

Leadership in Complex Organizations MLS:5321
College of Liberal Arts
University of Texas at El Paso
Online
June 8, 2020 through July 31, 2020

Instructor Information:

Mari Noopila, Ph.D.
Office Location: Kelly Hall Room 409
Phone: 575-571-7300 (mobile)
Email: mynoopila@utep.edu
Office Hours: By appointment (online, Skype and telephone office hours available).

Introduction

Complexity, speed, span of operations, rapidly forming consciously contrived teams as well as self-organizing groups, organizational porousness, heightened vulnerability, proliferation of information, expanding systemic uncertainty, ephemerality, and constantly reassembling structures are just some of the features that mark the world of the modern organization. It can, then, come as little surprise that traditional approaches to organizational theory are in danger of breaking apart on the shoals of the contemporary world. What remains of the “traditional” organization is sped up to the pace of modernity, where that acceleration in-and-of-itself makes the old new and largely unrecognizable. Managers and the managed now find they must be ready to remake themselves, retrain, adapt at rapid pace, and keep attachments to structure at only the level of necessity in order to meet organizational needs and challenges with appropriate agility and application of resources.

Even organizations oriented to small niches or organizations small in resources and numbers of personnel are required to have a degree of complexity that would have been unimagined a decade ago. With the rise of complexity comes the rise of uncertainty and a more redolent possibility of catastrophe and failure. This course is designed to introduce you to some of the problems that face modern organizations and how to organize, control, and generally manage these problems in complex environments. The goals of the course are to:

- 1) Familiarize you with the means for leaders to manage organizational complexity;
- 2) Provide a rich background of examples that will provide practical guidance for you when you find yourself in difficult organizational situations; and
- 3) Help you plot and prepare for organizational change that will be upon us in the coming months and years.

Required Texts and Supplemental Readings:

Dweck, Carol S. 2006. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success; How We Can Learn to fulfill Our Potential*. New York: Ballantine Books. ISBN: 978-0-345-47232-8.
Senge, Peter M. 2006. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Currency/Doubleday. ISBN 978-0-385-51725-6.
Holmes, Jamie. 2015. *Nonsense: The Power of Not Knowing*. New York: Broadway Books. ISBN 978-0-385-34839-3. Various readings and media available on Blackboard.

**You must have access to a computer, or mobile phone with access to the internet. I will ask you to access presentation software, articles, podcasts, videos, and take part in class activities etc.

Supplemental Reading Sources:

Access to a computer, a printer, the internet, an active UTEP e-mail address, and an active Blackboard account are necessary. I will be posting additional course materials online for students to access.

Required Readings: Throughout the semester you will be required to read the text books and various articles that will help you understand the course content and will assist you with the weekly writing activities. The professor will provide you with the articles or links to the articles that will be used in the class. All materials should be read before attending class for the week. You should be familiar enough with the reading material that you are able to participate in the in-class activities/review.

Online Videos: In addition to the above resources I may ask that you view assigned videos or pod casts that will be discussed in class and that will help you with the weekly writing activities.

Course Description and Objectives

This course examines leadership in complex situations and operating environments, e.g., situations with multiple contexts, constituencies, and functions. Organizations of all sizes, government agencies, military organizations, and corporations face a variety of complex problems, some of which cross organizational boundaries. These situations may involve contending with rapid change in markets or technology, downsizing/rightsizing, or leading collaborative work in a shared-power world.

This course will study the nature of these unique and complex problems that organizations face and the ways in which they have been addressed. Principles from texts and articles on organizational learning and collaboration will be applied to cases of current and previous public and private sector problems.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

- Understand the nature of the unique and complex problems and operating environments faced by organizations.
- Analyze the strategies that organizations have used to address these problems.
- Understand and apply the principles of learning organizations to complex problems.
- Identify the habits of mind and behaviors of successful leaders in these situations.
- Develop integrative and collaborative leadership approaches to complex organizational challenges.

Faculty Availability and Responsiveness:

Available by appointment, please contact me to arrange a meeting time. Any correspondence should be through email or Blackboard email. You can expect a response from me within 24-48 hours during the regular Monday-Friday week, please allow more time during the weekend for correspondence.

Teaching Philosophy:

My classroom is one of respect, competence, and forward thinking. As an educator-scholar my classroom, whether it be face-to-face, hybrid, or online is one that recognizes everyone brings a unique lived experience and knowledge to the table. I make sure that students feel comfortable with sharing their experiences, and I encourage that students let their voice be heard. By consideration of the diverse classroom dynamics that the environment consumes, I seek to establish a supportive, collaborative, encouraging places where all students have the opportunity and desire to thrive. In my classroom, students are in a safe space where they are encouraged to share, take risks, and reflectively learn from their experiences. Through innovative instruction, a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, my classroom uses technology-enhanced learning, service learning and professional development, and a

continuous dedication to rigorous research. My role in the classroom is that of an engaged facilitator who involves students in the experiential application of leadership concepts and theories.

