

DEPM 604 – SPRING 2014

Leadership and Management in Distance Education and eLearning

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Conference Participation—Individual: Weekly Online Conferences (20%)

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Weekly conferences are the focal point of our ongoing discussion/exchange. It is here that you can "try out" your emerging ideas and interests with an engaged audience! Conferences are in fact, the "core" of our collaborative learning community. During Weeks 7, 8, and 9, student work groups will be assigned to lead one of the conferences in each week entitled "DE Leader."

As noted above, overall individual participation in the conferences will be weighted 20 percent of the course grade. The 12 weeks will be broken into four participation evaluation periods from which you will receive feedback on the quality of your participation: Evaluation Period I (Weeks 1/2); II (Weeks 3/4/5); III (Weeks 6/7/8/9); and IV (Weeks 10/11/12). During the week your group leads the class discussion for the "DE Leader Conference," your individual participation grade will be assessed as part of the overall group project grade.

The minimum weekly individual posting is: one substantive "new topic" or main post response as appropriate to each conference exercise or question, and at least one substantive response to your colleagues for that exercise. The strongest comments are those that involve ideas, concepts and applications. Each conference will be opened by Sunday midnight EDT of each week and closed by Monday midnight the following week. Aim to have your initial posting as early in the week as possible so that the discussion isn't just left to the end of the following week-end or Monday.

Participation will be assessed based on the following Criteria:

- Content (50): Assessed on the basis to which contributions demonstrate a grasp of key ideas, concepts, and applications and show critical thinking, integration, and reflection of ideas.
- Frequency (20): Set with a minimum (for a passing grade of 16 points) of one substantive main post to each conference topic or exercise and one substantive response to another person's post or response in each conference. More participation rates higher points.
- Distribution/timelines (10): Scored by the following scale: substantive posts and responses put up by midnight EDT Thursdays rate 10 points; midnight Saturday 9, midnight Sunday 8, noon Monday 7, and Monday night 0.
- Collaboration (20): Based on the extent to which one's responses to the comments and questions of others aids or supports the learning of the class community.

ASSIGNMENT 1: What Does Leadership Mean to Me? Parts I & II (10%)

Part I: During the first week of class, please write a 2-3 page essay, double-spaced, on what leadership means to you. The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to share some of your preliminary and preconceived ideas about leadership before delving into the formal content and readings of the course. For example, do you think particular individual traits define a good leader? Do all good leaders have charisma and the ability to communicate a vision that followers can embrace? You are not limited in what you write and although you will begin formal readings, please use this as a venue to share your existing ideas and perceptions about leadership.

PLEASE POST YOUR PAPER IN THE ASSIGNMENT FOLDER BY THURSDAY, 5:00 p.m.(EST), February 6th

Part II: During the last week of class (Week 12) please return to your original Part I essay for review and write a 2-3 page summary highlighting how your perceptions and knowledge of leadership have changed, what specific aspects of the course contributed to these changes, and how you may use these ‘take aways’ in our particular work environment. Given you will have had the benefit of course readings and discussions, please cite specific sources that you draw your ideas and concepts for in this paper and include a reference section.

PLEASE POST YOUR PAPER IN THE ASSIGNMENT FOLDER BY THURSDAY, 5:00 P.M., April 24th.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR YOUR ACADEMIC WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

At the end of this document there is a list of key components expected of graduate academic writing. I wanted to share few tips up front to serve as reminders to help you improve your writing. Although these seem like common sense they are common challenges for most students. We will discuss these throughout the course.

1. **Introduction** – All your writing assignments need to be developed around a clear, concise introduction. What is the key purpose of your paper? What key elements and points will you discuss in your paper? Why is your topic or approach important? Your introduction sets up the entire paper and conveys to the reader a clear description of your focus – it makes the reader want to read more. Your introduction should be articulated clearly in the first two paragraphs of your paper. It is common in even the best papers for the opening paragraph to be descriptive of the general topic BUT by the end of the second paragraph you should have covered the components above and leave the reader with a clear understanding of your paper’s focus. Please pay special attention to writing your introduction – everything evolves from this and is critical to good academic writing.

2. **Citing Sources** – This is an absolute ethical and professional courtesy (and responsibility) in all academic writing *and also in your conference participation posts for this course*. A considerable portion of your writing will be developed from the resources you access in this course and of course your own outside resources. If you use these in any context of your arguments, you must cite them in text in concert with the end of paper/conference reference list. Note: Although it is sometimes permissible to use a source by you from a previous work, this must be justified to me and you **MUST** cite yourself. I generally will not approve this unless there is a strong and valid reason for using previous material by the student. All your citations and reference list must be APA compliant. This is not optional and is part of your writing – it must be accurate.

