

MBA B610
Organizational Behavior: Understanding people at work
Fall 2025 Course Outline

Human Resources and Management Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University

COURSE OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this course is for MBA students to gain an understanding of the fundamental issues of organizational behavior (OB) – the study of individual behavior in organizations. Drawing on theory and research in psychology, social psychology, and organizational behavior, we shall explore individual, interpersonal, and group processes in work settings. The course is designed to provide students with innovative ways to address issues of how and why people think, feel, and act as they do within organizations.

Having a greater knowledge of human behaviour will help you to better understand (and predict!) the attitudes and behaviours of your co-workers, subordinates, supervisors, and clients. The course advances through three levels of thinking about managing others: managing yourself, managing groups, and managing others. Through a combination of in-class exercise, cases, readings and assignments, this course will help you to better understand your own past and future behaviours as a member and leader within an organization.

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Antirequisites: None

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor	Teaching Assistant
Dr. Meena Andiappan Associate Professor Human Resources and Management Email: meena.andiappan@mcmaster.ca Office hours: Immediately after class or upon request Office: RJC 254	Ayush Suri DSB MBA 2022 suria@mcmaster.ca

COURSE ELEMENTS

Avenue: Yes	Leadership: Yes	IT skills: No	Global view: Yes
Participation: Yes	Ethics: Yes	Numeracy: No	Written skills: Yes
Evidence-based: Yes	Innovation: Yes	Group work: Yes	Oral skills: Yes
Experiential: Yes	Guest speaker(s): Yes	Final Exam: No	Awesomeness: Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course includes lectures, class discussions, exercises, and cases. This multiplicity of methods allows students to:

1. Test their understanding of theories and concepts presented in class and the readings.
2. Use theories and concepts to analyze and solve actual problems in organizations. This theoretical knowledge is crucial: it allows you to be able to return to “first principles” in order to solve the new problems that you will face, continually, as a manager.
3. Develop skills in communicating ideas, in developing and presenting arguments, in listening to and understanding others, and in challenging others’ views in a way that advances everyone’s understanding.
4. Learn to think independently and critically: you will need to choose the theories or conceptual frameworks that best fit with the issues and problems in the case at hand.

In this course, the role of the professor includes lecturing, but will more often tend toward stimulating and guiding student discussion. I will review theoretical concepts, but will also ask questions and encourage you to present, and support, different points of view in discussion.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the completion of this course, your professional skills should be improved by being able to better:

- Understand the impact of individual characteristics (e.g., personality, values), and how these factors do and do not shape behaviour
- Analyse and improve the design, motivation and function of teams
- Anticipate and manage dysfunctional interpersonal conflict
- Understand how to assess and improve organization culture
- Understand the difference between a good manager and a great leader, and start thinking of ways in which you can improve your own leadership style
- Understand how to build and leverage your power within and outside of your organization as you work towards your career goals
- Understand that most managerial issues are multi-faceted and not always quickly resolved by the latest management fad

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Nine cases available via Harvard Business Publishing:

1. Iggy's Bread of the World (HBS)
2. Suicides at France Télécom (ESMT)
3. Brainard, Bennis & Farrell (HBS)
4. Uber: #WhatDoYouDo? (Darden)
5. Google's Chief Executive: In Need of a Change Leadership Style? (Ivey)
6. Satera Team at Imatron Systems, Inc. (HBS)
7. Jacinda Ardern's Farewell, a Leadership Reflection on Stepping Down (HKUST)
8. Transitions Asia: Managing Across Cultures (HBS)
9. Digital Transformation 2.0: CEO Elie Girard at Atos (HBS)

Students' grades will be calculated as follows:

EVALUATION

Component	Individual/Team	Date	Value
1. Case analysis – presentation & discussion leadership	Team	Variable	15%
2a. Create-a-case – presentation	Team	Last day of class – Week 13	5%
2b. Create-a-case – written study	Team	Last day of class – Week 13	15%
3. OBHR innovation presentation	Team	Variable	10%
4. Participation	Individual	Throughout the term	10%
5. Midterm Exam	Individual	Week 9	40%
6. GRIT assignment	Group	GRIT Week – Week 6	5%
Total			100%

Grade Conversion

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme.

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A+	90 – 100	12
A	85 - 89	11
A-	80 - 84	10
B+	75 - 79	9
B	70 - 74	8
B-	60 – 69	7
F	00 - 59	0

Communication and Feedback

Students that are uncomfortable in directly approaching an instructor regarding a course concern may send a confidential and anonymous email to the respective Area Chair or Associate Dean:

<http://mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca/contact/anonymous/>

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Administrative Assistant.

