ORGC 317: Virtual Teams
Online Course
Spring 2015

Kay Yoon, Ph.D.
Home office: 14 E. Jackson Suite 1809
Office Phone: 312-362-7987
E-mail: kyoon4@depaul.edu

Office hours:
By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS AND OBJECTIVES:

Teams are primary work units in many contemporary organizations. Organizations rely on teams, as opposed to single individuals, when it comes to complex problem solving and decision making. Therefore, team work skills are becoming ever more crucial competencies to be successful in organizational life. With growing multi-national operations and recent advances in communication technologies, teams whose members are geographically dispersed and culturally and naturally diverse are no longer rarity. Such teams operating in virtual context face unique challenges when collaborating with members across temporal and geographic borders.

This is a fully on-line advanced undergraduate course in small group communication that addresses how team processes in virtual context are different from those in face-to-face settings and what takes to become a successful leader and a member of a virtual team. Class materials will focus on various theories and research, case studies, simulations, and their applications to real-life virtual teams.

The objectives of the course include (1) comprehending concepts and a language for understanding teams processes in both face-to-face and virtual contexts, (2) acquiring theoretical and technological tools to effectively participate in and manage virtual teams, (3) learning analytical tools to observe, diagnose, and choose appropriate responses to different problems related to virtual team processes, and (4) recognizing and reflecting on one’s own leadership skills in virtual team context.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All required readings will be available on Desire2Learn at <d2l.depaul.edu>. See the course schedule section on pp. 8-10 for full citations.

All students are required to purchase Everest Simulation ($15.00). See Everest Online Simulation section for purchasing instructions.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATIONS:

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<td>Leadership Essay</td>
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<td>Team Case Analysis (25%)</td>
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<td>Part 1: Problem Analysis</td>
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<td>Part 2: Recommendations</td>
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<td>Everest Simulation</td>
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Course grading scale:
Your course letter grade is a function where your total course percentage grade falls within the following percentage ranges:

- A = 94 - 100
- A- = 90 - 93
- B+ = 88 - 89
- B = 84 - 87
- B- = 80 - 83
- C+ = 78 - 79
- C = 74 - 77
- C- = 70 - 73
- D+ = 68 - 69
- D = 64 - 67
- D- = 60 - 63
- F = Below 59

Leadership Essay:

Leadership is critical in any team, but it is even more so in virtual context. In this essay assignment, you will reflect on how leadership played out in your own virtual team in this class. There are three team assignments throughout the course (Team Case Analysis part 1, Team Case Analysis part 2, and Everest simulation), and your team will elect a leader for each team assignment. Your essay must address what aspects of your team leadership were successful and what aspects could have been better. For those of you who have served your team in leadership roles, you can reflect on your own leadership behavior (your strengths and weaknesses). For those who haven’t, you can share your observations of different leaders. See the full guideline on D2L under “Assignment”.

Team Case Analysis:

As a team of 5-6 students, you will read a case on “Leo Burnett Company Ltd: Virtual Team Management” and address a variety of issues related to virtual teams. This team case analysis will give you opportunities to discuss, evaluate, test and/or put into practice many of the topics from the readings and class discussions. This team case analysis involves two related segments, each of which you will complete over the term. You will be randomly assigned to a 5-6 person team, which will be your team for the entire term. The team will select a leader for each of the two parts. The leaders’ responsibilities are to initiate and lead the team collaboration, and direct preparation processes for the submission of the team’s analysis.
Peer evaluation: Your individual grade for team assignments depends both on the success of your team in completing the assignments, and on your individual performance within the team (as privately rated by your teammates). I assign a team grade for each part of the assignment, which is the best possible individual grade you can get. At the end of the quarter, your team members will fill out a confidential peer evaluation form to assess your level of contribution to the team assignments throughout the quarter. Your individual grade for total team assignments may be lowered depending on the evaluations your team members provide me.

Everest Team Simulation:

In Module 5, your case study team will experience a very fun and stimulating online simulation: Climbing Mountain Everest! In the simulation, each member will have a specific role (leader, photographer, physician, marathoner, and environmentalist), and each member’s contribution will be crucial to whether or not your team will succeed in reaching the summit on time. The simulation will take approximately 1.5 hours, and everyone in your team will have to be online at the same time to work on the simulation. After your team completes the simulation, I will share the results of your team performance with you. You will be required to debrief and analyze your team outcome in Module 7 discussion forum. For further instructions and evaluation guidelines, see the assignment description under “ORGC 317 Assignments” tap.

To begin, you need to register at Harvard Business School Publishing at https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/35647029. Once you register, you will be guided to the course folder and student purchase. The registration and purchase ($15.00) must be completed by 4/17 (F) so that I can have enough time to set it up. The completion of your team’s simulation is due at 11pm on 5/8 (F).

