MORS 430: Leadership in Organizations

Section 61

Spring 2020

Per Kellogg Policy, Spring 2020 classes will take place live via Zoom at the regularly scheduled time (Thursdays 6-9pm CST)

Professor Rivera
Phone: 847-467-0344
Fax: 847-491-8896
E-mail: L-rivera@kellogg.northwestern.edu
TA: Hannah Birnbaum (hannah.birnbaum@kellogg.northwestern.edu)

CONTENTS
Course Overview .......................................................... Page 2
Course Requirements .................................................. Page 3
Class Schedule and Topics ........................................... Page 6
Senior Executive Case Analysis .................................... Page 16
The goal of this course is to create, develop, and enhance your leadership skills. The course is designed to prepare you to lead high-performing, successful firms in the future and to effectively steer your own careers. These will be the twin themes of the course: (1) how to establish, manage, and lead prosperous firms and (2) how to develop a thriving career for oneself.

A key leadership task is to assemble the skills, talents, and resources of individuals and groups into those combinations that best solve the organizational problem at hand. You must manage people, information, and processes to accomplish organizational goals. You must make things happen, often under conditions or time frames that are not of your own choosing. The successful execution of these goals requires leaders to be able to diagnose problems, make effective decisions, influence and motivate others, manage the diversity of their personal contacts, tap into and motivate the human and social capital of organizational members, optimize cross-functional teams, and drive organizational change.

This course prepares you to achieve these objectives. You will learn fundamental tools from the behavioral and social sciences that will improve your ability to analyze organizational dynamics and take robust action.

Course Format:

Each day we will focus on a particular set of leadership skills. Our goal will be to distinguish between effective and ineffective strategies, based on thoroughly vetted, scientific principles. We will accomplish this by discussing key theoretical concepts and real-world examples. In each class session, we will use a group exercise or case to motivate our discussion.

Class discussions introduce key concepts and useful ways of thinking about common situations in complex organizations. Class exercises and required readings provide opportunities to hone your skills in identifying and solving organizational problems. Optional readings are truly optional and are provided solely for those who are interested in learning more about a given topic for their personal and professional enrichment.

As you complete readings, ask yourself:

- What are the key concepts/principles?
- How and why does this matter for an organization?
- What are the implications for the kinds of challenges I face as a leader?
- How can I apply this to my firm and my career?
Assignments:

Your final grade is composed of:

1. Course Participation and Professionalism 15%
2. Midterm Exam 20%
3. Senior Executive Case Analysis 35%
4. Final Exam 30%

Course Participation and Professionalism (15%)

While an online course is a unique format, a portion of your grade is based on your class participation and professionalism. This involves being an active participant in group discussions, exercises, and projects; completing class assignments; demonstrating respect for all course participants; and communicating with the professor and TA about issues that arise in a timely manner. We understand that many of you will be participating from home, and home environments can be chaotic. Please mute your device when not talking.

If you must miss a class, it is essential that you notify the TA as soon as possible, ideally at least 24 hours in advance, so that we can make arrangements for class exercises (which are conducted in pre-assigned teams), you can get the materials that will be distributed during the class and that your classmates’ learning does not suffer.

All class sessions involve active discussion. You should be prepared to share your ideas and to listen to and interpret the issues presented by others. In Zoom, you can push the “raise hand” function or type in chat to ask questions or share ideas. Quality discussion comments possess one or more of the following attributes:

- Offer a relevant perspective on the issue, backed up by evidence or experience.
- Provide careful analysis.
- Apply concepts offered in the readings and lectures.
- Move the discussion forward by building on previous contributions with new insights; do not repeat points already made by others.
- Demonstrate respect for all other course participants.

In a class of 45 people, it is not always possible to call on every person who has a question or comment during class. If you have a question you would like to discuss further, please follow up with me or the TA via email.

Midterm Exam (20%)

For the midterm exam, you will be given a case and a series of questions to answer about the case. The midterm will take place on week 6 at home. You are allowed 3 hours to complete the exam.

Senior Executive Case Analysis (35%)

Your own career success will depend at least in part on how effectively you manage your professional relationships. These relationships will give you access to information, skills, and expertise and will help to determine your power, control, and opportunities. This project provides
an opportunity to spend some time reaching a deeper understanding of how the social relationships of successful leaders are developed, managed, and executed to get things done.

**Each group will be required to interview two senior executives via phone or video chat regarding their experiences.** Your group can choose to interview more leaders, but at least **two executives must be interviewed**. These executives can be from firms you previously worked for, from firms you would like to work for, or simply from industries that interest you.

