

MS MANAGEMENT CAPSTONE

MAN 6950-901

Spring 2023

Tues. 6:30pm–10:15pm

BSN 118

Instructor Information

Professor: Logan Steele

E-Mail: lmsteele@usf.edu

Office: CIS 2069

Office Hours: Tues. 12:00pm-2:00pm or by appointment

Course Description

As a capstone, this course serves as an opportunity to reflect on, integrate, and put into practice what you have learned throughout this program. To structure this process, we will view management through the lens of complex problem solving. That is, we will assume that the chief function of a manager—the primary way in which they add value in organizations—is to solve problems, most of which are difficult and not straightforward to address.

In this course, we will explore a set of processes through which you will be able to recognize problems in organizations, systematically investigate their causes, and evaluate potential solutions. We will draw on knowledge you have acquired through previous courses, as well as acquire new knowledge. What I hope you will get out of this course is this: an integrated set of knowledge and skills that will enable you as a manager to analyze organizational situations and implement appropriate solutions to change an organization for the better.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Appropriately apply relevant knowledge from previous courses (e.g., organizational behavior, people analytics, etc.)
2. Distill complex organizational issues into measurable discrepancies
3. Develop an appropriate plan for collecting data that will enable an accurate diagnosis of a problem
4. Design data collection tools (e.g., surveys, interviews) that will enable an accurate diagnosis of a problem
5. Provide solutions that are based on evidence and sound reasoning and that accommodate situational constraints
6. Design a research study that would test the efficacy of a solution(s)
7. Draw appropriate inferences from the results of a research study

Materials

All materials will be provided on Canvas.

Assignments

Participation

Research on learning suggests that information is best understood and retained through active, frequent use of the content. So, we will use our class time to help you understand and process the material that you cover outside of class in your readings, as well as to answer the questions that come up as you read. Some of the activities we'll use to reach this understanding include interactive lectures, group discussions, videos, and case studies.

Your participation grade will depend on your contributions to in-class activities, both when you're meeting in small groups and when we have class discussion. Every day of class, I will call on volunteers and randomly draw names of

students to respond to discussion questions. I will post a participation grade on the following scale at the halfway point and end of the semester:

- 100% = *Provides responses that reflect very good understanding of course content **and** asks questions that indicate striving for better understanding of course content*
- 80% = *Provides responses that reflect good understanding of course content*
- 60% = *Provides responses that reflect mediocre understanding of course content*
- 40% = *Provides responses that reflect poor understanding of course content*
- 0% = *Does not provide responses related to questions asked by the professor or uses technology inappropriately*

If you choose not to attend class, you can earn Participation point through an alternative approach. You may submit to me via email the in-class activities we complete each week. These in-class assignments must be submitted by Friday at 11:59pm of the week you miss class.

Reaction Posts

Engaging actively with the content of this course will be essential to your learning. The purpose of Reaction Posts is to help ensure that you are consistently prepared to participate in the learning activities that will take place in class. If you read before coming to class, you'll have a better understanding of what's being discussed. And, after having read and processed the content, if there is something in there that you don't understand, you'll be able to ask about it in class.

There are eight Reaction Posts due throughout the semester. Here are the requirements for this assignment:

- Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm the day before class.
- They should be 300 to 600 words in length (longer is okay) and reflect your original work.
- Include a discussion question.
- Discuss all assigned readings.

Below are some questions to help spur your thinking about what to include in your reaction post. (Note: you do **not** need to respond to every question.)

- What are the key takeaways?
- What was interesting to you, and why? What did you learn?
- Are you skeptical about anything you read or heard? If so, why?
- How do your professional or personal experiences relate to the content?
- How do the ideas in these readings relate to other content presented in the course or previous courses?
- How might you apply what you learned to your current job or future career?
- What are the practical implications of the readings for organizations?

Grades will be determined by the instructor based on the quality of content. Discussion Leaders are strongly encouraged to read these ahead of the days on which they will be teaching.

Career Development Exercises

For most of you, this course will be your final or penultimate semester in this program. As a result, I want to ensure that you are as prepared as possible for the next step in your career. To facilitate this transition, you will attend a Career Development Workshop facilitated by Anna Bahvala, the Student Success Champion in the School of Information Systems and Management. This workshop will be scheduled during a regular class time this semester. She will lead you through (1) creating a professional LinkedIn profile, and (2) preparing an up-to-date résumé. You will then submit a link to your updated LinkedIn profile and upload a copy of your résumé.

