



MB021: ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

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MB021.06 – Tue & Thu 1:30-2:45, Fulton 135

MB021.05 – Tue & Thu 3:00-4:15, Fulton 135

Course website: BlackBoard Vista (<https://cms.bc.edu>)

COURSE OVERVIEW

The main goal of this course is to help you understand how organizations work and how to deal with people in organizations. To do so, we will examine these phenomena from three different points of view: the individual, the group, and the organization as a whole. We will also address many different questions related to organizational life, such as how to motivate people, why people work in teams, and what is the most efficient type of organization. At the end of this course, you will be able to understand how various organizational elements (e.g. organizational structure, teams, networks, knowledge and learning) relate to each other, and what is the best way to bring them all together to build and run an effective organization. This knowledge can help you considerably in your future professional life, both as employees and as managers of organizations, providing you with the tools and the knowledge necessary to manage other people as well as your own career.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY & STRUCTURE

The most important feature of this course is the way we will try to accomplish its goal: i.e., by simulating the organizational environment as much as possible. I have chosen this course structure for two main reasons. First, I see you as grown up individuals who are here to learn about important issues that will affect your future lives and careers. Therefore, not only I think that you are ready to take responsibility for your own actions, but I know that you demand such challenge (you would not be at this university, if it were otherwise). Second, I believe that the best way to learn about organizations and people in organizations is to make your experience as close to the 'real thing' as possible. Therefore, during the class you will be working individually and in teams 'as if' you were part of an organization. Below I will start to explain what this means in terms of your involvement in the class and how it translates into your evaluation for the course.

Class activities. You will be required to contribute to this course both at the individual and at the team level. In almost any organization you will join, you will be expected to contribute to solve the problems the organization is facing through creative thinking, proactive behavior, and the like, both individually and as a member of one or more teams. In our class, we will try to relate as much as possible the theories and the concepts we introduce to actual organizational problems. This will be done by using class exercises and discussions, as well as readings from the textbook and from the business press. The use of case studies, especially in the latter part of the semester, is an example of this attempt to apply what we learn to actual situations: cases analyses and discussions will sharpen your

ability to identify course concepts in actual organization settings and to apply these concepts in decision-making situations.

While your individual contribution is quite important, even more critical for the smooth functioning of the organization you will join is your team performance. True to the attempt to simulate an organizational environment, an essential part of this course is to provide you with hands-on experience working in teams. I will assign you to a team at the beginning of the course and you will work in teams throughout the semester: my goal is to help you become familiar with this common element of today's organizations. Since teams are critical in today's organizations, employers actively look for this crucial job skill in new hires: thus, learning how to work in teams is an additional skill that could provide you with competitive edge in getting a job and building your career.

The course structure also provides valuable opportunities for you to practice leadership and negotiation skills in a context in which mistakes do not have far-reaching consequences (as they might in an actual work setting).

Computer skills are also critical in today's organizations and will therefore be important in the class. The course will rely heavily on the Internet. First, the schedule, the materials and the assignments will be constantly updated on our website, which means that you will have to go on the Web very often (i.e., at least once a week). Second, I will rely on email for my communication with you and hope you will do the same, which means that you should check your email frequently.

Course requirements and grading. Consistently with the basic philosophy of the course (and with your future professional career), you will be evaluated on the basis of your individual and team performance. In the table below, you can find a summary of the assignments for the class.

Type	Category	Assignment	Length	Weight
Individual 45%	Exam 15%	Midterm I	1 hr, 15 m	15%
	Exam 15%	Midterm II	1 hr, 15 m	15%
	Other 15%	Class Participation		15%
Group 55%	Team Project 35%	Presentation + Report	20 m + 12 pp. max	35%
	In-Class Team Activities 20%	Case studies discussion		10%
		In class debates	10-15 m each	10%

Your grade is determined by your performance on two exams, a group project (consisting of a presentation and a final report), a series of in-class team assignments and class participation.