Course Policies and Expectations:

All assignments and major projects are to be presented by the due date. An absence means forfeiting the grade for those assignments. If the homework is late, it will be given a 0. For written assignments, I expect that students will consult APA style manuals for the guidelines required for college-level academic writing. I expect that the course's major speaking assignments will be well researched, rehearsed, and prepared with ample time. I will provide specific guidelines for each assignment in the course.

Multiple submissions: All work submitted in class must be original work. Please do not submit work that you have submitted in another course.

Incomplete grades: An incomplete may be given if a student provides evidence of a documented illness or family crisis that the instructor believes genuinely precluded successful completion of the course.

Make-up work: No make-up work will be accepted. If you miss the deadline for a submission you will receive a 0 for that assignment.

Grades: All work must be submitted on time and using APA style format. Excessive spelling and grammar errors and late papers will impact your grade.

Participation: Each student is expected to read assigned materials on the dates given and to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned content. Students are expected to actively and intently participate in the class discussions, critically engage with the readings, and work collaboratively in the weekly writing activities to learn and to support the learning of peers.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is academic dishonesty and will likely ensure your failing the class. Plagiarism means using another person's ideas, language or other original (not common-knowledge) material without proper acknowledgement of its source. This includes taking information or ideas out of books, from articles, off the Internet, your telephone, from a friend or instructor, and so on. If the ideas or words come from a source or person other than you, you must indicate it in your writing or speech. Never use another student's work. A plagiarized assignment will result in failure, and even further disciplinary action in accordance with UTEP policy is possible. Please become familiar with the guidelines outlined by the student handbook, and if there is any question about this topic, please contact me to schedule a meeting.

Other Policies:

Students are expected to know and observe the published deadlines for (a) dropping the course and (b) withdrawing from the course. These deadlines are published on the Academic Calendar, which is available in the my.utep.edu site, the course catalogue, and is in the Dean's Office, also online <http://catalog.utep.edu/grad/welcome-to-utep/academic-calendar/>.

No competing audio/visual technology in class. Laptops and smart phones may be utilized during our course, but these moments are integrated into the curriculum. Usage of these devices, apart from the course design, will be considered competing.

Official UTEP email accounts are encouraged of every student. All business not dealt with in class will be conducted through UTEP email accounts and students are responsible for checking their accounts for course updates and notifications.

For direction about online course etiquette please visit UTEP's netiquette guide for online courses: <https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/Files/docs/netiquette-guide-for-online-courses.pdf>

Student Conduct:

Students should familiarize themselves with the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures <https://www.utep.edu/vpba/hoop/>. Violation of procedures will result in failure of the class.

While enrolled at the University, a student neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of social responsibility. Any student who engages in conduct that is prohibited by the Board of Regents' *Rules and Regulations* or University rules or by federal, state, or local law is subject to discipline whether such conduct takes place on or off campus or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct. All students are expected and required to obey the law, to show respect for properly constituted authority, and to observe correct standards of conduct.

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) administers student discipline according to established procedures of due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Regents' *Rules and Regulations*, Rule 50101, and in the UTEP's [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#).

The Regents' Rules and Regulations

"All students at the University of El Paso are expected to have read and understood The Regents' *Rules and Regulations*."

"The official copy of the Regents' *Rules and Regulations* is maintained by the Office of the Boards of Regents. The *Rules and Regulations* of the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System for the Government of The University of Texas System were reissued on December 10, 2004."

Handbook of Operating Procedures

Students at the University of Texas at El Paso are encouraged to engage their campus in a positive way. By staying educated on policy and procedure, students can ensure a healthy and productive education at the University of Texas at El Paso.

The UTEP's [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#) contains official policies and procedures for the governance of UTEP. The rules and regulations constituting the HOP must not conflict with any rule or regulation in the Regents' Rules and Regulations.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR). [Avoiding Plagiarism \(PDF\)](#)

Academic Misconduct:

The University of Texas El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

Students in need of accommodations and other support services:

If you have a documented disability that may influence your performance in this class, please consult with The Center for Accommodations and Support Services. They will help determine appropriate, reasonable accommodations. Following the meeting, please make an appointment me during the first weeks of the class, in person, and provide documentation from Center. I will make any reasonable accommodations necessary to assure your success in this course. Please find contact information below.

