

MANAGEMENT FORUM – MGT 400

University of Wisconsin, La Crosse
College of Business Administration
Department of Management
Fall 2007

Professor:	Davide Secchi	Classes:	MWF 1:10-2:10am
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Welcome students!

The emphasis of this course will be on examination and study of current management issues. The course provides the opportunity to discuss important and new topics. It is structured in order to get you involved in discussions during the class, and outside (hopefully). The selected issues for this semester course are: (a) cognitive science and management, and (b) challenging corporate social responsibility (CSR). Since this course is called “forum,” the main aim is that of discussing ideas, and not that of presenting a “handbook” overview of a specific topic. Together, we will try to answer to the following questions: Is there anything new in cognitive science? How useful is that to management scholars and practitioners? Are we able to integrate these different domains? How can we deal with them, i.e. what kind of theoretical tools we need? And in relation to CSR, we address the following questions: Are there recent approaches to social responsibility? How can we classify theories of CSR? When a classification becomes useful? What are the practical implications of these theories? Can we frame empirical cases through CSR theories? In which way? To what extent? Of course, I have no “truth,” and no “faith” so that I don’t have answers to all these questions. By the end of the course I hope you will not get *the* answer.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course you will develop your basic skills on two different sides. The first is the ‘passive’ side, i.e. you will be able to listen to the others’ points of view, to analyze and understand their perspectives, and to integrate them on your own view. I want to tell you that this is not easy at all; you need to carefully take under consideration the fact that this implies a high degree of flexibility, and of humility. The first thing you have to keep in mind is that you may be wrong. When you deal with other opinions, and even if you think your idea is far better than the others’, you may want to test if this is really true. This leads to the fact that you need to understand first, and analyze then other people’s ideas.

The second objective is more ‘active’ in kind. You will learn how to analyze and present topics that are strictly related to your point of view. Moreover, you will be able to interact with other people, with a strong commitment to challenge your own view. To have concerns on what you think means that you always know that you don’t know enough, therefore you might be wrong.

In summary, the two objectives together will lead you to think about being open-minded as a positive and desirable outcome of your personality. The main issue here is that you may want to improve your knowledge rather than to let your opinion prevail.

Objectives related to management topics

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- have a clear understanding of what cognition means, and why we deal with that in management too
- analyze human behavior as an output of the way we think
- define the impact of different cognitive perspectives on managerial behavior
- define social responsibility as it stems out from theories
- use theoretical frameworks of social responsibility to understand, frame, and analyze practical business cases
- get the sense of the way social responsibility has gone into business practices

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment #1 – Find a Case!

Find a business case on your own on the basis of confirmable, and verifiable sources of information (i.e. the case should be a *true* case). You may also use web resources, however you will need to verify these information with more appropriate and official sources (official websites, newspapers, interviews, or any other direct source).

The case is a *business* case if one of the following issues are involved:

- it deals with an organization (better if this is a corporation)
- the management states something and behaves differently (or the opposite)
- you may find ethical, social, or environmental concerns in the way the corporation is actually managed
- you may find best or worst practices in the way the corporation is managed toward stakeholders (employees, local community, suppliers, competitors, shareholders, local or central government, etc.)
- you may find economic or financial excellence, and may link this to a particular habit of the top management or of its owners
- ...

Here you find a step-by-step summary of the things you need to build up your business case on your own:

- select the broad topic you want to get started with your investigation (e.g. ethics) [you may want to start your search with a company name if you know something interesting on it... it’s your case, it’ your choice!]

- use the proper database to get information on this topic (e.g. Google, UW-L databases, ...), and type your keywords (e.g. “ethics management,” “corporate ethics,” “ethical misconduct,” etc.)
- try to find a corporate brand related to the issue
- define if the information you find are of particular concern or if they cannot be confirmed in any way
- write a report of 1,000 words in which you
 1. summarize the business case with a fair and objective description of the event(s) or of the story (you may want to describe the corporation if the facts were not well-known by the general public),
 2. clearly define which are the main points of interest, and
 3. explain what makes the case worth interesting from a managerial point of view

Journals: all local, national, and international newspapers, weekly journals (such as *The Economist*, *Business Week*, and the like), and Internet resources.

You may work alone or be one in a group of 2-3.

You are strongly encouraged to contact me so to check if your ideas and selected business case are all right BEFORE you start working.

Due: December 3

Assignment #2 – Improve your analytical skills

This assignment has the objective to improve both your analytical and relational skills.

Find a scientific journal article (see journals titles below) on the basis of one of the following topics, with which you feel comfortable:

- corporate social responsibility and financial performance
- ethical skills that management (don't) need to survive in a business environment
- socially responsible behavior and value management
- ethics and cognition: the overlooked link
- cognitive explanations of managerial (or employee) behavior
- advice taking
- emotional intelligence as a cognitive attitude of human behavior

I need you to write a short report (1,000 words), structured in three parts:

- (1) short analysis of the paper's contents
- (2) definition of strengths and weaknesses of the author(s) point of view
- (3) your point of view on the paper, the ways to improve it, and what you should put more stress on

You will also be requested to make a public slideshow presentation in front of your classmates, and to run a debate on what you will find (I will be chairing the session). We will schedule classroom presentation beginning Monday, September 24, 2007. The idea is that of keeping the forum on top scientific issues.

