

Weatherhead School of Management – International Management Center
MIDS 433: Managing Electronic Teams in Global Economy
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(TH 10 – 12 noon, EST.)

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COURSE OVERVIEW

The rapid advancement and availability of high-speed communication networks and interactive software, combined with the trends in organizations toward speed, teamwork, and knowledge management, are driving the growing development and the use of a variety of collaborative technologies. Things are even more complicated when multinational companies are trying to implement these collaborative technologies in a global scale. Although collaborative computing has become a strategic necessity for firms to compete successfully in the global marketplace, implementation of such collaborative technology without considering potential technical, behavioral, legal, and cultural risks could lead to catastrophic outcomes.

This course covers technical, behavioral, and cultural bases that are necessary to build and manage high-performing global teams in electronic communication environments. By bringing students from WSOM and IMC, students at both sites will have rich learning experiences as they collaborate throughout the semester.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

Collaborative Technology:

As organizations continue to search for new organizational structure for the 21st century, the “networked organization” is one of the most popular prescriptions for companies. Fueled partly by the rapid advancement and availability of collaborative technology, this new organizational form holds the promise of allowing companies to overcome physical limitations (time and locations) and deploy valuable key resources where and when it makes the most economic sense. As such, it is imperative for managers in these “new” organizations to be able to speak about and understand collaborative technology. This course will examine a wide range of collaborative technology which can be used to build such networked organizations, including groupware (Lotus Notes), group support systems (GroupSystems), web-based group support systems

(Consensus@nyware), desktop videoconferencing systems (NetMeeting), H.320-based videoconferencing systems (PictureTel), and internet-based conferencing systems (Communicator and MS Chat). The primary focus is on understanding what these tools are, what they can be used for, and their relative strengths and limitations, rather than gaining the ability to create complete working applications using them.

Electronic Teams:

This course approach is premised on the view that collaborative technologies must be used in the context of appropriate and effective team management procedures. Thus, we will look at the ingredients of effective team management in general, and their implications for electronic teams. The course will analyze descriptive and normative models of team process, and will emphasize the analysis of various characteristics of team process such as leadership, decision-making, team building, negotiation, and communication. This perspective will serve as a basis for sketching new organizational structure using available collaborative technologies. Case studies on team process will be drawn from such domains as management, organizational behavior, new product development, and information systems. Results from actual research studies will be brought into the classroom for added knowledge and insight.

We will apply insights gained from in-class discussion to the virtual team exercise. In this exercise, face-to-face meetings among the team members are minimized, while the majority of the work will be done in an electronic space created using collaborative technologies that we discuss in the classroom for the project. At the end of the semester, we will collectively share our experiences in virtual team environments to make our own conclusions about such technology-intensive work environments.

Target Audience:

This course is aimed at managers in functional areas who are in a position to manage teams communicating primarily through electronic communication channels. Those interested in becoming IT-based management support consultants are encouraged to take the course. Finally, IS managers who are in a position to develop and maintain electronic communication infrastructure for teams in functional areas are also encouraged to take this course. Students who are interested in taking this course should have taken an introductory class to IS or should be able to demonstrate an equivalent level of knowledge. No programming background is required, albeit preferred.

COURSE CONDUCT

The learning activities will be divided into two distinct parts: in-class and out-of-class learning activities.

In-class Learning Activities

Every class will be conducted jointly with students at both WSOM and IMC. In-class learning activities are designed based on “cellular” learning approach. In a cellular learning environment, each small group (cell) represents an independent learning entity which defines its own learning

objectives and goals but at the same time contributes to the learning of entire class by sharing its learning and discoveries with other cells.

Each class will typically include lectures, a small group exercise, and large group electronic discussions.

Lectures. Lectures will be delivered to both sites at the same time via wide-area videoconferencing. Students will interact with the instructor either through the videoconferencing or a supplementary interactive web page. All teaching materials, including handouts and slides, will be distributed to students at both sites through Lotus Notes.

Small Group Exercises. Each class will include a small group exercise. The class will be divided into several small groups to engage in small group discussions (I will announce the team assignment for this exercise at the beginning of the 3rd week). Each team will be assigned into one of three communication modes: textual, audio, and video + audio modes. Students will stay with a particular communication mode for few consecutive weeks before being rotated into another communication mode. This provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about the pros and cons of several different communication technologies by using in small group settings.

Large Group Electronic Discussion. The small group exercise will be either followed by a large group discussion or sandwiched between two large group discussions, both facilitated through Consensus@nyware™ to connect two classrooms. Typically, the large group discussion before the small group exercise will define the overall scope and the direction of the small group exercise. Among many possible discussion topics, members of each small group will pick one or two topics and issues that they want to focus on during the small group exercise. The large group discussion after the small group exercise will be used for students to share their thoughts and learning outcomes with other students in the classroom.