The University of Texas at El Paso
The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)
Union East Bldg. Room 106
P.O. Box 609
El Paso, Texas 79968-0609

E: cass@utep.edu
P: (915) 747-5148
F: (915) 747-8712

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade will be based upon the following assignments:

Assignments	Points
Weekly Discussion Boards (7x30pts. each)	210
Mini Analysis (2x100pts. each)	200
Statement of Solidarity	100
Final Paper (200)	200
Total	610

Grading scale

90-100% = A
80-89% = B
70-79% = C
60-69% = D
<60% = F

NETIQUETTE

Netiquette involves the rules that govern proper behavior or etiquette when communicating online. There is a tendency to believe that the proper behavior and etiquette of face-to-face communication does not apply to online communication. We are all familiar with stories about improper behavior surrounding emails, tweets, Facebook posts, other social media apps, blogs, etc. Netiquette is being civil online. In this course, we will practice proper netiquette.

DISCUSSION POSTS

Each week, there will be discussion questions. You are responsible for answering each of the questions in the original post as well as responding to at minimum two of your classmates posts. In the posts you are expected to apply what you have learned from the readings and case studies for the week. Use the

readings to engage in an analysis of the case study. Do not simply discuss your opinion. Do not simply regurgitate another student's post. You must provide substantive posts. A substantive post is one that:

1. makes me see that you have done the readings;
2. demonstrates that you have thought about the material;
3. analytically applies ideas and elements from the readings to the case study for the week; and
4. entices your fellow students to engage in further discussion and continue your analysis. While there is no set word limit, strive to keep your discussion posts to 250-300 words.
5. you must use citations and references in your original post and at minimum you need to reference the material that was assigned for the discussion board.

RESPONSE POSTS Each week, you are responsible for responding to at least two of your fellow students' discussion posts.

As with your discussion posts, your response posts should be substantive posts. While there is no set word limit, strive to keep your response posts to 200-250 words. Try to post your original discussion earlier in the week so you will give your classmates time to respond by Sunday. All posts and responses are due by Sunday of each week.

Statement of Solidarity:

Leaders across multiple organizations have taken the opportunity to show their solidarity with the Black community and condemn racism, violence, and police brutality. As a leader within an organization you may be asked to or compelled to write a letter or solidarity for your organization. For this assignment I encourage you to write a letter of solidarity addressing systemic racism and racial violence within the U.S. There are few issues as complex as systemic racism and this exercise should allow you to reflect on how you would approach the important task. There are multiple approaches that you can take when writing the letter, you can approach it as if you were the leader of an organization, a team, institution of education, etc., or if you would prefer to write a personal statement of solidarity you may approach the assignment in that way as well. Either way be creative and authentic in your approach. Please make sure in the title that you explain what perspective you are coming from for example:

Statement of Solidarity from (The Nursing Association)

Statement of Solidarity from (The NCAA)

MINI ANALYSIS 1 & 2

Analysis of Complexity within the Context of Current Events

Students will engage in a critical analysis of leadership and complexity theory and practice, based on readings from the class. My primary concern with this analysis paper is that students engage materials in ways that demonstrate at least three dimensions:

- First, students should demonstrate strong engagement with theories and concepts from the book chapters and readings

- Second, students should engage these materials critically (what is working, what is not; what are strengths and what are limitations).
- Third, students should feel free to explore a variety of ideas that relate to leadership and complexity (what does thinking outside the box really look like?).
- Forth, this paper should specifically address current events that can be analyzed using key concepts and theories presented in the readings.

FINAL PAPER

In this 10 page paper (minimum eight pages of text, not counting the title page and references), you will apply principles, frameworks, lessons learned, etc. from the course readings to a crisis, disaster, or success that you choose (a self-selected case study). View the final paper as an expanded and more in-depth analysis of the weekly case studies we reviewed. Your self-selected case study cannot be one of the case studies examined during the course. Additionally, your self-selected case study must be approved by me. There are many complex cases to choose from; below are only a few examples:

- Flint, Michigan water crisis
- Boston Marathon bombing (response is an organizational success)
- JP Morgan Chase debacle
- the London Whale
- Hurricane Maria – Puerto Rico (response?)
- Homelessness crisis (San Francisco and Los Angeles)
- Blackhawk Down.

The paper must include three parts:

1. a relatively short description of the case study;
2. an analysis of the leadership efforts (quality, effectiveness, etc.), or lack thereof, using appropriate principles from the readings; and
3. Analysis/comment on the leadership lessons to be learned. The analysis (parts 2 and 3) should constitute the main part of the paper. If you cannot locate enough research material to address parts 2 and 3, choose another topic. It is important to identify and draw upon high-quality academic resources. Additional guidelines for the final paper will be available on Blackboard.

QUALITY OF WORK

This is a graduate course and you are expected to produce quality work. Quality work requires being prepared and encompasses both substance and presentation (style, organization, grammar, etc.). Poor presentation distracts from what it is you are trying to communicate. Quality work also includes submitting discussion posts, response posts, and the final paper on time. Barring exigent circumstances, work submitted late will not be accepted. Producing quality work requires more than a minimum effort. In all cases, quality trumps quantity.