Regrading Policy

Any regrading requests must be submitted in writing with a full explanation of why you think the work was incorrectly graded within a week of the grades being returned. Except in cases where the grader has added numbers incorrectly, the entire test or paper will be regraded. Please understand that once you submit your work for regrading, the grade can go either up or down.

COURSE DELIVERABLES

1. Case Analysis (20%)

Your case study analysis presentation should include:

- 1) A short summary of the case study
- 2) Identification of the key issues and players in the case study
- 3) Your analyses and hunches about the organizational and individual reasons underlying how and why the critical issues in the case occurred and how they can be addressed
- 4) Use of a case analysis framework: SWOT, 7S, 3C, or another established framework
- 5) Proposed solutions to the identified issues based on your analysis

The presentation will be evaluated on how specific you are about the issues in the case, your ability to distinguish between major and minor issues in the case, clarity of your analysis, use of your chosen analysis framework, and use of relevant OB concepts and theories throughout.

Teams will be also evaluated on the skillfulness of the presentation itself (e.g., diction, poise, organization, visual aids) and how well you engage your audience and lead the case discussion. All team members must actively participate in the presentation. All team members receive the same grade.

Presentation slides must be emailed to me (meena.andiappan@mcmaster.ca) at least 24 hours before the beginning of class on the day of the presentation. Please indicate your course section (C01, C02, C03) in the email title.

2. Create-a-Case Project (25% total)

a. Create-a-case - Presentation (5%)

Your presentation of the case created by your group should include:

- 1) Your motivation – why did you choose this case topic
- 2) The case setting – the who, what, when, how, and why of the case study
- 3) Your recommendations for how the case could be helpful to learners:
 - a. what questions should be discussed
 - b. how the case relates to theories and constructs studied in class
 - c. what points would you want students to take away from the case

The presentation will be judged on the concreteness and plausibility of the case, how well you researched the case, and its grounding in OB concepts and theories.

Groups will be also evaluated on the skillfulness of the presentation itself (e.g., diction, poise, organization, visual aids). All group members must actively participate in the presentation. All group members will receive the same grade. Presentation should be ~ 10 minutes, with Q&A to follow of 5 minutes.

Presentation slides must be emailed to me (meena.andiappan@mcmaster.ca) 24 hours before the beginning of class on the day of the presentation. Please indicate your course section (C01, C02, C03) in the email title.

b. Create-a-case – Written Study (20%)

Your task in creating a case study is to present an intriguing, relevant case on an OB or HR issue of your choice. You can examine a novel angle on an existing topic, present a situation based on your own workplace experience, examine an issue facing a single (or multiple) organization, etc. It's up to you! You should spend some time looking at the cases we use in this class and your other courses to help inspire you. Your case study will include the following key elements:

- 1) An introduction to what you are studying
- 2) A detailed description of the case context – the who, what, when, how, and why of the case
- 3) Data or references that support your case story

Bibliographies should be on a separate page and include all relevant information. Make sure that you include a reference for every citation that you have included. You can use any reference format you would like, as long as it is used consistently.

Your case studies should be 10 pages or less (not including the title page, bibliography, and appendices if needed), in Times New Roman 12-pt font, double spaced. The names and student numbers of all team members must be included on the title page.

Because all team members receive the same grade (for the written study and the presentation), it is your team's collective responsibility to manage the team's work process. If your team is having difficulty doing this, then you may approach me for advice. Be sure to document any problems that you are having. If a member of your team is engaging in academic dishonesty, I expect you to let me know, and I will follow the McMaster University and DeGroote School of Business guidelines in prosecuting this.

All create-a-case written case studies should be submitted on A2L by the last day of class. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of ten percent (10%) per calendar day.

3. OBHR Innovation Presentations (10%)

In your groups, you will be asked to present one 7 to 10-minute presentation throughout the semester relating to that day's topic. Your group is expected to present a relevant OB/HR issue, idea, or innovation, discuss how it may impact our thinking about OB or HR moving forward, and attempt to "sell" this idea to the class.

4. Participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend and participate actively in all class exercises and discussions. Participation grades will be based on the quantity as well as the quality of your contributions to class discussion. Generally, you should err on the side of participating more than you would ordinarily. Your comments and questions are welcome, will not be judged, and help to make the entire course more interesting and enjoyable for everyone. There is no penalty for being "wrong." Professional demeanour is mandatory at all times. Behaviours or comments that would be inappropriate in a boardroom setting are also inappropriate in the classroom.