Discussion Leader

You and your classmates play a large and integral part in determining how much will be gained from taking this course. You will only get out of this course what you put into it. My hope and expectation are that everyone (myself included) will benefit by hearing one another's perspective, whether or not we agree with each other on certain issues. In fact, it is exciting when we disagree! To make sure a variety of points of view are represented, be prepared to regularly participate in-class discussions and activities.

Because active discussion is so important in this course, once during this semester, you will lead a small group on a topic we're learning. It is expected that Discussion Leaders will develop a firm understanding of the assigned topic, and that they will be able to lead their peers in achieving a deeper understanding. This will require Discussion Leaders to find related materials themselves and consult sources outside those assigned. You may do this through whatever means you like, as long as they are not disruptive to other discussion leaders. The grade for this assignment will be based on the materials submitted ahead of leading the discussion and my observations of your discussion group during class. Here are the requirements for this assignment:

- Find at least two sources relevant to the focal article of the week (the *focal article* is the one listed in the "Discussion Leader Dates" Google Sheet on Canvas)
 - The sources must not be ones that I have assigned
 - The sources must be from reputable sources (e.g., academic journals, newspapers, business magazines)
- In 300 to 600 words, write about how the sources you find give you a richer understanding of the focal article of the week
- Write 3 to 5 discussion questions
- Submit on Canvas by the time class starts on the day you are assigned to present

Remember, it is essential that we show respect to each other in this process. As a class, I expect us to foster an environment ripe for learning.

Managerial Problem-Solving Project

This course is a very practical one. As I mentioned in the Course Description, we are focused in this course on integrating and applying the knowledge you have acquired through this graduate program. The primary way in which we will put knowledge into practice is through the Managerial Problem-Solving (MPS) Project. In teams of 3 to 4 members, you will find a business to consult with and work to address a managerial problem they are facing. A detailed rubric will be provided on Canvas.

Although some students prefer working in groups, others do not. For those of you who feel some reservations about this idea (as I often did as a student), here is the rationale behind why I am organizing the assignment this way. First, this project will be a hefty workload for one person to address on his/her own. Having teammates will allow you to distribute that workload. Second, having multiple team members expands your professional network, increasing the chances of finding a business that will open its doors to you to collect data. Third, while conducting this project, you will likely run into problems, and the solutions may not be readily apparent. If such an event occurs, it will be helpful to have the intellectual and emotional support of some colleagues.

Ultimately, by the end of the semester, my goal is for you to garner a substantive experience from this course — and this project, in particular — so that you can add it to your résumé and sell it to prospective employers in job interviews.

Summary of Assignments

Category (% of grade)	Specific Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation (10%)	Participation 1 & 2	100	5% each
Reaction Posts (32%)	Reaction Post 1 – 8	320	4% each
Career Development (4%)	Up-to-date Résumé and LinkedIn Profile	40	2% each
Discussion Leader (10%)	Discussion Leader 1 & 2	100	5% each
MPS Project (44%)	Team Plan 1 – 4	40	1% each
	Paper 1 – 4	400	10% each

Grading

Final grades will be calculated by summing all the points you have accumulated in the course. Grades will be determined using the grading scale shown below. Please do not ask to have your final grade rounded up.

F	≥ 599	D	600 – 699	C	700 – 799	B	800 – 899	A	900 – 1000
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Policies

Communication

The best way to contact me is through email. I answer email regularly (and usually within a few hours) on weekdays. There may be times during the semester when I do not have access to email, but I will be sure to notify you if such situations occur.

To avoid confusion on my part, please follow the following guidelines when sending emails:

1. Use only this email address: lmsteele@usf.edu
2. Identify yourself as a student in MAN 6950 in either the subject line or the first paragraph of your email.
3. Always sign your emails, so that I know who sent them.
4. Treat your emails as professional communications—use proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and avoid internet shorthand.

Technology in the Classroom

The use of computers, tablets, and phones are prohibited during class (unless needed to accommodate a disability). The research on the use of technology during class is unambiguous—it's not only counterproductive to your own learning (Ravizza et al., 2017) but also your classmates' (Sana et al., 2013). We only have a few hours together in the classroom each week; I want us to make the most of it by being focused and fully present.

Late Assignments

An assignment that is turned in late will be penalized 10% for every day that it's late. After one week passed the deadline, assignments may no longer be submitted for a grade.

There are three reasons I have this late assignment policy. First, each assignment during a given week is intended to be complementary to one another. Therefore, to get the most out of these assignments, it's important that they are completed close in time. Second, this policy helps to ensure everyone is held to the same standard. It is easy to imagine becoming frustrated that your work turned in on time earns the same grade as someone else's work turned in weeks late. I want to head off issues like those by having a consistent, late assignment policy. Finally, this policy is helpful to me as your professor as well. Grading all assignments at one time helps me to deliver grades back to you in a timely fashion; furthermore, it ensures that I'm grading open-ended assignments (i.e., non-multiple-choice questions) in the same way for all students.