The format for all the assignments you will be required to turn in is single-spaced, 1 inch all-around margins, 12-font. I expect all assignments to look professional, which means that (as a minimum) yours or your team name should show up in the header, together with the date and the name of the assignment. Also, make sure to proofread your work; you will lose in case of grammar and spelling mistakes. The due dates for each assignment are on the schedule. An initial (but not permanent) copy can be found on the back of this syllabus; however, since the schedule may well change, make sure you consult it frequently on our website.

Individual requirements: exams. There will be two midterm exams during the semester. They will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, true-false, and short essays questions and will be closed book. Questions will cover the readings from the textbook, the material on our website, class handouts and activities (including movies) and the content of our class discussions. Each midterm is worth 15% of your final grade. The class has no final, which will allow us to put even more emphasis on class activities and to focus on a semester-long team project. I believe that several of you might welcome the absence of a final, given the extra pressure you receive from most of your other classes, around that time of the year. As a consequence, the course is more heavily front-loaded than you are used to; I made this choice also out of necessity, since I need to provide you with the basics of OB before moving on to the actual analysis of cases, during the second part of the semester.

Make-up exams are only given for documented illnesses or emergencies for which you will have notified me within 24 hours from the time of the exam, either via phone or email. If you fail to show up for the scheduled exam or for an arranged make-up exam, you will receive 0 (zero) points for it.

Individual requirements: class participation. Class participation depends on the quality of your contribution to class discussion. Quality contributions are those that are relevant to the class and expressed in an appropriate manner (e.g., not rude or insulting to anyone). As it is often the case, quantity does not make up for quality: in fact, short, to-the-point comments are usually of much better quality than rambling comments and have a much higher impact on your participation grade. More often than not, I will ask you to explain your comments. In order to hear from everybody, I will also randomly call on people. If you really do not like to talk in class or cannot find the time to do so, you can send your comments via email directly to me. These email comments will go toward participation; I will accept them before the class to which they pertain and up to midnight of the day of such class. However, email is definitely not sufficient to get 100% of the class participation grade. I strongly recommend trying to participate in class: the nature of a direct interaction has usually the benefit of allowing additional comments on a specific comment, and therefore tends to have more impact. Moreover, since we are simulating a real organizational setting, you need to get ready as much as possible to support your ideas in a public setting. Of course, I expect that you will be thoroughly prepared to discuss the course material assigned for each class period. In addition to class discussions, we will also have some in-class exercises and activities during the semester to which I expect you will participate.

I will also take class attendance using a class roster which will be circulated at the beginning of each class. It is your responsibility to make sure you have signed the sheet by the time it gets back to me. Going back to the philosophy of this class, I expect that, as much as you would show up for work every day (unless there is a very good reason not to), you will be present (and punctual) to class and that you will stay for the entire class. AS it would be the case in an organizational setting, if you won't be able to make the class I expect you to inform me in advance (in person or via e-mail) of your absence.

Group requirements: team project. At the beginning of the year, I will assign you to different teams, usually with three to six people each. These teams will work together on all the group assignments. In completing the team project, your team will act as a group of consultants, using concepts discussed in class to analyze a problem or situation currently faced by a prominent organization. The deliverables of such process are a presentation and a report, which both equally count toward your final grade. A detailed description of the team project is provided on our website.

Group requirements: in-class team activities. Given that 20% of your grade comes from in-class team activities, you should never underestimate coming to class prepared. There are two different types of in-class team activities: case studies discussion and debates. We will have two case studies discussions, late in the semester. You will read the cases beforehand and during class we will work on specific questions and/or attempts to find solutions to issues that are illustrated in the cases. Since this is a very effective way to put together actual organizational problems and theories you have learned during class, your participation in these discussions will affect strongly your participation grade for the entire class. Remember that your will be graded on your participation to these discussions as a team: this means that having one member of the team monopolize the conversation or act as team spokesperson will not result in the best grade.