Attendance at all classes is required. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor of the reason and acquire the course notes from one of your classmates. Slides will also be available from the course website.

Name cards and class pictures are used to help give credit for your participation. You must have a name card with your **full first and last name** clearly written and displayed in front of you for every class.

5. *Midterm Exam (30%)*

This exam will be conducted in class and will cover all material covered to date. Questions will focus on demonstrating a deep understanding of the material by extending concepts beyond what was studied in class (e.g., mini-case studies, novel situations). Study early and study often!

6. *GRIT Assignment (5%)*

This group assignment will take place during GRIT week. More details will be provided at that time.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at:

www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

Students are responsible for being aware of and demonstrating behaviour that is honest and ethical in their academic work. Such behaviour includes:

- following the expectations articulated by instructors for referencing sources of information and for group work;
- asking for clarification of expectations as necessary;
- identifying testing situations that may allow copying;
- preventing their work from being used by others (e.g., protecting access to computer files); and
- adhering to the principles of academic integrity when conducting and reporting research.

AUTHENTICITY AND PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT

All courses use some online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

Students may be required to use the Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor. The Respondus LockDown Browser is a downloadable program that allows a student to take an Avenue to Learn quiz in a secure environment. Quizzes can be set to use LockDown Browser or LockDown Browser.

For more details about McMaster's use of Respondus Lockdown Browser please go to <https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/respondus-lockdown-browser-and-respondus-monitor/>

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [*Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities*](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx, Teams, or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

ATTENDANCE

Arriving late or missing class disrupts the learning experience for both you and your peers. Punctuality and attendance are crucial to maintaining a respectful, professional, and productive environment for everyone, including our faculty. Attendance will be recorded in each class to help identify students who may be at risk or in need of additional support.

Instructors will be using Top Hat to capture attendance in their classes. Attendance is recorded by submitting a unique 4-digit code displayed in your physical classroom using your personal device.

MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Please do not use the online McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) as this is for Undergraduate students only. The MBA program will not accept an MSAF.

When students miss regularly scheduled term work which contributes 10% or more to the final grade, for legitimate reasons as determined by the Student Experience – Academic Office (SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office)), the activity necessary to compensate for the missed work will be determined by the course instructor. The compensatory activities assigned will vary with the nature of the course and the missed requirement. They include, but are not restricted to, an alternative assignment, a rescheduled midterm exam, or re-weighting the marks for the missed component to other mark components. Documentation explaining such missed work must be provided to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) within five (5) working days of the scheduled date for completion of the work.

Acceptable reasons for missed work, along with the [Petition for Missed Term Work](#) and the [MBA Student McMaster University Student Health Certificate](#), can be found on the DeGroote MBA Student website (mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca). Please direct any questions about acceptable documentation to the MBA Academic Advisors (askmba@mcmaster.ca).

University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) Petition for Missed Term Work per academic year, after which the student must meet with the Director of the program.

If term work is missed without an approved reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for examinations on or before the last date for withdrawal from a course without failure (please refer to official university session dates). Students must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor immediately upon receipt. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is:

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

Use of Test Accommodations at McMaster University Burlington Campus Ron Joyce Centre

Whereas Student Accessibility Services (SAS), on Main Campus, determines all MBA student accommodations, the MBA Faculty Office manages the coordination of accommodations for tests, midterms, and exams at the Ron Joyce Centre in Burlington.

Process for Students

- Students must activate their accommodation(s) (e.g., extra-time, memory aid, etc.) for each upcoming test, midterm, or exam, at least two weeks in advance. Students can do this by emailing their Instructor and the DeGroote MBA SAS scheduling office at DSBSAS@mcmaster.ca. If a student cannot meet this

deadline, they should contact DSBSAS@mcmaster.ca to discuss alternative arrangements. The program is committed to exploring flexibility where possible to support students.

- All tests, midterms, and exams are booked synchronously with the class's start time. Any deviations from the start time (e.g. start earlier than the class to enable completion at the same end time) requires a discussion with their instructor on protocol at the time of accommodation activation.
- Students will leverage the accommodation (e.g., extra-time, memory aid, etc.), in a designated testing room. Rooms will be booked according to the student's SAS accommodation. Unless the accommodation states otherwise, students should expect that they will be writing in a room with other students. One or more invigilators will always be in the room.
- Following the request to activate the accommodation(s), dsbsas@mcmaster.ca will reach out to the student with their test, midterm, or exam details, including the date, time, and room number. As there may be other students writing tests in the room, we ask that students enter the room quietly and leave all personal items at the front of the room.

