BARCELONA SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Organizational Behavior

Professor: Gaël Le Mens

Office hours: by appointment, Office 20.2E76

Objectives

The core objectives of this course are:

a) to provide an opportunity for you to define your personal project and what you are going to do in the next few months / years to grow as an individual and a professional;

b) to have you discover things about you that will help you achieve your personal development goals;

c) to have you see your social world and other people differently—to change what you notice and think about and how you apprehend the world around you;

d) to also change what you do as you navigate through that world.

This Syllabus describes everything I can think of that is relevant to the course and its requirements and logistics. Please read it carefully and use it as a guide to what we will be doing.

Methodology

We will discuss a set of core theoretical concepts that form the foundation of **behavioral science**. We will illustrate many of the concepts through in-class experiments in the theory sessions. You will have a chance to put the theory into practice and reflect on how it casts light on organizational phenomena through assignments, case discussions and project assignments. I will ask you to reflect on how the scientific knowledge discussed in class can be put into practice in your own life, to help you achieve your development goals. If you have engaged the course material enough on a regular basis during the quarter, you will notice that how you see others and how they see you will have changed substantially.

1. Involvement and Engagement

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

1

To accomplish the ambitious objectives of the course, you will need to spend a substantial amount of time each week engaging with the course material. Those who have committed themselves to engage deeply with the course concepts have found the course to be an enriching and sometimes transforming experience. This is not a briefing, a lecture, or a presentation, a Netflix TV show, it is a **course**. When you subsequently need to put the material of this course into practice, you probably won't have the notes, handouts, the books, or me or my colleagues sitting nearby. It is, therefore, my hope that you will work to **internalize** the learning, ideas, and the feelings and beliefs about power and influence that you develop during this course.

2. Education and Learning.

Education is about seeing new things or seeing the same things differently. Therefore, the materials and ideas that form the basis for much of the course material have been selected because they **do challenge** many aspects of conventional wisdom or the taken-for-granted assumptions that many people hold about human nature, how we think, our propensity to make mistakes and good predictions, our skills, the role of luck, the sources of success and influence. They even occasionally may seem inconsistent with other classes you are taking or have taken at the UPF or elsewhere. The ideas and concepts are, however, **well-grounded in the literature in the behavioral and social sciences**. If some of the readings or discussions disagree with your ideas or cause you to feel uncomfortable, that is part of the learning process.

3. Teaching Material

In-class experiments - We will illustrate many of the course concepts using in-class behavioral experiments. To participate in experiments, you will be asked to fill-in online surveys at the beginning of many of the course sessions. Please bring your **smartphone**, **tablet**, or **laptop** to class to be able to respond to the surveys and take part in that activity.

Required Books:

Power, by Jeffrey Pfeffer, 2010, Harper Business. This book discusses how many psychological concepts can be used to your advantage in an organizational setting. Although you might not agree with some of the positions of the author (you surely do not have to agree with him!), this book discusses many issues that are worth reflecting on as you decide where to start your career and the type of professional life you will enter.

To go further (optional readings to learn more deeply about the psychological concepts that provide the foundation for the course):

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

2

1. <u>Thinking, Fast and Slow,</u> by Daniel Kahneman (2011). This book provides an in-depth discussion of many of the concepts that will be taught. Many of the book chapters are assigned readings for the theory sessions. I am asking you NOT to read the chapters before they are assigned. The reason is that we will do, in class, a number of the experiments that are discussed in the book. If you read the chapter beforehand, you will know the experiment results before we do the experiment in class and you will eliminate all the fun and surprise that should make the course memorable and enjoyable (and ease your learning). On the other hand, if you read the chapter AFTER the corresponding session, it will help you fixate the learning in your memory.

2. <u>The Social Animal</u> by Elliot Aronson, Worth Publishers. This is a basic social psychology textbook, well-written, engaging, and accessible to non-experts.

3. <u>Encyclopedia of Social Psychology 2 Volume Set</u> (2007), by Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs.

4. <u>Social Cognition Making Sense of People (</u>1999), by Ziva Kunda.

Readings to download from eCampus - To the extent possible, I will make the assigned reading available for download on eCampus. Some of the readings can be a bit challenging and therefore I encourage you not to wait for the last minute before starting to read the material for a given session.

