

# BEHAVIOR AND THEORY IN ORGANIZATIONS – MGT 308

Department of Management  
College of Business Administration  
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse  
Spring 2008

Professor:	Davide Secchi	Classes:	MW 2:15-3:40pm
Telephone:	(608) 758.6664	Room:	CWH 138
Office:	Wimberly Hall, Room 418I	Office hours:	MW 11:00-12:30pm T 3:30-5:30pm and by appointment
email:	<a href="mailto:secchi.davi@uwlax.edu">secchi.davi@uwlax.edu</a>	Credits:	3.0

## *Welcome students!*

This course provides an introduction to Organizational Behavior and Theory. It covers some basic concepts of organizational theory such as organizational environment, structure and design, organizational culture, and strategy and goals. Emphasis is on key individual and group level behavioral processes deemed essential for effective management. They include perception, motivation, communication, and group dynamics. The course introduces you to basic management concepts, and helps you to understand how people make decisions both at individual and social level.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course has two sets of objectives. The first is broad in kind while the second deals with the specific issues that we discuss during the semester.

### *Main objectives*

First and foremost, management is a living discipline in the sense that it means nothing without its practical validation. It has to do with real-life situation, and offers tools, models, theories, approaches, and concepts to understand, analyze, and solve them. Management is about creativity, knowledge, challenge, learning, explaining, and a lot of other variables. At its core, management is about human beings, and the way they learn, explain, lead, organize, control, etc. in a social, and defined environment. It is about reasoning. This is what I expect from you: to understand how managers think, and to learn how to understand, and analyze variables from a managerial viewpoint.

As a first goal, you will understand that management (whatever you define it) will enrich your personality in many ways. It deals with problems that change every time (“tomorrow always arrives, and is always different!” writes the management guru Peter F. Drucker). This is what defines organizations as complex systems but, as you will see,

there is plenty of tools that might help your analytical capabilities. However, these tools cannot in any case substitute your capabilities as a problem solver (and fast decision maker!): they help you in your work, that's it. The most powerful tool means nothing if you don't know what it is for.

Second, you will understand that any attempt to make firm divisions between scientific domains leads to nothing. You will learn that being open-minded is a fundamental prerequisite for effective business leaders. That is to say that you need information from different disciplinary perspectives. Being able to organize them in the right way is the thing you are always asked to do in organizational settings.

### *Specific objectives*

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

- have a clear overview of the many issues that define management as a scientific discipline, and a practical wisdom
- analyze human behavior in its basic components, such as rationality, emotional intelligence, and decision making
- frame individual behavior when they are part of an organization
- help you to get a picture of how complex working organizations might be
- investigate the nature of organizational behavior
- understand that what motivates individuals in organizations (a) is not the same for everybody, (b) changes as time goes by, and (c) affects the way people behave

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### *Assignment #1 – Verify and analyze business information*

Find a newspaper article (see journals list below) that deals with something you think it is worth interesting for management and/or organizational behavior. Then follow the instructions:

1. read, and analyze carefully
2. verify the information found on the paper through the web, email to the main players (managers, journalists, the editorial board, or any person you think should help to confirm or clarify the information), other journal articles, or other sources you may find appropriate. The higher the number of sources, the higher the quality of information
3. understand, and analyze the business case
4. define pros and cons or strengths and weaknesses
5. write a report of 1,000 words (a) summarizing the business case, (b) making an integration with the different sources you found, and (c) explaining what is the value of using different sources of information, and how this helped you to change your mind or to reinforce your original ideas

Journals list: The Economist, Financial Times, New York Times, Washington Post, Business Week, also local newspaper, and other journals of this kind (non U.S. journals are welcome too).

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: March 12**

*Assignment #2 – Class information in practice: business case, and discussion*

Find a company, and analyze behavior in relation to *one* of the following topics:

- corporate strategy
- socially responsible behavior & business ethics
- human resources policies
- environmental practices
- conflict management
- all other class topics

I need you to write a short report (about 1,000 words) on what the company is doing on the selected issue, and to define how concepts we discuss in class are useful/helpful to understand corporate behavior. Follow the guidelines:

- (1) choose one issue, read the related pages of the textbook, and look for further information on management journals in UWL databases;
- (2) find the company that looks interesting from that perspective (the case might be interesting in positive or negative terms);
- (3) write a paper where you (a) describe the case, (b) present points of interest, (c) include critical notes, and your opinion;
- (4) send the paper to me, so that I can upload it on D2L, and everybody can read it, and get prepared for class discussion;
- (5) define the core points of interest and set up slides for class presentation, and discussion.