Anticipate having to interview each leader to gain an understanding of his or her situation, the structure of his or her network, how this network is managed, and how he or she uses this network to tackle some of the types of organizational challenges discussed in class. Following these interviews, your group will write an analysis of two (or more) executives’ networks. In this analysis, you will compare and contrast the executives’ networks: **both what they look like and how they use them**. You should compare the networks they have developed, how they manage these networks, and what their general strategies are for accomplishing goals. The names of the executives will be kept strictly confidential; you may use an alias when discussing your interviewees in your analysis.

Detailed information on this assignment is included on pp. 16-19 of the syllabus. The 10-page analysis (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins, single-sided) is due by **6pm CST on the last day of class, June 4th**. As a part of the group assignment, you will be asked to evaluate the performance of all of the members of your group, including yourself. **Please submit the SECA assignment via Canvas.** The group evaluations should be submitted separately and independently by each member via Canvas.

**Final Exam (30%)**
The final exam will be a closed-book, **at-home** exam that will consist of a series of short essay questions. You will **receive** the exam electronically on **June 11th at 6pm CST**. You will have three hours to complete the exam and return it via Canvas to the TA at or before **9pm CST**.

**Previous Knowledge of Cases**
If you are familiar with a case or an exercise introduced in class, please do not discuss your prior knowledge with other students as this can ruin the learning experience for them. **Telling other students (in any section) about your experience with cases and exercises is an honor code violation.** If you are concerned that your prior experience with a case might be an issue, please let me know before class.

**Recordings, Postings, Blogging, Tweets, Social Media, etc.**
Going online to find information on cases or exercises is an honor code violation unless you have been told explicitly that online research is part of an assignment. In addition, exercises and their solutions are confidential per the Kellogg Honor Code or copyrighted and cannot be circulated, (micro) blogged about, or posted in any form. If you are unsure as to the application of these rules, please see the instructor. **No audio or visual recordings of the class can be made or circulated without prior permission of the instructor.**

This course adheres to the guidelines established in the Kellogg Honor Code and the Kellogg Code of Classroom Etiquette.
Course Materials:

Required readings and cases are accessible via Study.net (SN) and Course Reserves (CR). We have split the readings this way to save on coursepack costs for you. Many of the readings have links via the Module tab on Canvas. Readings labeled “Placeholder” will be distributed separately via Canvas. No other textbook is required. Pp. 6-15 of this document detail assignments due each day of class.

Optional readings not required; they are simply reading recommendations provided for students who are interested in learning more about a given topic.

Deliverables are listed in the box at the bottom of each page.
Managing People for Competitive Advantage
April 9th
Class 1

Objectives:
- Introduce course objectives and requirements
- Learn strategies for gaining competitive advantage through people
- Understand and avoid ethical traps in leadership

Required Reading:
- “Why Should My Conscience Bother Me?” (SN)

Optional Readings:

DUE: Online Getting to Know You Assignment on Canvas (located under Assignments)
Objectives:
- Learn how to identify and stop the most common biases that corrupt managerial decisions

Required Reading:
- “Speed Ventures” (written case, distributed via Canvas)

Optional Reading:
- Kahneman. *Thinking, Fast and Slow.*

DUE: 1. Complete online Decision-Making Quiz (on Canvas) before completing the case/readings. 2. Write a 2-3 sentence description (and submit via Canvas under Assignments) of whether you will race and why based on the case.
Objectives:
- Learn the art of persuasion

Required Reading:
- None

Optional Reading:
Objectives:
- Equip you with the core principles of expert negotiating tactics
- Learn how to lead an effective integrative negotiation

Required Reading:
- Abhas-Bussan (written case, distributed via Canvas)
- Grant. “In Negotiations, Givers are Smarter than Takers.” New York Times (CR)

Optional Reading:
Dedicated SECA Time
May 3rd
Class 5

Objectives:
- This week’s class session (makeup) will be used to provide dedicated space for working on your SECA project. Groups will sign up for brief meetings with Prof. Rivera during class time (6-9pm CST) via Canvas to review progress and ask questions
Midterm Exam:
- For the midterm exam you will be given a case and a series of questions to answer about the case.
- The case will be distributed one week prior to the exam; the exam will be distributed and completed in class.
- You are allowed 3 hours to complete the exam.
Objectives:
- Learn the properties of a network rich in social capital and strategies for optimizing networks
- Understand common barriers that prevent diversity in teams, networks, and organizations