3. **From Descriptive to Analytical to Synthesis – Building and Justifying Your Arguments**

As you have progressed through the MDE program, you are continuously exposed to new readings, resources, strategies, and approaches to various aspects of the field. This can be overwhelming at times and yet all of these are part of the broader puzzle that defines the open and distance learning profession. With so many resources at available to you, it often tends to promote writing that focuses more on describing theories, strategies, and innovations emanating from these resources than moving to higher level analysis and synthesis.

What do I mean by higher level analysis and synthesis? It basically means moving beyond the descriptive phase and interjecting your own critical thinking skills by formulating your interpretation and implications of the content. **Indeed, even more simply it means that you take the risk to tell me what you really think.** Remember all the readings and resources we cover are open to interpretation, disagreement, and as a springboard for formulating your own ‘insights’ into issues and problems. I encourage you in all writing requirements for this course to take this risk, defend your arguments with resources, and express your own ideas and views. Don’t be afraid to think – tell me what you believe but back it up with literature and resources into a coherent, logical continuum of reasoning. This includes your conference participation as well. Good thinking to all of you. 😊

ASSIGNMENT 2: Mini Paper (15%): Evaluation of a Leadership or Management Theorist

Objectives: 1, 3, 6, 7

By the conclusion of Week 1, select a theorist from the below list based on your interests and initial research. From material published by the theorist, as well as scholarly material about the theorist and his or her theory, develop a paper of 1000-1250 words (4-5 double spaced pages), excluding front and end matter). Please use Times New Roman 12 point or Arial 11 point font. Be sure to use scholarly references (at least 5) and include the following in your discussion:

- Give a brief summary of the theorist's work. Note: This summary should not be a biographical sketch; it should be a short (c. 2 – 3 paragraph) summary of the main thrust of the theorist's ideas and contributions. The summary should be *in your own words*. Copying what others have said will be considered unresponsive.
- Describe how the theorist and his or her theory advanced our understanding of leadership/management. Be specific: what elements of the theory do you think contributed to a new understanding about leadership – if at all.
- Assess whether the theories advanced by this theorist are, or are not, relevant today. In particular, how might they be relevant, or not, to leaders or managers of distance education operations today?

Management Theorists List:

Argyris, Chris	Individual and organization; learning organization
Barnard, Chester	Functions of the executive
Bass, Bernard	Transformational leadership
Bennis, Warren	Leadership and change
Bertalanffy, Ludwig von	Systems theory; general systems theory
Fayol, Henry	Nature of managerial work
Follett, Mary Parker	Negotiation, power, employee participation
Janis, Irving	Groupthink; decision making
Kanter, Rosabeth Moss	Change management
Katz, Daniel & Robert Kahn	Social psychology of organizations;
Lewin, Kurt	Change theory; force field analysis
Locke, Edwin & Gary Latham	Goal setting theory
Mayo, Elton	Hawthorne studies on motivation
Mintzberg, Henry	Managerial work, strategy formation
Nonaka, Ikujiro	The knowledge-creating company
Orlikowski, Wanda	Info technologies and organizations
Porter, Michael	Strategic management; forces of competition
Roethlisberger, Fritz	Worker and organization
Schein, Edgar	Organizational culture
Senge, Peter	Systems thinking; the learning organization
Staw, Barry	Organizational behavior
Vroom, Victor	Expectancy theory
Weick, Karl	Social psychology of organizing

ASSIGNMENT 3: Group Project: Team-led Conference and Analysis Paper (20%)

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

During Week 4, you will be assigned to a team to identify a living leader who has led or is leading a major distance education organization or operation either in North America or somewhere around the globe. Your team will develop interview questions to serve as a core vehicle for a conversation with this leader. The questions must deal with major themes related to this course as follows:

- Current challenges to DE organizations and the profession
- The leader's vision for his or her organization or for the DE profession.
- The leader's perceived management or leadership style
- Strategy for implementing organizational change
- Strategy for organizational survival in a dynamic environment
- Advice to aspiring professionals in the DE community#

After your team has decided upon a distance education leader to interview, you must obtain approval from the faculty of this course before contacting the selected leader. (You may not use a current or past leader of UMUC.)

Once you obtain approval, you are to schedule a phone or Skype interview with this leader at her or his convenience but within the timeframe for this assignment. Following the interview, you will then develop and post your results for discussion in a class conference titled "DE Leader Conference" for the week assigned to your group (Weeks 7, 8, or 9). At the conclusion of your assigned discussion week, you are to post a group paper about the interview and what you have learned from the interview as related to the content of this course.

Be sure you discuss why you selected this particular leader and how the content of your interview reinforces the content of this class, or not, and if not, why do you think not. Please note: Your conference discussion about your DE Leader and the content of your paper should be as much, if not more, analytical rather than descriptive. You undoubtedly will have to go out to the published literature to bring in additional material to amplify your analysis and discussion.

