Teaming: The art and science of collaboration
GB.2351.10 – Spring 2017

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Course Summary
Whether you are an entrepreneur or a high-tech CEO, whether you work in finance or consulting, your success at work depends on your ability to collaborate and motivate others to do so. Organizations today bring together groups, teams, and networks, sometimes without creating a clear chain of command, stable roles and established boundaries. In these more fluid and dynamic leadership situations, 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 course has three primary goals. First, it teaches the science of collaboration: concepts from social scientific research will help you analyze and diagnose group dynamics and determine your strategic options as a manager and leader. The second goal is to teach the art of teaming: you will gain practical interpersonal skills for implementing effective strategies for group situations. Finally, the third goal is to teach how technological change affects your work—what type of leadership is needed in the digital age and how can you adjust in a constantly changing technological environment? The course is intended for anyone who leads or works with other people—particularly students who seek to become more effective at collaborating and helping others to collaborate.

Course objectives
The first goal of the course is to provide a model of creating and leading groups and teams that complements more traditional models of management. To this end, we will be developing frameworks (based in social science) for analyzing groups’ goals and options. We will answer questions such as how to choose and motivate group members, how to structure decisions in teams, how to enhance group creativity and innovation, and how to manage the conflict that sometimes arises in group contexts.

Second, the approach of the course is based on the belief that a conceptual understanding of optimal strategies (the science of collaboration) is of little use without the behavioral skills required to implement these strategies (the art of collaboration). To this end, the course emphasizes cases and exercises that let you apply the concepts concretely. You will analyze cases that illustrate dynamic social interaction processes that can either facilitate or impede success. You will also participate in 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 your team skills and leadership abilities.
A final goal entails understanding the effects of technology on collaboration and leading teams. In the past decade or so, new communication technologies have enabled new forms of working and organizing – virtual worlds that are significantly different from traditional forms of doing business. However, at the core of these new forms are the people who are using technology to support their work and organizations. We will explore how teams, and their members, are influenced and constrained by such new technologies.

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 in the second class that will exist throughout the semester 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:

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. More than three absences will result in a failing participation grade, which will severely impact your grade in this course. If you anticipate missing more than three 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.

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 or exercise.
- 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, 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: February 15
(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: March 1**

(4) **Collaboration and 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 semester. 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 these forms 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: April 19**

(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 3

Guidelines 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**: Personal integrity and professionalism are fundamental values of the Stern MBA program. This course will be conducted in strict conformity with the Stern Honor Code. The Code and related procedures can be found at http://www.stern.nyu.edu/cons/groups/content/documents/webasset/con_036267.doc I encourage you to refresh yourself on its contents or see me if you are uncertain about what represents an honor code violation.

**Academic Accomodations**: If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation during this course, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD, 212-998-4980; www.nyu.edu/csd/) and provide me with a letter from them verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend.
CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

1st Session:  Introduction to teams and team building  (Feb 8)
Readings:    LL:  Introduction and Chapter 1
In Class:    Introduction to the course
              Team exercise

2nd Session:  Group Performance and Creativity  (Feb 15)
Readings:    CP:  HBS CASE: A note for analyzing work groups (Merit Case)
              Thompson, Leigh.  (2014).  Making the Team.  Chapter 2:
              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
3rd Session: Creativity and conflict (Feb 22)

Readings:
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 (March 1)

Readings:
CP: HBS CASE: The Overhead Reduction Task Force (ORTF)

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

Due: Group ORTF Case analysis (questions in the assignment section, page 4)
5th Session: Group Design  (March 8)

LL: Chapters 7 & 8

In class: Production Exercise

Handout: Leadership Assessment Questionnaire

6th Session: Leading in the Team Environment  (March 22)


LL: Chapter 9

In class: Tanagram Production Exercise

7th Session: Teams under Uncertainty  (March 29)


In class: Counterterrorism Task Force Exercise
8th Session: Virtual Teams: Trust and Organizational Issues (April 5)

   http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/03/pycon-2013-sexism-dongle-richards
   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?

9th Session: Culture, Diversity and Teamwork (April 12)

   CASE: Neeley T. and T.J. DeLong Managing a Global Team: Greg James at Sun Microsystems, Inc. 409003-PDF-ENG

In class: Social Identity Exercise – complete grid and bring to class.

Case Discussion: Sun Microsystems

   How well has James managed his team? Who is responsible for the H.S. Holding crisis? What role did the “Open Work”
environment play in the case? What should James do moving forward?

**10th Session: Communicating within and across group boundaries** (April 19)

Readings:
- 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

**11th Session: Building a team-based organization** (April 26)

Readings:

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 were made regarding (1) task design, (2) organizational context, (3) strategy (culture and communication), (4) leadership, and (5) decision making. What were the consequences of these decisions? Should Stayer have let the workers vote on acquiring a new plant?

Qualitative Feedback Exercise

**12th Session: Wrap-up** (May 3)

Readings: NONE!

In class: Group Project Final Presentations

Due: Final group paper