As for the in-class debates, they respond to my intention of running the class as much as possible as a real organization. During their lifetime, actual organizations run into crisis situations that leave them scrambling for solutions that can make a difference between life and death. Given our attempt to simulate the organizational context, we will have daily debates on the day's topic. The twist is that you will find out who does the debate and its topic just the day before the class, which will (in a way) simulate a crisis in an actual organization, requiring you to manage the situation in an effective and efficient way. Given that you need to be prepared on the material anyway, this should not add too much last-minute strain on your schedule: the best teams find ways to effectively coordinate (the key word here is coordination) and will not take more than 30-60 minutes to prep for this activity.

Remember that your individual participation grade will be impacted by your participation throughout the semester, and not only in by what happens during these two activities.

Extra-credit opportunities: exceptional contribution to classroom discussion. You can earn an extra three percentage points in your final grade by making an exceptional contribution to class discussion, over the course of the semester. I will assign these extra points when calculating final grades.

COURSE MATERIALS

The required materials for this course are:

- ❑ *Organizational behavior*, by J.M. George & G.R. Jones (4th edition is ok; 3rd may be acceptable, but talk to me about it)
- ❑ *Articles & other additional material*, posted on our website or handed out in class
- ❑ *Cases*, available on our website or through the BC Bookstore

While I took the job of selecting the textbook very seriously, spending several days going through all the available books for this course (if you come by for office hours, I can show you the stack of 20+ books I have gone through), the book has still the typical limitations of a textbook. That is, while it provides you with the theoretical foundations of what we discuss in class, it cannot keep the pace of today's events, sometimes it reads a little dry and other times it is downright boring. For this reason, I will supplement it with additional material, which will be posted on our website. In addition, I reserve the right to add or substitute material as I see fit for the final goal of enhancing your learning experience. This means that it is critical that you check our website frequently (i.e., at least once before each class) for changes and additions to readings and assignments. In case you have any trouble retrieving the material I posted, please contact me right away so that I will make sure everything is online and running.

GRADING

I strongly dislike to grade on a curve, so I typically don't do it. This means that it is technically possible for the entire class to get an 'A', although this is extremely unlikely. Normally, the median grade in my classes is between B and B+. I usually grade all assignments by giving a percentage score, which translate to letter grades as follows:

Percentage Range	Letter Grade	Percentage Range	Letter Grade
93.0 – 100	A	73.0 – 76.9	C
90.0 – 92.9	A-	70.0 – 72.9	C-
87.0 – 89.9	B+	67.0 – 69.9	D+
83.0 – 86.9	B	63.0 – 66.9	D
80.0 – 82.9	B-	60.0 – 62.9	D-
77.0 – 79.9	C+	00.0 – 59.9	F

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- 1) As already mentioned, if necessary I will make changes to course requirements, assignments and other related policies listed in this document. Such changes will be reflected in an updated readings and assignment schedule on our website. It is your responsibility to periodically to check the schedule for such chances.
- 2) Additional readings may be distributed in class and/or posted on our website. It is your responsibility to show up to class to get them (or to obtain them from classmates if you are unable to make it to class) and/or to download them from the Web.
- 3) If you have any documented disabilities that may impair your performance in the course and/or require special accommodation, it is your responsibility to let me know about them. Please consult with me early in the semester and I will do whatever I can to support your learning.

- 4) Except for the exceptional contribution to class discussion, there are no extra credit opportunities in this course. You cannot do anything for extra credit if you get a bad grade on a test or assignment. The course structured so that no one single component dominates the final grade. If you do poorly on one component, you should focus and redouble your efforts on other components rather than spending time on an extra credit assignment. After all, this is the way things work in real organizations.
- 5) The best way to prep for the exam is to review the slides and the material we focused on during each class: this will give you a good idea of what to focus on in preparing for exams. Around 90% (if not more) of what is in the exam has been at least touched upon in class. We will not have in-class review sessions (unless you can make a good argument for why we should – so far, I have yet to hear one, but I am very open to hear one from you).