Case studies - Due to copyright restrictions, it is impossible for me to post some of the case studies on eCampus. You will be provided with access to the case studies by the program management office. A tentative list of cases is the following:

1. Zia Yusuf at SAP: Having Impact (OB73-PDF-ENG)
2. Jeffrey Sonnenfeld (A): The Fall From Grace (OB34A-PDF-ENG)
3. Gary Loveman and Harrah's Entertainment (OB45-PDF-ENG)

Evaluation criteria

Grades will be based on four components:

1. 30%: Contribution Class Discussion
2. 15%: Thinking-about-Thinking Assignments
3. 15%: Self-Reflective Essays
4. 40%: Individual project

1. Contribution Class Discussion (30% of the final grade)

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

3

I will spend part of many sessions discussing readings / assignments with the class. Such discussion is generally an enjoyable and productive learning experience under the condition that students come prepared to the session. Students are therefore expected to complete **all the readings and all the assignments.**

I expect discussions to be **engaging, fun, and productive learning experiences**. Those who consistently come prepared to class, contribute to a positive learning atmosphere and are engaged with the course material and the pedagogical activities will receive a high participation grade. On the other hand, those who show a lack of involvement in the course, the discussions and the pedagogical activities will likely receive a very low participation grade.

To help the teaching team track your class participation, as well as to learn your names, I am asking you to use a **nametag** in **every** session. It will be impossible for us to track your participation if I do not know you and therefore you should try to make sure I know your name as early as possible. It is your responsibility to make sure that I know your name and properly account for your participation. If I do not know your name, I will not be able to give you a proper participation grade, even if you are a good contributor to the class discussion.

2. Thinking-about-Thinking Assignments (15% of the final grade)

For almost every session you will have to prepare a "Thinking-about-Thinking Assignment". Each assignment consists in one or several questions about the material covered in the previous session that I am asking you to think about before coming to the next session. I will create an online form so that you submit your responses before the session. Your online submissions will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

At the beginning of each class, I will randomly choose 2 or 3 students and ask them to share their thoughts about the question(s) asked for that session. You should be **ready** to do so and give a 3-minute presentation of the outcome of your thinking process (just speaking, without any slides). After the presentations by the randomly chosen students, time permitting, other students will be free to volunteer to also share their thoughts (this can compensate for a poor performance in the mandated presentation).

Your Thinking-about-Thinking Assignments grade will be based on the quality of your oral presentation(s). Each presentation will be graded on a 1-to-5-point scale. If you present more than once, your grade will be the average of the presentation grades.

Note: to get a Thinking-about-Thinking Assignments grade, you need to have no more than 3 fails in the online submissions. Note that any submission that occurs after the beginning of the class counts as a fail. Thus, if you get 4 fails or more, then the Thinking-about-Thinking Assignments grade is 0.

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

4

3. Self-Reflective Essays (15% of the final grade)

The **Self-Reflective Essays** are designed to help you explore the content of the course in the context of your own plans, objectives, values, and experiences. If taken seriously, these self-reflective essays will be useful as work in process for your individual project. They will be graded on a 1-to-5-point scale.

These Self-Reflective Essays are designed as nudges to make you think about you, your plans for the future, and how you are going to achieve them. There is no right or wrong answer, and there is really no point in trying to imagine what the professors want to read and then write your assignment accordingly. If you do so, I can guarantee you that writing these assignments will be a frustrating experience. But if you take these assignments seriously and honestly, you will learn some valuable insights. To get a good grade, you need to show that you put some serious thoughts in your response.

Self-Reflective Essays should be handed in on eCampus as .pdf documents by 9:00am the day they are due.

4. Individual Project (40% of the final grade)

The assignment will be described in an addendum to this document. Individual projects should be uploaded on e-campus as .pdf documents by 9:00am the day of the LAST session of the course.

Information concerning the written assignments

Turned-in assignments must be original and unpublished. Turning assignments in on time means turning them in when they are assigned per instruction provided by the teaching team. To make the logistics of the course as simple as possible, we will adopt the following rules:

- Assignments should be uploaded on eCampus as .pdf files on e-campus, by the deadline indicated on e-campus. We will not accept assignments via email.
- If an assignment is submitted in a format other than a .pdf document and the teaching team cannot open the document, it will not be graded and thus will automatically receive a grade of 0.
- No late assignment will be accepted. Late assignments will automatically receive a grade of 0.

These rules will be consistently applied, with no exception (this applies to the individual project as well).

