take a particular action related to an organizational behavior topic. Your paper will be related to issues we discuss in class (or it can be related to another interest you have pertinent to OB if you consult with me first). Sample topics include: why team-based rewards should be used instead of individual rewards, or why workplace diversity requires a change in the way the company socializes newcomers.

Keep in mind that many bosses, yours included, may have little professional management training and even less knowledge of social science (not having the benefits of a Carnegie Mellon education and Tepper degree!). Criteria for evaluating your paper will be based on 1) how effectively you marshal the best evidence to make your case, 2) the extent you have made your case in a strong, truthful, and convincing manner, and 3) how well you use facts about the particular organization (again, real or hypothetical) to help you make your case.

**Participation:** People learn best when they are active (not passive). Your active participation is essential to this class. Participation is more than just attending class and asking an occasional question. Full participation consists of demonstrating that you are prepared for each class, asking thoughtful questions that help you and your peers learn, responding respectfully to peers, engaging productively in all class exercises, and posting queries and replies on the course discussion board. Note that talking is not the same as participating, since excessive talking without offering useful ideas is disruptive.

Participation in this course is graded as follows:

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 0-9   | Demonstrates consistently poor attendance and poor preparation; may be disruptive in class and hinder the learning of others; consistently fails to participate in class activities.   |
| 10-12 | Demonstrates inconsistent attendance, timeliness, and/or preparation in class activities; may be disruptive in class; is frequently not prepared; sporadic participation in other class activities.  |
| 13-15 | Demonstrates consistent attendance and preparation; and occasionally participates in class discussions and on line postings.   |
| 16-19 | Demonstrates consistent attendance, preparation, and participation in all class activities and discussions; occasionally demonstrates insight by asking questions or making statements that add to and facilitate the class discussion either in class or on-line.   |
| 20/20 | Demonstrates consistent attendance, preparation, and participation in all class activities and discussions in class and on-line; consistently demonstrates insight by asking questions, making statements that add to and facilitate class discussion, builds upon others' comments both in class and on-line. |

## GRADING

### Grading System

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Best Self 10%</b>                                    | <b>A 90 - 100%</b> |
| <b>Learning Log I 15%</b><br><b>Learning Log II 15%</b> | <b>B 80 - 89%</b>  |
| <b>Get the Evidence 20%</b>                             | <b>C 70 - 79%</b>  |
| <b>Persuasive Paper 20%</b>                             | <b>D 60 - 69%</b>  |
| <b>Participation 20%</b>                                | <b>F Below 60%</b> |

## BEHAVIORAL NORMS:

1. Individual Participation: You are expected to come prepared to ask questions that add to your understanding of the course materials as well as that of your fellow students. You will be asked to complete some assignments that are not graded. If they

are completed, you will be one step further along on your personal journey toward enlightenment. What an incentive system!

2. "New Business": Each class will begin with a poll of new business items. These are brief ("sound bite") reports on events (in the news--front page, business, or sports section; Tepper/CMU; your personal experiences) pertinent to human behavior in organizations. I expect each class member will make **at least one** contribution to New Business during the mini term.
3. Readings: You are expected to read all assigned readings and while doing so, you should continually ask yourself the following two questions:
  - (a) Do I **understand** the theory and/or principles of this material?
  - (b) So what? What are its implications? How would I **apply** this as a manager?
4. You are asked to actively participate by raising these questions as well as others during our class time and/or on-line via the class discussion board.
5. All assigned readings should be completed prior to the class for which they are specified. Readings will be briefly reviewed to check for understanding at the beginning of each class. Be prepared to answer questions regarding the readings and more importantly to **ask** them.
6. Ethics: All work turned in must be original and your own. Plagiarism is a violation of the Tepper/Carnegie Mellon code of ethics.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1: Orientation 1/17-19**

TU Overview & Introductions

What's an Excellent Organization?

READINGS: Robbins: ch1-2

TH Becoming an Evidence-based Manager

Attribution exercise

What are its cross-cultural implications?

**Week 2: Personality, Individual Differences & Job Satisfaction**  
**1/24-26**

TU Personality

When do individual differences really matter?

How do values change over time?

READINGS: Robbins: ch3

COMPLETE Big 5 test and type A assessment in Text Book Supplement:

Bring results to class

TH Satisfaction—Cause or Effect?

**Week 3: Motivation & Goals** 1/31-2/2

TU Modes of Information Processing Shaping Motivation

READINGS: Robbins ch 4, Steve Kerr: "Folly of Rewarding A..."

TH Motivation & Goal setting

CASE: Hausser Foods

**Week 4: Rewards** 2/7-9

TU Rewards/Allocations/Equity/Justice

Readings Robbins ch 5

Alternative Rewards, Idiosyncratic Deals

**BEST SELF EXERCISE DUE 2/9**

Preparing yourself for your first post CMU job

Preparing yourself to manage others

**Week 5: Individual Decision Making** 2/14-16

TU Modes of Information Processing Rational decision making

Hot Cognitions

Fast and Frugal

READINGS: Robbins ch 6

CASE: Carter Racing

TH Evidence-based Management & Rational Decision Making

Guest Executive Speaker: John Zanardelli, President, Asbury Heights

**Week 6: Group Behavior** 2/21-23

TU Exercise: Tenagram  
READINGS: Robbins Ch 7

TH: How to Run a Meeting  
READINGS/CASE: TBA

### **2/23 GET THE EVIDENCE PAPER DUE**

#### **Week 7: Team Dynamics, Past Present Future 2/28- 3/2**

TU Virtual Teams In-Box Exercise  
READINGS: Robbins Ch 8; Rousseau, "Teamwork: Inside and Out"

TH Guest Professor Paul Goodman: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teams  
Video: Computer Emergency Response Team

### **3/2 LEARNING LOG 1 DUE**

#### **Week 8: Communication and Feedback 3/7-9**

TU In-Class Exercise: Lou and Chris  
READINGS: Robbins Ch 9  
COMPLETE: ***Self Assessment IIA***

TH Feedback Seeking and Feedback Giving

### ***SPRING BREAK***

#### **Week 9: Leadership 3/21-3/23**

READINGS: Robbins Ch 10  
Case: TBA  
COMPLETE: ***Self Assessment IIB***

#### **Week 10: Politics and Conflict 3/28-30**

TU Organizational Politics and Conflict: Not Necessarily the Same  
CASE: Katz Gefford  
READINGS: Robbins Chs 11-12  
COMPLETE: ***Self-assessment IIC***

TH The Informal Organization, Perceptual Gaps,

### **Week 11: Culture and Structure 4/4-6**

TU Culture: Bundles of Practices that Make the Organization

The "Famous Onion Model"

READINGS: Robbins Chs 13-14

CASE: Lintell Co.

TH: Alternative Structures

Presentation by Keith Hunter

### **Week 12: HR practices 4/11-13**

Tu Human Resource Practices as Contract Makers"

READINGS: Robbins, Ch 15, Rousseau, "Psychological Contract: The Ties that Motivate" & "Diversity for High Performance"

TH Diversity: HR's Special Challenge

**4/13 Persuasive Paper Due**

### **Week 13: Change Mgt 4/18-20**

TU Model of Effective Change

READINGS: Robbins ch 16; Rousseau, "Changing the Deal..."

COMPLETE: ***Self Assessment 49-50***

TH Implementing Change that is Kind to the People

Revisiting Case: LINTELL SCIENTIFIC

### **Week 14: Envisioning the Future 4/25-27**

TU Managers as Designers

TH WRAP UP

**4/27 LEARNING LOG II DUE**