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

- 1) You are accountable for your own class attendance behavior. If you know you will be absent from class, I expect you to notify me in advance or, in the case of an emergency, as soon as possible afterward. My contact information is listed on the front of this syllabus.
- 2) I expect you to behave in a professional manner toward your classmates and me. While I know that ‘stuff happens’, chronic tardiness and in-class interruptions are disruptive to the class. If you know you will be late to class or have to leave early, you need to notify me in advance. Please leave cellular phones and beepers turned off or at home. Think about it: what would your boss think/do if your cell phone starts ringing in the middle of a meeting?
- 3) I am extremely meticulous when assessing your work. However, I think it is fair to leave you the opportunity to contest your grade. To dispute the grading of an exam answer as well as of any other assignment, you must follow the procedure described below:
 - a. write a one-paragraph explanation of why you believe your answer to be correct or your assignment to be graded unfairly. Submit this explanation to me within one week of the communication/posting of the exam or assignment results. Your explanation must be documented with appropriate references from course materials;
 - b. within one week of the receipt of your request I will return my re-evaluation of your assignment to you. Please notice that re-grading implies that the grade can be adjusted either upward or downward. This is true of both the individual and the group grade that are contested. If you have additional questions after reviewing my re-evaluation, make an appointment to discuss your questions;
 - c. no complaints will be accepted after a week from the communication/posting of the exam or assignment results.
- 4) One foundations of this class is reciprocal respect and understanding. If something is interfering with your class performance, come in and discuss it with me. I value openness and I am available 24/7 to solve a problem together. On the other hand, I abhor dishonesty and misrepresentation, which I will prosecute to the fullest extent.
- 5) I strongly discourage the use of laptops in the class. I know how easy it is to be distracted by the opportunity to go online, and I prefer removing that temptation altogether.

MISCELLANEOUS

I like my classroom to be informal, alive, talkative, argumentative, interruptive, happy and humorous. I love people who are willing to take a chance on being wrong. I give lots of participation (or 'effort') points to people who try out ideas in class. Warning: sometimes I joke with people. For example, if somebody says something wrong in class, do not be surprised if I say something like 'That is absolutely, 100 percent, unbelievably, WRONG!' When I do say things like that, it means that (a) I am having a little fun, (b) I like you, and (c) I think you can handle it.

Sometimes I call on people (especially quiet people). If you do not know the answer, do not worry about it: the purpose of our discussion is not evaluation. In addition, I do not assume people are incompetent just because they did not have an answer on the tip of their tongue. You could always email me afterwards (until midnight of that day) with your comments. This course is a lot of work. There is a lot of reading, although not so many written assignments. In addition, working in teams requires a lot of coordination. I think you will find, as your colleagues in previous years have, that it is all worth it, but you must plan accordingly! It would be a really big mistake to assume that this will be your easy course this semester. My goal in this course is to prepare you to work in today's corporate environment. I take this very seriously and I am quite confident that if you work hard in this course, you will be ready. One thing I can promise you in return is that you will learn things that are incredibly valuable for your future career and that at the end of the semester you will not regret one bit having taken it. Feel free to ask students who have taken this class before or check on my PEPs (although I am sure you have done that already), and you will see that this is indeed true. For many of you this is the only OB class during your time at BC; thus, it is my intention to give you your money's worth. The way I see it is that if you are at BC it means that you are 'expecting excellence'. If you still have doubts, check with people who have already taken my class and ask them if they learned something from it and if they would recommend it. I already know their answer.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity. All students are expected to understand the University's rules and guidelines on plagiarism, colluding, cheating and other breaches of the policy and are encouraged to read the guidelines at:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>.

CSOM takes the University's policy very seriously. Students who violate the policy should expect to be penalized according to the University procedures. Penalties may include: grading penalties with notification of the dean, "university probation, suspension, or expulsion, all of which become part of a student's academic record and are reportable to graduate/professional schools and outside agencies."

The increased use of the Internet has caused many cases of plagiarism and insufficient credit attribution to arise. Students using the Internet for research must be very clear when citing their sources. (This does not mean citing the Web page. There are formal citation guidelines you are expected to follow.) The library's Web site provides a list of writing resources to assist students in citing sources. These resources can be found at

<http://bc.edu/libraries/resources/readyref/#writ>.