Required Reading:

Optional Readings:

DUE: Complete Gender & Careers IAT (located on Canvas under Assignments) before class
Motivation and Culture
May 21st
Class 8

Objectives:
- Provide strategies for inducing productive behavior through incentives
- Understanding how to motivate people
- Strategies for building effective organizational cultures

Required Reading:
- “Southwest Airlines” (CR)

Optional Reading:
Objectives:
- Gauge your performance in a simulated change program
- Acquire the skills for championing and leading large-scale organizational change

Required Reading:
- *The EIS Simulation Manual* (SN)

Case:
- **EIS Simulation** (set up software prior to class; complete exercise in class)

![Graph showing adoption curve with innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and resistors over time. The graph illustrates observed and expected trends, with a tipping point indicated.]
Objectives:
- Learn how to lead organizational change efficiently by harnessing critical MORS concepts

Required Readings:
- None

Optional Readings:
- Gladwell. *The Tipping Point*. 

DUE: SECA report and group evaluations (via Canvas)
Senior Executive Case Analysis (SECA)

Your own career success will depend at least in part on how effectively you manage your professional relationships. These relationships will give you access to information, skills, and expertise and will help you build a solid base of power, control, and opportunities. Research shows that managers who aspire to positions of executive leadership succeed by effectively synthesizing the capabilities of the individuals on their teams and in their firms. In this way, leaders transcend their own individual limitations by leveraging the knowledge and resources of others. In addition, personal networks enable effective leaders to share their resources with others to enhance the performance of the firm.

This project provides an opportunity to spend some time developing a sophisticated understanding of how leaders and senior executives initiate, develop, and manage their interpersonal relationships to accomplish their key professional objectives. In your interviews and analysis always remember the twin themes of the course: how to establish, manage, and lead prosperous firms and a thriving career for oneself.

Each group should interview two senior executives regarding their experiences building, maintaining, and using their social networks. The choice of the leader is up to you. Try to choose someone who you believe will be candid, open, and insightful. Choose someone who might serve as a good contact in the future. These executives can be from your previous firms, from firms you would like to work for, or simply from industries that interest you.

Following these interviews, your group will write an analysis of the executives’ networks. In this analysis, you will compare and contrast the leaders’ approaches to building, maintaining, and using their social networks. You should analyze what your executives are doing well but also highlight any opportunities they may be missing. Projects will be graded for their grasp of the class material, displayed insight into the managers’ networks and networking strategies, and clarity of presentation.

The analysis of the managers, their networks, and the lessons you have learned from examining them is due by 6pm on June 4th. Each student must also complete a confidential team evaluation form on Canvas by the same deadline.

Key Elements of the Analysis

The paper should have a four-part structure:

1. **An introduction to your analysis and the executives.** What is your paper's thesis? Who are the leaders you interviewed? This introduction should include a brief description of each leader’s situation, and if applicable, the problem being faced.

2. **Body of analysis.** You should focus your analysis on course concepts and use those concepts to explain the similarities and differences you observed. That is, the experiences of your leaders should be compared and contrasted to draw general lessons about which strategies are most useful under which conditions. Assess each leader’s strategy for networking. What are its strengths? How could the strategy be improved? Are there any opportunities the
individual has overlooked? What role have their relationships played in their success both within their current firms and across their careers? How do executives effectively build trust and commitment from their network contacts? How do these executives use the resources lodged in their network ties to get things accomplished?

3. **Network map.** Include a network map for each executive you are discussing (these may be placed in an Appendix but should also be discussed in the main body of the paper). Be critical in your analysis.

4. **There should be a conclusion section titled: “Recommendations for Kellogg Students.”** This section should be 1-2 pages and include concrete recommendations for building value into the vital activities of Kellogg students. **These suggestions should be gleaned from your interviews with executives and course concepts.** Focus on what students could potentially do the next day in their teams or during the first years after graduation to build, maintain, and use social relationships to build trust, influence others, lead teams, and enact change.

**NOTE:** The most informative analyses go beyond description (a story about or description of the executives' networks) to an explanation of why something happened the way it did using the concepts from class. Well-organized papers that stress the most important factors rather than simply provide a data-dump of all the possible concepts are evaluated more highly.

**In all other respects, the project is yours to define. Be creative, yet professional. You decide how best to package your analysis.**

**Tips for How to Approach this Assignment**

1. You should assure the executives that their names will be kept strictly confidential. You can use an alias or pseudonym when discussing each interviewee in your analysis.