I recognize that extenuating circumstances can emerge, however. If this happens, please let me know immediately. Communicating with me the moment a problem arises really helps with this, so please prioritize this. If you wait until weeks after the problem has passed, I can't do much for you. So, late assignments are only accepted in extenuating circumstances where documentation (or some other kind of verification) of the circumstance is provided.

Academic Integrity

The Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Here are the basic assumptions about academic work: (1) Students attend university in order to learn and grow, (2) academic assignments exist for the sake of this goal, (3) grades exist to show how fully the goal is attained, (4) thus, all work and all grades should result from the student's own effort to learn and grow. Academic work completed any other way is pointless, and grades obtained any other way are fraudulent.

Academic integrity means understanding and respecting these basic truths, without which no university can exist. Academic misconduct is not just "against the rules"; it violates the assumptions at the heart of all learning. It destroys the mutual trust and respect that should exist between student and professor. Finally, it is unfair to students who earn their grades honestly.

Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating (e.g., looking on another person's exam or allowing them to look on yours), plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person (i.e., copying someone else's work, allowing someone to do your papers or take your exams for you), taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. For more information on academic integrity, please see USF's policy [here](#).

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

As a faculty member, I am committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. If you, as a student in this course, have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities, please consult with Student Accessibility Services (www.usf.edu/sas) to arrange appropriate accommodations.

Campus Free Expression

It is fundamental to the University of South Florida's mission to support an environment where divergent ideas, theories, and philosophies can be openly exchanged and critically evaluated. Consistent with these principles, this course may involve discussion of ideas that you find uncomfortable, disagreeable, or even offensive.

In the instructional setting, ideas are intended to be presented in an objective manner and not as an endorsement of what you should personally believe. Objective means that the idea(s) presented can be tested by critical peer review and rigorous debate, and that the idea(s) is supported by credible research.

Not all ideas can be supported by objective methods or criteria. Regardless, you may decide that certain ideas are worthy of your personal belief. In this course, however, you may be asked to engage with complex ideas and to demonstrate an understanding of the ideas. Understanding an idea does not mean that you are required to believe it or agree with it.

Course Calendar*

Class Dates	Topic	Readings and Lectures Due	Assignments [Due Dates]
Week 1: Feb. 7	Introductions, syllabus review, evidence-based practices as problem solving		Milestone 1: Form teams [Feb. 10]
Week 2: Feb. 14	Defining the problem	Repenning et al. (2017, pp. 39-43) Spradlin (2012)	Milestone 2: Find an organization [Feb. 17]
Week 3: Feb. 21	Analyzing the problem I: The basics	Redman (2014) Hidden Brain (2021 , 0:00-12:41)	Plan of Work 1 [Feb. 24]
Week 4: Feb. 28	<i>Team meetings</i>		Paper 1: Initial Meeting, Problem Definition, & Problem Analysis [Mar. 3] Peer Feedback 1 [Mar. 3]
Week 5: Mar. 7	Analyzing the problem II: The tools	Ebster (2014) Designing an interview McLeod (2015)	Plan of Work 2 [Mar. 10]
Mar. 14	Spring Break		
Week 6: Mar. 21	Testing solutions I: Criteria and designs	Bahrampour (2018) Denworth (2019)	
Week 7: Mar. 28	<i>Team meetings</i>		Paper 2: Data Collection Proposal and Analysis Plan [Mar. 31] Peer Feedback 2 [Mar. 31]
Week 8: Apr. 4	Testing solutions II: Considerations	Sanchez (2018) Schaffer (2017)	Milestone 3: Collect Data [Apr. 7] Plan of Work 3 [Apr. 7]
Week 9: Apr. 11	Evaluating results	Denrell (2005) Gino & Pisano (2011)	
Week 10: Apr. 18	<i>Team meetings</i>		Paper 3: Summary of Results and Conclusions [Apr. 21] Peer Feedback 3 [Apr. 21]
Week 11: Apr. 25	Pros and cons of evidence-based management	Pfeffer & Sutton (2006) Stoll (2019)	Plan of Work 4 [Apr. 28]
Week 12: May 2	The future of management	Waters (2020) Groth (2020)	Paper 4: Recommendations and Research Design [May 5] Peer Feedback 4 [May 5]

*The course calendar is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.