



2015-16 PGP II Elective Course Slots IX and X Credits: 0.50 Ver 5

Mysteries in Management		
Area: BP	Faculty: Professor Ajeet N. Mathur	Sessions: 10
Contact Details		
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About this Course

Puzzles are often satisfactorily solved. Mysteries are not. This is because puzzles require thinking through but essentially call for filling information gaps in incomplete patterns or calculating missing values by following routines or by hit-and-trial. In contrast, mysteries need new knowledge creation and until that occurs, mysteries can remain “unthought, unexplained knowns” for long periods. There are numerous mysteries in management that generations have hidden or pretended they do not exist or shrugged off as unimportant or inexplicable. Some may even consider it shameful that in this age of Wikipedia and Google, there are still mysteries in management which we are unable to adequately demystify and which defiantly remind us of human and organizational limits pointing to the need to place a premium on thinking over knowing if we are not to limit management actions only to the definitively known universe.

Mysteries require reaching out for understanding the “logic” underpinning patterns from partially revealed patterns before they can be grasped or comprehended. This may be done in the Upanishadic “*neti, neti*” way by a process of elimination of all but one remaining of all hypotheses considered but that would be possible only for self-evident truths waiting to be discovered in nature. In alternative traditions, one could be encouraging the raising of all plausible working hypotheses and interpretations and sequentially rejecting each explanation with an improved version until only one-the last in a series of successive approximations of reality remains-but only for now. Choices of conceptual convenience require trade-offs between stochastic systems which have underlying determinate laws and any determinate system that may be regarded as the limiting case of a stochastic system

This course covers a selection of ten important mysteries in management together with an attempt to demystify them to the extent it is possible to do so. These are chosen from among a much larger number of mysteries that have continued to intrigue generations of scholars, practitioners, policy-makers and concern some of the most relevant, difficult and controversial aspects of management.

Course Objectives

This course has the following objectives:

- Familiarising participants with how concepts and praxis challenge each other and to the need for persistent questioning of received knowledge, of acknowledged ignorance and of little understood phenomena that makes us wonder
- Developing insights into why certain imbalances such as underrepresentation of women in electoral and professional life in most vocations persists over time and across geographies.
- Understanding the connections between the design of management processes, control systems and organisation structures.
- Building knowledge and skills for insights to conduct inquiries to verify and understand dark sides of leadership, managerial productivity, and management succession.
- Developing curiosity and capacity to investigate and make decisions under uncertainty with a better understanding of boundary conditions that affect scale, scope and sustainability of organizational actions concerning tasks and people and enable pattern recognition of complex management phenomena..

Pedagogy

- Each session will introduce a contextualized mystery in management demystified to the extent of what is known inviting discussion on what more may be knowable. Together with concept building and spaces for reflection, there will be opportunities to enable participants learn from their own experience of grappling with phenomena through exercises.
- Learning through concepts and class praxis will be supplemented with recommended readings, and through class presentations.

Evaluation

The course grade would be based on:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| • Class Preparation and Participation | 25% |
| • Reflective Journal | 50% |
| • Home Assignment | 25% |

The 10-session plan follows:

Session Plan

Session 1

Introduction to the Course.

Mystery One : Is 7 truly a lucky number for team size and 13 really unlucky?

Investment risk in small firms is known to be high and failure incidence sharply reduces when the number of actors reaches 7. A Board size exceeding 12 is also observed to be associated with hiccups when the 13th member is inducted.

Readings:

1. Nothing is Quite So Practical as a Good Theory by Andrew H. Van De Ven, *Academy of Management Review*, October 1989, 14(4), 486-489.
2. Bad Management Theories are destroying Good Management Practices by Sumantra Ghoshal, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 2005, 4(1), 75-81.
3. Rational Fools by Amartya Sen, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer, 1977), pp. 317-344.
4. Research results: why do they seldom reach students? By Barbara Czarniawska (pages 119-130 in *A Theory of Organising*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2008)

Session 2

Mystery Two: Are emotions a disturbance or helpful signals for coping wisely? “Emotional work” is widely recognized as an unavoidable part of human interfaces. This concerns more than inter-personal relations because intra-group and inter-group processes beyond conscious awareness impinge into all organizational task spaces.

Case: Thermax B

Readings:

1. Emotions in Organisations: Disturbance or Intelligence? by David Armstrong, in Claire Huffington et.al (eds.), *Working Below the Surface*, Karnac Books, London, 2005
Reprint 11-27.
2. On change: is it possible to lift oneself by the hair? By Barbara Czarniawska (pages 78-91 in *A Theory of Organising*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2008)
3. The Large Group and the Organisation by Joseph Triest in Stanley Schneider and H. Weinberg (eds.), *The Large Group Revisited*, Jessica Kingley, Philadelphia, 162-174.
4. Mediating the Paradoxes of Organizational Governance through Numbers by Valerie Michaud, *Organisation Studies*, 2014, 35(1) 75-101.