Journals: Journal of Organizational Behavior, Academy of Management Review, Academy of Management Journal, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Journal of Business Ethics, Business Ethics: A European Review, Business Ethics Quarterly, Business and Society Review, Journal of Management, Organization Science, Administrative Science Quarterly, and the like.

You may work alone or be one in a group of 2-3.

You are strongly invited to contact me so to check if the paper, and ideas you want to share with classmates are all right BEFORE you start working.

Due: October 22 (paperwork ≈ 1,000 words)

Slideshow: to be scheduled

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE *

Week 1	September 5, 7	Introduction Human rationality	Simon 1979
Week 2	September 10, 12, 14	A primer on decision-making	March 1994
Week 3	September 17, 19, 21	Tough decision-making: is it rational? Behavioral economics: A psychological perspective	McNamara Kahneman & Tversky 1979
Week 4	September 24, 28 September 26	Slideshow & discussion #1, #2 Managerial and organizational cognition	Magnani 2005
Week 5	October 1, 5 October 3	Slideshow & discussion #3, #4 Let's move from our masters	Magnani 2006; Bardone & Secchi 2006
Week 6	October 8, 10 October 13	Modern cognitive science theory, and managerial decision-making Slideshow & discussion #5	Secchi & Bardone 2007
Week 7	October 15, 19 October 17	Recent management trends: The "image theory" Slideshow & discussion #6	Beach 1998 Silver & Mitchell 1990
Week 8	October 22 October 24, 26	Introduction to Corporate Social Responsibility Slideshow & discussion #7, #8	Garriga & Mele' 2004
Week 9	Monday, October 29 November 2, October 31	Mid-course test on "Managerial and Organizational cognition" (1 hour exam) Utilitarian, Managerial, and Relational theories of CSR	Secchi 2007

* The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Week 10	November 5 November 7, 9	Utilitarian theories: find the right matching Slideshow & discussion #9, #10	Friedman 1970
Week 11	November 12 November 14, 16	Managerial theories: overview Slideshow & discussion #11, #12	Gray 2001
Week 12	November 19, 21	Slideshow & discussion #13, #14 Managerial theories: focus on social responsibility in international business	Donaldson 1996
Week 13	November 26 November 28, 30	Relational theories: overview Slideshow & discussion #15, #16	Secchi 2007
Week 14	December 3 December 5, 7	Relational theories: ISCT Slideshow & discussion #17, #18	Donaldson & Dunfee 2000
Week 15	December 10, 12	Final discussion and course overview	
	Tuesday December 18 H7:45-9:45am	Final test on CSR (1 hour exam)	

REFERENCES

Readings: *Management and cognition*

- Bardone, E., & Secchi, D. 2006. The distributed cognition approach: Getting the framework. Presented at the **2006 Academy of Management Conference**, Atlanta.
- Beach, L.R. (ed). 1998. ***Image Theory. Theoretical and Empirical Foundations***. Mahwah (N.J.): Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. 1979. Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. ***Econometrica***, 47(2), 263–292.
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- Magnani, L. 2006. Mimetic minds. Meaning formation through epistemic mediators and external representations. In A. Loula, R. Gudwin, and J. Queiroz (eds.), ***Artificial Cognition Systems***. Idea Group Publishers, 327–357.
- March, J.G. 1994. ***A primer on decision making. How decisions happen***. New York: The Free Press. (selection)

Secchi D., and Bardone E. 2007. "Super-docility in Organizations: An Evolutionary Model." Presented at the *2007 Academy of Management Conference*, Atlanta, August 3-8.

Silver, W.S., & Mitchell, T.R. 1990. The status quo tendency in decision making. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18(4), 34–46.

Simon, H.A. 1979. Rational decision making in business organizations. *American Economic Review*, 69, 493–513.

Weick, K. & Roberts, K.H. 1993. Collective mind and organizational reliability: the case of flight operations on an aircraft carrier deck. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 357-381.

Wood, R., & Bandura, A. 1989. Social cognitive theory of organizational management. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(3): 361-384.

Zhang, J. 1997. The nature of external representations in problem-solving. *Cognitive Science*, 21, 179–217.

Zhang, J., & Patel, V.L. 2006. Distributed cognition, representation, and affordance. *Cognition & Pragmatics*. 2(14), 333–341.

Readings: Management and social responsibility

Donaldson T. and Dunfee T.W. 2000. Précis for: Ties that bind. *Business and Society Review*, 105(4): 436-443.

Donaldson, T. 1996. Values in tension: Ethics away from home. *Harvard Business Review*, September-October: 48-62.

Friedman, M. 1970. The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits. *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 13.

Garriga E. and Melé D. 2004. Corporate social responsibility theories: Mapping the territory. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 53: 51-71.

Gray R. 2001. Thirty years of social accounting, reporting and auditing: What (if anything) have we learnt? *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 10(1): 9-15.

Secchi D. forthcoming. "Utilitarian, Managerial, and Relational Theories of Corporate Social Responsibility." *International Journal of Management Reviews*, September 2007.

GRADING (WEIGHTS)

Class participation	20%
Assignment #1	20%
Assignment #2	30%
<i>of which:</i>	20% paperwork
	10% slideshow
<u>Tests</u>	<u>30%</u>
Final grade	100%

GRADE SCALE

A	93-100%
A/B	89-92%
B	83-88%
B/C	79-82%
C	70-78%
D	60-69%
F	< 59%