Evaluation is based on the slideshow effectiveness (40%), and on the paper (60%). Your grade increases in relation to the use of concept, models, theories, and approaches to understand, and analyze the business case.

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: presentation time depends on mutual agreement; paper: no later than April 30**

## **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE \***

Week 1	January 28, 30	Introduction Principles of Management	Chapter 1
Week 2	February 4, 6	Managerial Functions, and Roles	Chapter 1-2

---

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

Week 3	February 11, 13	Defining organizations	Chapter 2 & Scott 2003
Week 4	February 18, 20	The manager as a person Ethics & business: An Oxymoron?	Chapter 3 Chapter 4
Week 5	February 25, 27	More on responsible management Diversity	Chapter 4 Chapter 5
Week 6	March 3  March 5	Test 1 on introductory issues, and principles of management (chapters 1,2, 3 class notes, slides, and assigned readings) Think global, act local	Donaldson 1996
Week 7	March 10, 12	World trends and globalization Introduction to decision-making	Chapter 6 Chapter 7
Week 8	March 23, 25	Are you rational? Strategic management: A focused introduction	Chapter 7 Chapter 8
Week 9	March 31 April 2	Organizational control & change	Chapter 11
Week 10	April 7  April 9	Test 2 on ethics, social responsibility, environmental management, diversity, and global issues (chapters 4-7, class notes, slides, and assigned readings) Human Resources Management	Chapter 12
Week 11	April 14, 16	An Introduction to Human Resources Management & Motivation	Chapter 12, Chapter 13
Week 12	April 21, 23	What pays more an effective worker? Is Taylorism back? Leadership	Chapter 13 Chapter 14
Week 13	April 28, 30	Tell me who you lead, and I'll tell you who you are (or models of leadership) Communication & management	Chapter 14 Chapter 16

Week 14 May 5, 7

Conflict management  
Course overview

Chapter 17

Final test Tuesday, May 13  
7:45-9:45

Test 3 on the last part (chapters 8, 11,  
12, 13, 14, 16, and 17)

## REFERENCES

**Required book:** Jones G.R., and George J.M. 2006. *Contemporary Management*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill

**Readings:** Scott, W.R. 2003. *Organizations. Rational, Natural, and Open Systems* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. (first chapter)

Marrewijk, M. van 2003. Concepts and definitions of CSR and corporate sustainability: Between agency and communion. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 44: 95-105.

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

Other readings will be assigned.

### *A note on plagiarism*

**plagiarism n.** 1. copying what somebody else has written or taking somebody's else's idea and trying to pass it off as original; 2. something copied from somebody else's work, or somebody else's idea that somebody presents as his or her own.

If I don't provide you with the information related to this definition (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999) I behave like a plagiarist.

A widely accepted academic (and legislative, in some nations) rule states that you must provide written evidence of material used in your work when it belongs to (has been created by) another person. In any case, you want to make sources of information explicit in your work.

The reproduction of a single part or of the whole work without any reference to the original author is commonly known as "plagiarism." Personally, I don't want you to be scared about UW-L policies on plagiarism. However, you will be scared about *my* policy on this issue: plagiarism leads automatically to an "F" in relation to the assignment, and thus biases the whole final grade (i.e. you fail the class). I think that plagiarism is something to be avoided since it displays no consideration for the others' work, and a clear attempt to cheat. This is not admitted in any case. It reveals the lacking of fundamental moral attitudes, fundamental for you as a person, and for you as a worker.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

I think that taking part to class lectures is fundamental. Therefore, my suggestion is to attend this class every time it is scheduled. Your evaluation is based on:

- (a) your active (or proactive) participation in class activities,
- (b) homework quality, and
- (c) the extent to which you will develop your creativity.

## **GRADING (WEIGHTS)**

Class participation	15%
Assignments	30%
<i>Of which: #1</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>#2</i>	<i>20%</i>
Tests	55%
<i>Of which: First</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Second</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>Third</i>	<i>20%</i>
<hr/>	
Final grade	100%

## **GRADE SCALE**

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