Out-of-class Learning Activity

A semester long project will be used to provide an out-of-class learning opportunity for the students. Student teams will work with executives from Ameritech in Cleveland and Hungary to develop a new product development plan for Matav (a Hungarian telephone company which is 1/3 owned by Ameritech).

For this project, students will be assigned to a “virtual” team to propose a new “product business plan” for caller’s ID in Hungarian market. The target customer groups are residential and small business who do not own their own PBX systems. The proposal should include (a) market research (what customers want), (b) product description (engineering, network, and database aspects), (d) financing plane (including cost/benefit and payback period analysis), (e) marketing plan, and (f) pricing strategy. The team assignment for the global virtual team project is different from that of small group exercise and will be made a week prior to the beginning of the project. More detailed information for the project will be provided later in the semester.

Students at WSOM will work with managers in the US to get necessary information, while students at IMC will work with managers in Budapest. (Students will have limited access time to these managers via e-mail, Notes-based web page, and fax.) Students will then communicate

via various Internet-based communication technologies including desktop videoconferencing systems and Lotus Notes to communicate with remote teammates and coordinate the project management. The project will start on Feb 18, and students will deliver their final products and give presentations to a group of executives from both companies and the class on April 22.

The out-of-class learning activity has two specific objectives. First, students are expected to learn how to analyze issues and problems related to the implementation of global business plans as a team. Second, students are expected to learn various features of different electronic communication technologies.

GRADING

The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- Class participation 30%
- Case analyses and small group exercise* 35%
- Global virtual team project* 35%

* denotes group assignments.

Final letter grades are *not* determined according to a “curve” that specifies in advance the proportion of people to receive each grade. Instead, letter grades are determined according to the percentage of possible credit achieved by each student, computed by adding together scores for individual grading components multiplied by their percentage indicated above. This “criterion-based” grading is done to promote a cooperative climate in which assisting one’s classmates and/or studying in groups, which I strongly encourage, does not adversely affect one’s own letter grade. The course is graded using the letter grades A-F. Those earning 90% or more of the available credit will receive an A. Those earning 80% or more will receive a B. Those earning 70% or more will receive a C. Those earning 60% or more will receive a D. An incomplete will be given only for cases in which the student is unable to complete some parts of the course requirements due to verified illness or family emergencies, and must be completed within one academic semester to prevent the grade from being automatically converted to an F.

The grade cutoff points may be adjusted downward, thereby raising student grades, if the final distribution of grades is unfavorably low.

Class participation: The class participation grade will reflect my judgment of the quality and quantity of students' contribution during and between class sessions over the course of the semester. Much research has found participative and active learning to be highly effective in terms of student learning and retention. There are few assigned readings for each class and one case study. Except the first class, you are expected to study the assigned course readings and the case for a given day before coming to class. Students should be prepared to be called upon to discuss issues covered in the assigned readings.

Criteria for class participation credit include attendance, punctuality, level of preparation, professionalism, answering questions, discussing readings, and contributing to group activities.

Tardiness disrupts the flow of class activities and often leads to having to repeat announcements or instructions. Entering and leaving the room during the class similarly distracts both students and instructors and conveys a disregard for the material being discussed. You should display your name cards throughout the semester to enhance interaction. I encourage you to engage in critical thinking, to challenge ideas without showing disrespect for others' ideas. Please use judgment when raising issues in class – do not waste the class's time on a personal matter – instead see the instructor or GA one-on-one. Effective participation has much more to do with the quality than with the quantity of your interaction. In other words, those who attempt to dominate air time for its own sake without contributing to the advancement of the discussion will *not* be rewarded for it. If for some reason on a particular day you were not able to prepare for that day's class, let me know at the beginning of the class and I won't call on you (to be used once during the semester without penalty).

If a student is unable to attend a class session, it is the student's responsibility to acquire the class notes, assignments, announcements, etc. from a classmate.

Case Analyses and Small Group Exercise: For every class, students will be asked to come prepared to discuss a case study. At the beginning of each class, students will be asked to respond to one or two essay questions regarding the case study assigned for the day. Sometimes, these "lead-in" questions will be posted to the course web site ahead of time (48 to 72 hours), in which case students are requested to post their answers (via Lotus Notes) no later than midnight prior to the scheduled class. This is an individual assignment.

Then, students will be asked to engage in small group discussion to further discuss the case study, after which they will be asked to respond to another set of questions as a group. This is a group assignment and the quality of these writ-ups will be evaluated for each group.