Your group paper should be no more than about 1500-2000 words (excluding front and end matter), posted in the conference by Monday midnight at the end of the group's assigned week.

To maximize the success of your project, you may want to identify ahead of time specific "lead" individuals for different tasks: to draft questions, facilitate discussion, and write parts of the paper, as well as to perform other "group functions." It is up to you in terms of the exact division of labor, but in the past, it has been useful to have an identifiable contact point for each set of activities. Please do post all documentation and group communication in your study group since this is an important part of the team evaluation as a virtual team.

Each group's success will be assessed according to the following Criteria:

- Content (40): The extent to which the Group as a whole demonstrated a grasp of key ideas/concepts/applications and showed critical thinking, integration, and reflection of ideas
- Facilitation (20): The extent to which the Group as a whole contributed to class understanding of contemporary leadership literature and behavior.
- Collaboration (40): The extent to which the group as a whole appeared to pull together as a “work group.”

ASSIGNMENT 4: Individual Analysis of your Group's Process (10%)

Objectives: 2, 4, 5

Write a short analysis of your observations and experiences in your group during the group project phase. Specifically note, assess, and discuss the emergence of and presence of “leadership” in the group, or lack of it. Who emerged as a leader or leaders? How did one know that? What characterized leadership in the group? How effective was it? Could it have been more so? Please note this paper is an analysis, so it should not be primarily descriptive. Your observations must be explained or assessed on the basis of the theory and concepts encountered in the readings and in class. Your analysis should be concise, a paper of 1000-1250 words (4-5 double spaced pages, excluding front and end matter).

The individual analysis paper may be submitted to your assignment folder anytime following completion of your group's project, but see course calendar for specific due date.

ASSIGNMENT 5: Major Paper. Leadership and Distance Education (30%)

Objectives: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7

Develop a major paper in which you integrate the material you have encountered in this course with your personal experiences and understanding of distance education (DE) operations. Write the paper in two parts, prepared and submitted as a single document in the Assignment folder, using APA style, double-spaced, 1500-2000 words (8-10 double-spaced pages excluding front and end matter).

In Part 1, develop a list of at least five attributes or approaches that you feel best embody an effective DE leader. Whether these are people skills, technical skills, organizational skills, etc., justify your choices by explaining why these are so critical to successful leadership in this digital age. Also indicate if these leader characteristics have changed much in this more recent era of DE, and if these are universal to most DE settings or are best suited to particular situations.

In Part 2, define and discuss at least three crucial issues to which, in your opinion, DE leaders must attend in order to successfully guide their organizations. How have leaders of whom you are aware (perhaps including yourself?) dealt with these challenges? Identify those trends, politics, events, pressures, and developments (both positive and negative) within the field of DE that have brought these issues to the fore and now demand the attention and action of DE leaders, not only to deal with today's DE issues, but also those of the future. Most importantly, conclude with a discussion of what you most take away from this course that might be useful to you or other DE leaders in addressing these issues.

Finally, post a brief executive summary of your paper and its findings to the WEEK 12 class conference. In essence, the ideas you will present are your take-away ideas from this course that you find most useful. Be sure to make a substantive comment on at least one other of your classmates' presentations as well. The Major-Paper is due to your assignment folder see course calendar for due date.

Written Deliverables for this course will be evaluated on the following four criteria:

- Basics (10): The author followed the basic instructions for the assignment such as: providing cover page with her or his name or the team's name, followed APA format, provided the requested number of pages, references, etc. In other words, the author completed (*this particular*) assignment as requested.
- Quality of the Analysis (40): Writing demonstrates superior work, shows evidence of the ability to write and consider the significant implications of the issues and to present the issues and ideas in an analytical rather than a descriptive framework. The further one moves from merely describing a situation to considering its applications, implications, consequences, and linkages among ideas, etc., the more likely the work is to be superior. The ability to do this well is inextricably linked with high quality writing and strong, supportive research.
- Quality of the Writing (40): The ability to communicate ideas clearly and logically is integral to a top quality analysis. Written documents should use correct grammar, spelling, themes, and paragraphs that develop ideas so that the reader understands the path which the author/s has/have undertaken.

Effective writing includes such items as:

- Focus: demonstrates an understanding of the assignment
- Structure: organizes and develops ideas logically and clearly; writes papers with a strong introduction that contain a clearly stated purpose and approach, a main body that flows logically, and conclusions that are more than pro forma.
- Grammar: uses effective sentence structure, paragraphs, correct spelling, proper citation of resources.
- Writing: constructs sentences and paragraphs that flow logically, are analytical; uses paragraphs effectively
- Documentation/evidence: supports points with literature and data.
- Overall Integration (10): The paper basically “hangs together,” (i.e., basics, content, grammar, writing all fit well together in a smoothly flowing, logical document that reads easily).