Quizzes:

Instead of a midterm, we will have an online quiz for each module on the reading and lecture (except for Module 5). Each quiz is worth 10 points and will be due at 11:00pm every Tuesday. The goal of the quiz is to make sure that you keep up with reading and lecture consistently and prepare yourself for online discussions. Quizzes will consist of a mix of multiple choice and T/F questions. There is a 30-minute time limit for each quiz. The quiz will automatically close in D2L at 11:00pm on due dates. NO make-up quizzes will be given. Instead, I will drop your lowest quiz score at the end of the term. Note: The syllabus quiz for the preparation module will be counted toward the quiz grade.

Final Exam:

The final exam will be an open book online exam. The exam will be available at 8:00am-11:00pm on 6/5 (F), and once you start, you will have an hour and a half to complete the exam. The deadline for the exam is firm unless you provide documented medical or family emergencies prior to the deadline. The exam will cover contents from the entire term, and will consist of
multiple choice, T/F, short answer, and essay questions. Study guide will be provided prior to the exam.

**Discussion Forums:**

Unlike conventional face-to-face classes where I can visually see students’ level of engagement through verbal and non-verbal cues, online classes allow only written or other tangible products as a measure of your participation. The following guidelines are offered for your successful participation in online discussion forums.

Discussion forums are a chance to synthesize the materials, and students are expected to draw linkages between the reading, lecture, current events, and personal experiences. For each Discussion Forum, you’re required to post at least one comment of your own and at least one response to someone’s comment. For full points, your post must be substantive, compare/contrast, or synthesize information from multiple sources instead of summarizing the already familiar information from the reading and the lecture. Your comment to your classmates’ post must have a complementary aspect: offering additional information/insights/stories/linkages that add to the original post and encourage participation from more classmates. Posts that antagonize or simply offer opinions without substantiating will not get credit and may be removed if necessary. Feel free to respectfully disagree, and when you do bring new sources and information and keep your tone appropriate for scholarly debate. Note: posts made too close to the deadline may result in deduction in points due to the fact that few people can respond to posts that are made at the last minute. More detailed guidelines for Discussion Forum will be provided.

Each discussion forum will automatically close at 11:00pm on Thursdays for each module. NO make-up posts will be allowed. Instead, I will drop your lowest discussion forum score at the end of the term. Note: The class introduction during the preparation module will be counted toward the Discussion Forum grade.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Course Website:**

All class materials including assignments, lecture slides, readings, quizzes and exams will be posted on the course website at <d2l.depaul.edu>. Contact information for classmates will also be available. Make sure you submit the email address that you use regularly and frequently in Campus Connection, because that email address will be automatically imported to D2L and it will be the primary contact point for me and your classmates.

**Communication with the Instructor:**

Email will be the best way to get a hold of me. Whenever you send me an email, you must include your name and the course title so that I know with whom I’m communicating. I typically respond to emails within a few hours. If you don’t hear from me within a day, check with me to
see if I have received your email. Some emails get classified as junk or never make it to my inbox for unknown reasons.

For emergencies, please call my office phone (312.362.7987), and when I’m not available, leave a detailed message along with your phone number. For any issues that require long conversations, we can always set up an in-person meeting or schedule a phone conference in advance.

During Module 6, I will hold a 5-minute virtual conference (via phone, IM, or skype) with each one of you to touch base on your progress in this class. This virtual conference is optional, but it will be another good opportunity to address any issues or concerns. We will schedule the conferences as we approach the mid-point of the term.

Late Work:

All your individual and group work must be submitted online via D2L before deadline. No submission to my email will be accepted. It’s not possible to make up Quizzes and Final exam or post comments in discussion forum after deadline because they open and close automatically on D2L – once it’s closed make-up or late post is simply not possible in the system. For other assignments, late submission policy will apply: 5 points will be deducted from your total grade for each day after the due date. After a week passes, the submission will not be accepted.

Late submissions due to technical glitches (e.g., internet failure at home, stolen laptop, lack of familiarity with D2L, etc.) are not excused. It is your full responsibility to resolve such issues before due dates.

If you have technical difficulty with any aspect of the class, do not wait until only several hours before an assignment is due and then discover for the first time you are having a technical difficulty. If you have trouble accessing Desire2Learn, contact me via email as soon as possible. You may also contact the Technology Support Center at 312-362-8765.

Academic Integrity:

Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Student Handbook or by visiting http://condor.depaul.edu/~handbook/code17.html. Violations may result in the failure of the assignment, failure of the course, and/or additional disciplinary actions.