Global Virtual Team Project: The final proposal and the presentation of each team will be jointly evaluated by myself and the executives from Matav and Ameritech. 70% of team project grade will be adjusted based on the peer evaluation score.

READINGS

Required Textbooks

- *Teams and Technology: Fulfilling the promise of the new organization*, by Don Mankin, Susan G. Cohen, and Tora K. Bikson. Harvard Business School Press. 996
- CWRUNote

Recommend Readings

- *The Age of the Network: Organizing Principles for the 21st Century*, by Jessica Lipnack & Jeffrey Stamps, Wiley, 19994.
- *The Infinite Resource: Creating and Leading the Knowledge Enterprise*, by William E. Halal (Ed.), Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.
- *Groups Interacting with Technology*, by Joseph E. McGrath & Andrea B. Hollingshead, Sage, 1994.

- *Teams, Markets, and Systems: Business innovation and information technology*, by Claudio U. Ciborra, Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- *Groupware & Teamwork: Invisible Aid or Technical Hindrance?*, by Claudio U. Ciborra, Wiley, 1996.

Additional General Policies

Grading Policy

It is important to recognize that a grade reflects another's evaluation and judgment of your work. Different reviewers might evaluate a paper or exam differently. You are encouraged to meet me at anytime to discuss the strengths and weakness of your course work (i.e., to gain understanding of your performance). Grade appeals on course assignments and exams, however, are discouraged.

If you decide to appeal a grade, follow these steps:

1. Within seven days of receiving the grade, send me a written appeal. After seven days, I will not consider any grade appeals.
2. To file an appeal, prepare a written statement detailing why your are appealing your grade. Be sure to document your reasons by referring to grading standards, incorrect point calculations, etc.; stating simply that you feel you "deserve" a higher grade because you worked hard or based on a vague impression is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.
3. Submit the written statement together with the graded material.
4. I will consider your appeal and make a decision within a week.

Regarding final grades, changes will be considered only in cases of alleged "arbitrary and capricious grading," which can be defined as "a. The assignment of a course grade to a student on some basis other than performance in the course; b. The assignment of a course grade to a student by unreasonable application of standards different from standards that were applied to other students that were in that course; or c. The assignment of a course grade by a substantial and unreasonable departure from the instructor's initially articulated standards." This policy is intended to assure that grading is consistent and fair to all students.

Two key ground rules apply: 1) you must appeal a grade within one week of the time the score for you exam, homework, or project is made available to you, and 2) class time will not be used to discuss grade appeals.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is broadly defined as any act that violates the rights of another student or that involves misrepresentation of your own work. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, which means misrepresenting as your own work any part of work done by another; submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval of all instructors concerned; depriving another student of necessary course materials (e.g., removing library materials that are not available on a check-out basis); or interfering with

another student's work. Evidence of misconduct will result in reduction of course grade and notification of the Weatherhead School of Management.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Any student in this class who has a documented visual impairment, cerebral palsy, hearing disability or any other disability should contact the professor during the first week of class to discuss and arrange any instructional accommodation that may be necessary. Student who would like to serve as volunteer tutors, readers, or note takers for students needing special assistance are encouraged to contact the professor during the first week of class.

Instructor biography

Youngjin Yoo is Assistant Professor in Information Systems department at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. He holds a Ph.D. in information systems from the University of Maryland. He received his MBA and B.S. in Business Administration from Seoul National University in Seoul, Korea. He joined Weatherhead School of Management in fall 1997. Dr. Yoo was selected as a participant to 16th Ernst & Young/International Conference on Information Systems Doctoral Consortium representing the University of Maryland at College Park and was the recipient of 1995 Frank T. Paine Award for Academic Achievement in Maryland Business School. His research interests include the role of information technology in distributed group decision making and learning processes, the role of leadership in IT-facilitated teams, and virtual teams. The results of his research have been presented at several national and international research conferences, including International Conference on Information Systems, Americas Conference on Information Systems, and Hawaiian Conference on Systems Sciences. He worked with Lotus Institute, Inc. and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to design virtual learning environments. He also analyzed and designed information systems for several leading Korean companies such as Poong San Metal Co. (world's largest coin blank manufacturer), Korea Telecomm, and Korea Water Resource Cooperation. His work was published at leading academic journals such as *the Academy of Management Journal*, *Information Systems Management*, and *Korean Journal of MIS Research*. Recently, he was awarded Walter Nord Grant for 1998 – 1999 to investigate the role of IT in managing electronic teams in global economy. As a born-again Christian, he is a proud father of two boys. During his off-hours, he enjoys swimming, reading, and simulation games. By the way, he has an official black belt in Tae Kwon Do.