2. Find out the executive’s "philosophy of networks." To do this, focus on how the person uses relationships to get something accomplished and then work back to how that person makes and manages networks and to his/her "philosophy of networks."

3. A good way to start your discussion with each leader is to introduce the task, then ask the person to describe briefly how his or her career took shape. Let the executive free associate about his or her career and the critical events within this career progression. Note how the critical events were spawned by or renovated the social network around the leader. A good way to get the interviewees to reveal their knowledge about their experiences is to let them tell you a story about how they found a key job, a valued colleague, or an important competitive opportunity. After you hear the leader’s account, map it onto your understanding of how social relationships are used and managed. Asking the executives to tell you stories is often a much more effective technique than asking them direct questions, particularly at the beginning of an interview. Clarifying questions about their stories, on the other hand, are an important tool for ensuring your understanding.
Some Questions to Consider in Developing your Analysis

What is the summary network map of the executive's key contacts inside and outside his or her current organization? Consider drawing a network diagram during the interview in which you identify contacts and the types of exchanges and relationships the executive uses to cultivate them. Analyze the network map. What is the strongest entrepreneurial opportunity (i.e., where can the most value be added)? Be careful not to jump to quick conclusions that blind you to alternative interpretations.

1. How is the leader positioned for action and getting things done? How are barriers to action overcome? You could ask about a recent example of this (e.g., ask how she or he leveraged contacts to respond to a situation and why it did or did not work). Probe for how networks could be better structured, maintained or used, in light of the pattern of dependencies the person faces.

2. What are the kinds of contacts and exchanges that the executive uses for different purposes and in different contexts (e.g., to make decisions, to get a specific task accomplished quickly, to gain influence, to get information, to seize an opportunity, to advocate or implement change)? Have them provide specific examples and discuss specific contacts (they can use aliases to do so, if they are more comfortable).

3. How does the executive build trust in relationships? What kind of information is shared with different contacts and why? What role does reputation play?

4. How does each executive’s network stack up on the key network properties of trust, diversity, and brokerage? How could his or her network be improved?

5. Where is the executive’s sponsorship or mentoring structure? How has this changed over his/her career? What was the person’s experience with “developmental” relationships—either as a protégé, mentor, sponsor, or combinations of these?

6. How does the corporate culture impact the leader’s relationships?

7. How do the leader’s relationships map onto the formal organizational structure?

Interviewing Skills

Keep in mind that interviewing skills are extremely important to managers and consultants because interviews are major tools for collecting data about competitive processes and outcomes. Use this opportunity to test and develop your skill base. Furthermore, you will learn what makes a good interviewee; this knowledge will enhance your performance on the job market when you are being interviewed.

You should go into the interview with a set of questions, but remember that asking direct questions about executives’ views on power or networking may put them on the defensive or make them uncomfortable. Ask them to tell you stories at the beginning of the interview, and
then use their stories to guide your questions. Use your questions as an outline but be prepared to give up your sequencing. It is your job to navigate back to them when the time is ripe. If you try to stick too closely to your outline, you are likely to lose the interviewee’s attention and stall the interview when the conversation shifts in another direction.

**Probing.** It is important to probe during the interview. If your interviewee makes a general statement such as, “I use trust to build my network,” ask, “How do you build trust?” or “Tell me about a specific time when you built trust.” This is the best way to get more detailed information about how networks are used by your interviewees. Simple probes such as “How?” “Why do you think?” and “Tell me more” are extremely effective for getting interviewees to open up and provide richer answers to your questions. An optional reading on interviewing skills is located on the course website on Canvas under Modules.

**Here are some sample questions for revealing the structure of the network:**

1. If you look back over the last six months, who are the four or five people with whom you discussed matters of importance to you? Just list their first names or initials. Are these people connected to one another? If so, how?
2. Consider the people with whom you spend your free time. Over the last six months, who are the three people you have been with most often for informal social activities such as going out to lunch, dinner, drinks, films, visiting one another’s homes, and so on?
3. Who are the four or five people who have contributed most to your professional growth and where are they in the network? Are they connected to each other?
4. Who do you see as your single, most important contact for your continued success, and where are they in your network?
5. At the other extreme, what people working at your company have made it the most difficult for you to carry out your job responsibilities? Again, just list the person’s first name or initials (and remind them that this data is strictly confidential).
6. As part of your notes in the interview, you should diagram the manager’s key contacts. Which are most and least connected?