Session 3

Mystery Three: Why are women under-represented in all national parliaments (except Rwanda)? And also in most senior positions of responsibility except in caring professions such as teaching in schools, nursing in healthcare etc.?

Readings:

1. The Politics of Disharmony in the management of gender differences by Ajeet N. Mathur and Anja Salmi, Vikalpa, 2006, 31 (3), 81-93.
2. The Challenges of Building Theory by Combining Lenses by Ray Suddaby, Academy of Management Review, 2011, 36(1), 6-11.
3. On gender: is discrimination equal? By Barbara Czarniawska (pages 105-118 in A Theory of Organising, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2008)

Session 4

Mystery Four: If international collaborations would make the world a better place, why do nations and organisations emphasize and manifest behavior towards competition much more than collaboration?

Case: Endless Choices in an Investor's Paradise:Togo (new IIMA case)

Readings:

1. Freud-Einstein Correspondence, League of Nations Archives.
(this will be provided electronically)
2. The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tale by Jonathan Haidt, Psychological Review,2001, 108(4), 814-834.

Session 5

Mystery Five: When organisations exhibit patterns of behavior as prisoners of scripts, might they have something similar to DNA or a “genetic” profile?

Reading:

1. Dare to think the unthought known, 2nd edition, 2011, Chapter 1 by Ajeet N. Mathur, 1-32.

Session 6

Mystery Six: Is management a science, art or craft?

Praxis Exercise: Genesis of authority (link will be provided electronically)

Reading:

1. A New Manifesto for Management by Sumantra Ghoshal, Christopher Bartlett and Peter Moran, MIT Sloan Management Review, Spring 1999, 40(3), 9-20.

Session 7

Mystery Seven: Are strategies always invented or may they also be discovered?

Introduction to social dreaming and harmony sensing matrices

Readings:

1. Lost in Frankenstein Detail by Ajeet N. Mathur, Review of Professional Management, 2006, 4(2), 10-16.
2. The Scripture read backwards by Parsuram

Session 8

Mystery Eight: Can managerial productivity be measured?

Readings:

1. Is Managerial Productivity measurable? (Sydenham Management Classic) By Ajeet N. Mathur, Sydenham Management Review January, 1991,13-21. (may be distributed separately)
2. The Five Minds of a Manager by Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg, Harvard Business Review, November 2003, 54-63.

Session 9

Mystery Nine: Why does effectiveness of leaders always decline with passage of time?

Readings:

1. Working with the concept of Organisation-in-the-mind by Jean Hutton, The Grubb Institute, London, 2000.
2. Leadership and Negative Capability by Peter Simpson Robert French, and Charles Harvey, Human Relations, 55(10), 2002, 1209-1226.

Session 10

Mystery Ten: Is there an

- (a) optimal size for a community of habitat for demarcating it into an administrative unit?
- (b) optimal task distribution of complex tasks that require dividing for reasons of scale?

Readings:

1. Communities at Risk by Ajeet N. Mathur, Markku Ryyänen and Arne Nystedt, Tampere University Press, 2003 (this will be provided electronically to the class)
2. Task Partitioning by Erich Von Hippel, Research Policy, 1990 (19), 407-418.

Reflective Journal

Write your reflective journal and turn it in by email to anmathur@iimahd.ernet.in and provide a printed out version to Ankur Sumesra in Wing 6-A by **30.10.2015 17:00**.

What is a Reflective Journal?

Your Reflective Journal (RJ) is your personal conversation with yourself for your own learning and the issues involved in your learning processes about Mysteries in Management. Your RJ is to record, review, reflect, understand, and explore more from various perspectives and keep a record of your thoughts, feelings, as you chew over the discussions and assimilate readings from this course..

A RJ is not a collection of notes done in the class or during your learning process. It is based on your reflections. Make a habit of reviewing your learning after every class, after every reading associated with any of the sessions and any other library materials, websources you are inspired to look for and record your own experiences and observations on a file which is kept with you and belongs to you to be submitted to the Course Instructor only once for evaluation on 30.10.2015.

Note that it is your own text from your own perspective that counts. Do not reproduce any text from any source, unless you make a quote (max 4-5 lines with full references; see IIMA citation guide). However, note that quotes are used only to support your own text, not to be the main text. If you wish to attach any (short) articles, do it as an attachment (with full references). Note that attachments are not counted as the main text and are only supplements. Otherwise, always write your own text and paraphrase or summarise text you are referring to in your own words. The RJ is submitted both electronically and on paper, so you need to do it by computer.