Students, faculty and deans are all expected to promote the academic integrity of members of the University community. If there is any confusion about what is expected of you, please address the issue with your professor or dean *prior to* turning in an assignment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Below I provide an indicative course schedule, as of the first day of class. This schedule, however, is only indicative. As I have already mentioned, it can change during the semester. The rationale is that I want to keep open my options to improve the course throughout the semester (rather than lock up a decision on specific content before the class begins), since this will allow me to deliver a higher quality class.

Therefore, you must check the schedule before each class. Do not print it out at the beginning of the semester and then assume it will be valid a month later, because it is likely that it will not be. Homework is always **due by 9am on the day listed** in the schedule. You are responsible for completing all the readings before coming to each class: failure to do so will impact negatively your participation grade.

Legend: G&J = George & Jones, *Organizational Behavior* (4th edition)
W = Web (BlackBoard Vista)

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments due
Tu 1/15	Course overview & introductions. What is organizational behavior?		
Th 1/17	Intro to OB. Overview of main concepts, history. Starting teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • G&J 1 (main concepts, history) 	
Tu 1/22	Individuals in organizations. What makes you different from your co-worker? Personality & ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on Personality (W) • G&J 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reply to my welcome email • Personality inventory (Web survey)
Th 1/24	Satisfaction and motivation. How satisfied are you with your job? Values, attitudes and moods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article on Affect (W) • G&J 3 	
Tu 1/29	The cognitive side of individuals. Perception and attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 4 	
Th 1/31	Satisfaction and motivation. What makes you tick at work? Theories of work motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on Motivation (W) • G&J 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles of incorporation (up to five pages)
Tu 2/5	Satisfaction and motivation. How to motivate people: Job design, goal setting & other motivational techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 7 • G&J 8 (selected parts) 	

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments due
Th 2/7	Why (and how) should we work together? The nature and management of work groups and teams, I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring material for the 'PT in-class exercise'
Tu 2/12	Why (and how) should we work together? The nature and management of work groups and teams, II		
Th 2/14	Why (and how) should we work together? The nature and management of work groups and teams, III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch '12 Angry men' on BC Cable
Tu 2/19	Why (and how) should we work together? The nature and management of work groups and teams, IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on Teams (W) 	
Th 2/21	Midterm exam I		
Tu 2/26	Why did I have good and bad bosses? Of leaders versus managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on Leadership (W) • G&J 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team project proposal (one page)
Th 2/28	How can I get my way? Negotiating in organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on Negotiation (W) 	
Tu 3/4	Spring break!		
Th 3/6	Spring break!		
Tu 3/11	To be, not to be, or something else? The art of decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 15 (selected parts) 	
Th 3/13	Why do organizations come in so many flavors? Organizational structure and culture, I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 16 	
Tu 3/18	Why do organizations come in so many flavors? Organizational structure and culture, II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&J 17 	
Th 3/20	Easter break!		
Tu 3/25	What is the most efficient type of organization? Determinants of organizational structure and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on Culture (W) 	

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments due
Th 3/27	Midterm exam II		
Tu 4/1	Talking the talk and walking the walk. Ethics and corporate social responsibility I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles on Ethics and CSR I (W) 	
Th 4/3	Talking the talk and walking the walk. Ethics and corporate social responsibility II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles on Ethics and CSR II (W) 	
Tu 4/8	Do relationships matter? Intra- and interorganizational networks, I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles on Networks (W) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from the Kevin Bacon game
Th 4/10	Do relationships matter? Intra- and interorganizational networks, II		
Tu 4/15	Getting to know what you know. Learning in and by organizations, I Case #1 discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G&J 5 Case #1 (W) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case #1 in-class team discussion
Th 4/17	Getting to know what you know. Learning in and by organizations, II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles on Knowledge (W) 	
Tu 4/22	How do I make things better in my organization? Organizational change and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G&J 18 	
Th 4/24	Case #2 discussion Class wrap up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap-up articles (W) Case #2 (BC bookstore) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case #2 in-class team discussion
Tu 4/29	Team presentations, I		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All in-class presentations (PowerPoint slides and accompanying material)
Th 5/1	Team presentations, II		
Tu 5/6			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report , 4pm on our website