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

5

The teaching team encourages you to use AI tools (e.g., chatGPT) to generate ideas, improve your essays, correct spelling, grammar, and awkward phrases. These tools have the potential to help you write better messages, emails, reports, and essays. You need to learn how to use them effectively. At the same time,

1. you will be held **responsible** for whatever you write. In other words, if you write something wrong, you cannot claim that this is not your fault because you used chatGPT and chatGPT was subject to some 'hallucination,'

2. when you are asked to write about **your** personal experience, you should write about **your** experience, not the experience of somebody else or that of a being invented by a text generating AI,

3. you should realize that if everybody uses the same AI tool in the same way, many essays will look similar. It will therefore be harder to stand out. So, if you use some AI to help you write an assignment, ask yourself: "will it make my assignment essentially the same to that of others?" or "will it help my assignment to stand out?"

Retake opportunity

In case the grade average for the course is lower than 5/10, the student will fail the course. In this case, the student will be able to take a 'retake' exam. This additional evaluation will take the form of an oral exam, either face to face or via video conferencing. In case a student takes the 'retake' exam, the course grade will be 5/10 if the student passes the retake or will remain the original grade if the student fails the retake. This implies that students who take the 'retake' exam cannot have a course grade higher than 5/10. Grades at the retake exam are final.

Message from the program director:

"Students are required to attend 80% of classes. Failing to do so without justified reason will imply a Zero grade in the participation/attendance evaluation item and may lead to suspension from the program

Students who fail the course during the regular evaluation are allowed ONE re-take of the evaluation, in the conditions specified above. If the course is again failed after the retake, the student will have to register again for the course the following year.

In case of a justified no-show to an exam, the student must inform the corresponding faculty member and the director(s) of the program so that they study the possibility of rescheduling the exam (one possibility being during the "Retake" period). In the meantime, the student will get an "incomplete", which will be replaced by the actual grade after the final exam is taken. The "incomplete" will not be reflected on the student's Academic Transcript.

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

6

Plagiarism is to use another's work and to present it as one's own without acknowledging the sources in the correct way. All essays, reports or projects handed in by a student must be original work completed by the student. By enrolling at any UPF BSM Master of Science and signing the "Honor Code," students acknowledge that they understand the schools' policy on plagiarism and certify that all course assignments will be their own work, except where indicated by correct referencing. Failing to do so may result in automatic expulsion from the program."

Calendar and Contents (tentative)

Part 1: Introduction: Goals, Well-Being and Life Satisfaction

- Session 1: The experiencing self and the remembering self
- Session 2: Power, Well-Being and Life Satisfaction

Part 2: Thinking about Thinking - Basic Concepts

- Session 3: System1, System 2, Attention and Effort
- Session 4: The Lazy Controller - Associative Machine
- Session 5: Cognitive Ease
- Session 6: The Search for Coherence
- Session 7: Case Zia Yusuf at SAP
- Session 8: Judgments... They seem so easy, don't they?
- Session 9: Self-Justification and the reduction of cognitive dissonance

Part 3 - Heuristics and Biases

- Session 10: Impressions: What do people pay attention to?
- Session 11: Judgments from Memory: Information Sampling and Availability
- Session 12: Schemas, Stereotypes and Representativeness
- Session 13: Speaking with Power and the Fundamental Attribution Error
- Session 14: Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld

Part 4: Overconfidence

- Session 15: Statistics and Regression to the Mean
- Session 16: Overconfidence & Leadership Illusion
- Session 17: Expert judgment & Overoptimism
- Session 18: Case: Gary Loveman and Harrah's Entertainment
- Session 19: Endowment Effect and Loss-Aversion

Part 5: Conclusion

- Session 20: Conclusion

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

7

- TO DO before Session 20: Submit **Final Project** on eCampus

Bio of Professor

Gaël Le Mens is a Full Professor in the Department of Economics and Business at UPF. His research focuses on learning by individuals and organizations. Several of his papers explain how individuals might develop and maintain inaccurate beliefs because they rely on the biased samples of information they obtain from their experiences. In related projects on the dynamics of social processes, he has examined the development of technological trajectories, the evolution of cultural tastes and their consequences for organizational viability, the evolution of organizational inertia and dynamics of organizational failure.

Gaël's research has been published in top scientific journals such as Psychological Review, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the USA (PNAS), Cognition, Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Organization Science and Administrative Science Quarterly. Popular accounts have appeared in the New York Times, the Times (London), WSJ.com, FT.com, USA Today, ABCNews.com, Focus and other in-print and online periodicals. He has taught graduate courses at UPF, INSEAD, London Business School, ESADE, and the University of Lugano in Switzerland. He has given invited lectures at Stanford, MIT and IESE.

MSc in Management

Note: This document is for informational purposes only. Course contents and faculty may change.

8