Professionalism:

I would like to create a fun, open, and friendly learning environment for everyone. Professional behavior from all of us is a precursor to this goal. I expect you to display respectful and professional manners to your classmates and your instructor. Particularly, using sexist or racist languages and making comments that make others uncomfortable will not be accepted. Your professional behaviors online will be evaluated and counted toward your discussion forum grade.
Students with Disabilities:

I do my best to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. It is the student’s responsibility to notify me in advance of any special needs so proper accommodations can be made.

A Few Words about Online Class:

Learning in an online environment is a new territory to many of us. As online classes present many advantages as well as limitations compared with face-to-face classes, we must think differently about how to successfully accomplish our learning goals in this new environment. To help you succeed in this online course, I have a few tips:

1. **Set your expectations straight**: One of the misconceptions about online class is that it requires less work and less time commitment. IT IS COMPLETELY WRONG! Many research studies and actual student testimonies suggest that online classes actually require more time and are harder to hide from than face-to-face classes. I can monitor your behavior more closely online because D2L system allows me to verify if you read the materials, viewed the lecture, and are participating in forums. Every click, every post, and the duration of every activity are visible! Therefore, it would be wise to take this class only when you’re fully ready and committed to this new way of engagement.

2. **Be open to and exploratory about communication technologies**: How can you expect to perform well in an online class, particularly when the topic of the class is on virtual team processes, if you are not willing to use a variety of online communication tools? Check D2L regularly and frequently. Take advantage of technological support systems in place at DePaul when you run into technical problems about D2L. Also, be creative when selecting other freely available technologies (e.g., Skype, Google Document, IM, etc.) to stay connected with your team members.

3. **Become an independent and proactive learner**: In face-to-face classes, you can easily talk to your professor during lecture or after class whenever you have a question or need to clarify difficult concepts. However, online classes don’t allow such real time conversations where any confusions or misunderstandings are quickly and easily resolved. Whenever you have questions, it is your responsibility to address them by contacting me or seeking other sources of support. Always keep up with weekly activities and due dates. You are fully accountable for completing all assignments on time and for trouble shooting (and seeking help) whenever problems occur.

4. **Stay committed and dedicated to team work**: This course is on how to become a better team member and team leader in virtual settings, and therefore, your commitment to team work is an absolute precursor to your and your team’s success in this class (30% of your final grade is determined by team work). If you are not ready for or not interested in committed team involvement, consider taking this class in another term. Team commitment is crucial in any team-related classes, but it’s even more critical in this class because it’s fully online. In the online environment, you don’t have the physical
proximity that face-to-face classes offer, through which you can see your team members regularly and exchange updates about what each team member is working on to complete a team project. To be successful in a virtual team, you must be extra conscious about meeting deadlines, staying connected with your team members, and making quality contributions to team efforts.
COURSE TOPIC OUTLINE AND DUE DATES:
The schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced via email in advance.

Preparation Module: 3/30-4/5       Introduction to the Course

  Review Syllabus
  Discussion Forum: Class Introductions
  Syllabus Quiz

Module 1: 4/6-4/12       Nature of Virtual Teams


  Quiz 1
  Discussion Forum 1

Module 2: 4/13-4/19       Virtual Team Structuring


  Quiz 2
  Discussion Forum 2
  Everest Simulation Purchase due by 4/17 (F) by 11pm

Module 3: 4/20-4/26       Virtual Trust Building


  TED Talk: Jimmy Wales on “The Birth of Wikipedia”

  Quiz 3
  Discussion Forum 3
Module 4: 4/27-5/3  Leadership


Quiz 4
Discussion Forum 4
Team Case Analysis Part 1 due at 11pm 5/1 (F)

Module 5: 5/4-5/10  Everest Expedition Simulation

Completion of Everest Simulation due at 11pm on 5/8 (F)
Virtual Conference with Kay (Optional)

Module 6: 5/11-5/17  Consideration of Diversity and Time


Quiz 6
Discussion Forum 6

Module 7: 5/18-5/24  Knowledge Sharing in Virtual Teams


Quiz 7
Discussion Forum 7

Module 8: 5/25-5/31  Innovation and Creativity


TED Talk: David Kelley on “How to build your creative confidence”
TED Talk: Jason Fried on “Why work doesn't happen at work”

**Quiz 8**
**Discussion Forum 8**
**Team Case Analysis Part 2 due at 11pm on 5/29 (F)**

**Module 9: 6/1-6/7**  **Clean up and Preparing for Final Exam**

Final Exam Due on 6/5 (F) at 11:00pm
Leadership Essay due on 6/7 (Sun) at 11:00pm