All policies and procedures, including restroom access, how extra-time is allocated for assessments under Universal Design, and the submission of memory aids in advance, are consistent with those of SAS on Main Campus. The only variance in procedure is communication around, and physical location of, assessment. There is not a dedicated testing space at RJC. Existing classrooms and lecture halls will be used for most testing. All SAS-approved accommodations will be honoured by our staff; however, core testing elements are not eliminated in alternative testing formats. Students should expect and plan for invigilation, incidental noise, and other potential distractions.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS, OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with

explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) to the various learning activities of MBA B610 will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Students may freely use generative AI in this course so long as the use of generative AI is referenced and cited following citation instructions given in the syllabus. Use of generative AI outside assessment guidelines or without citation will constitute academic dishonesty. It is the student's responsibility to be clear on the expectations for citation and reference and to do so appropriately.

WEEK	DATE	ASSIGNMENT
Week 1 <i>Introduction & Nature of OBHRM</i>	C01: Sept 8 th C02: Sept 9 th C03: Sept 9 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - What are some of your strengths and weaknesses in the work realm? - Which of these (strengths/weaknesses) would you like to work on over the semester?
Week 2 <i>Personality & Values</i>	C01: Sept 15 th C02: Sept 16 th C03: Sept 16 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - How would you define your personality? - What are your core values? - How do your values and personality affect your behavior at work? Case: Iggy's Bread of the World
Week 3 <i>Motivation</i>	C01: Sept 22 nd C02: Sept 23 rd C03: Sept 23 rd	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - Where or when did you work the hardest? - Where or when did you slack off the most? - What do the differences about these situations suggest about what motivates you? <i>Required Reading:</i> Newport, Cal. 2012. Follow a career passion? Let it follow you. <i>New York Times</i>. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/jobs/follow-a-career-passion-let-it-follow-you.html Case: Suicides at France Télécom
Week 4 <i>Performance & Job Design</i>	C01: Sept 29 th C02: Sept 30 th (asynchronous) C03: Sept 30 th (asynchronous)	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - What types of performance evaluations have you had? - What's the best way of measuring performance? The worst? Case: Brainard, Bennis & Farrell
Week 5 <i>Ethical Decision Making & Organizational Justice</i>	C01: Oct 6 th C02: Oct 7 th C03: Oct 7 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - Have you ever felt unfairly treated at work? When & why? - Are your personal and professional ethics different? Case: Uber: #WhatDoYouDo?
Week 6 <i>GRIT Week – NO CLASS</i>	C01: Oct 13 th C02: Oct 1 ^h C03: Oct 14 th	
Week 7 <i>Leadership</i>	C01: Oct 20 st C02: Oct 21 nd C03: Oct 21 nd	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - Think of an organization you were a part of that you characterize as having a “good” culture. What was

		good about the culture? Did these attributes affect people's, and the organization's performance, and if so, how? Case: Google's Chief Executive: In Need of a Change Leadership Style?
Week 8 Group & Teams	C01: Oct 27 th C02: Oct 28 th C03: Oct 28 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - What are your most positive and negative team experiences? If you think about the differences between these, what can you extrapolate about what makes teams work well? Case: Satera Team at Imatron Systems, Inc.
Week 9 Midterm Exam	C01: Nov 3 rd C02: Nov 4 th C03: Nov 4 th	In-class Midterm – please bring your laptop
Week 10 Power & Influence	C01: Nov 10 th C02: Nov 11 th C03: Nov 11 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - Who would you describe as especially powerful within your organization, and why? - Are leaders always powerful? Why or why not? Case: Jacinda Ardern's Farewell, a Leadership Reflection on Stepping Down
Week 11 Networks, Conflict & Communication	C01: Nov 17 th C02: Nov 18 th C03: Nov 18 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - How do you approach networking? Have you benefited from your network connections in the past? Why or why not? Case: Transitions Asia: Managing Across Cultures
Week 12 Change Management	C01: Nov 24 th C02: Nov 25 th C03: Nov 25 th	<i>Preparatory Questions:</i> - Have you been in an organization while it was going through change? What factors helped or hindered during the change? - Why are people often resistant to change? Case: Digital Transformation 2.0: CEO Elie Girard at Atos
Week 13 Create-a-Case Presentations	C01: Dec 1 nd C02: Dec 2 nd C03: Dec 2 nd Create-a-Case Written Study due	