Whenever you share your own experiences, remember that RJ is not a confessional diary, but reflective. This means that any experiences encountered can be reviewed, analysed and connected from a learning point of view. Develop your skills on how to recognise, interpret and act upon issues you come across.

Process of Reflective journal

On Day one (today), start your journal by reflecting what your own expectations from the course are and what you think “mysteries in management” are or could be. Rely on your own views. Reflective journal is kept automatically. This means that you need to write it without being told. Whenever there are tasks that need to be incorporated in the reflective journal, it would be said so in the class. For each contact session, you need to consider what happened, what you learnt and what old or new questions arose in your mind.

Contents of the Reflective journal

Based on the presentations, discussions, reading materials, exercises, and your own notes, the diary length expected is of approx. 3500-6000 words, line spacing 1.5. This means you will write the RJ assignment based on the above. Use of articles, books, films, and own experiences as reflection resources is strongly encouraged, but always cite references!

RJ must minimally contain, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Dated entries from each class (10)**
- Highlights of class discussions: What do you think were the most important things in the discussions? Why were these important?
- Highlights of provided or referred to reading materials: What do you think were the most important issues in the reading materials? Why?
- What did you learn? Evaluate their importance with respect to course topics.
- What did you fail to learn? Why and how would you wish to correct that?
- What new learning wishes arose for you?
- Did the discussions give you new ideas about the topic or did it encourage you to try out something yourself?
- Did you discuss the topics with anyone (before/after the lecture, at work, at home etc.)?
- What were your own expectations for the discussions/topic? What did you want to learn?
- Try to analyze, how did you learn things or why do you think you didn't learn?

At the end of the RJ, reflect (2-3 pages) on the following:

- Do you think you could have improved your learning somehow?
- What kept you from improving this?
- Analyze how and where you could apply your learnings and how these relate to your work/studies/home organization?
- Were you able to apply these concepts in your everyday life/business?
- Were there any things that were left unclear or that you didn't understand? What did you do to understand them?
- What do you think will be most invaluable to you from the course in terms of the future?
- Other comments and feedback (Faculty, course, arrangements, materials, new mysteries that should be assigned to sessions).
- Make a self-evaluation and give yourself a grade (between A+ to F) as a learner, based on your learning process and reflective journal. Give justifications why you should be given this grade.

General guidelines

In order to write the RJ journal effectively, you actually need to make notes after every session and actively write your personal reflective journal after the sessions.

- Make minimum 3 entries per week (or after each class)
- Make entries daywise and put a date on the entry.
- Make notes of interesting observations and readings which have relevance to or reflect aspects of to Mysteries in Management
- Adhere to the dateline! Late submissions invite penalties. **No submissions after 30.10.2015.**
- Remember to write your name, student number (roll.no), section, and your email address.
- When returning your RJ as printed submission, make sure you have signed your copy on the first page. This is mandatory.
- Try altering your study methods and habits and see if some new style helps you to understand things more easily.

About the submission:

- when returning the hard copy, remember to sign your assignment on the title page
- send the material in *.doc format.
- name the soft copies as: 2015mymRJ_yourname.doc

Home Assignment (25% weightage)

Complete your home assignment and turn it in by email to anmathur@iimahd.ernet.in and provide a printed out version to Ankur Sumesra in Wing 6-A by **30.9.2015 17:00**.

The Task

1. Formulate/Identify questions (any number greater than 5 but less than 12) that management and leadership literature does not answer reliably or does not currently ask.

Hint: One possible trigger to think of such questions would be to recall courses you have studied (and enjoyed or hated/tolerated!) and remind yourself of those aspects of these courses that you still remember because they aroused emotions or passions or frustrations or brought thoughts around questions of significance that remained unexamined or unanswered. Other triggers could be to turn to business media (business magazines or business channels on television) or indeed anything else that brings you a muse.

2. Select five questions from this list to keep on your final shortlist based on any one or more of the following criteria:

- The question has significant implications for designing business models or task systems, or organization structures or management processes. OR
- The question involves exercise of authority or power in relation to resources or responses. OR
- The question involves decision-making about any of the boundaries of an open system-task, time, territory, sentience, technology, understanding OR
- The question involves setting rate of engagement with primary task OR
- The question has implications about quality of life, work-life or work-life balance.

3. Explore each of the five questions as mysteries limiting yourself to no more than 1-2 pages per mystery/question i.e. total of minimum 5 and maximum 10 pages and attaching your initial list in Step one above as Annexure I. Use Times Roman 12 pt scale with 1.5 spacing.

About the submission:

- when returning the hard copy, remember to sign your assignment on the title page
- send the softcopy in *.doc format.
- name the soft copies as: 2015mymHA_yourname.doc

All the Best!