![Columbia Business School]

TOP MANAGEMENT PROCESS
(MGMTB8515) Tuesdays in the Spring 2024

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Office hours by appointment

B8515-001 Tuesday 9:00-12:00 AM (Kravis)
CA: Yiru Luo (Section 001) – yl5197@columbia.edu
B8515-002 Tuesday 2:20-5:20 PM (Kravis)
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Attendance Expectations:

1. <u>Attendance at the first class</u> is mandatory for all enrolled students, as well as those on the waitlist who hope to add the class during add/drop.

2. You must attend class in your registered section and be part of all team projects with your team.

3. <u>Take-home Final Exam Period</u>: April 27th (9:00 AM) – April 29th (11:00 PM). Exam requires up to three hours to complete. **NOTE: Final exam period is non-changeable.**

4. <u>Class Attendance</u>: Overall, this is a highly participatory course and therefore attending all classes is critical. If you see yourself missing two or more sessions, this will be significantly detrimental to your grade, and you may want to reconsider taking the course. **Missing three sessions will automatically result in a failing grade, unless there is excused illness**.

5. <u>Participation Expectations</u>: This course really benefits from class participation and if everyone contributes accordingly, the course will be better for all of us. If you are not inclined to participate in the ways outlined in the participation section of the syllabus (P.5), this is not the course for you!

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Top Management Process (TMP) is about the job of the General Manager, like a CEO, who is ultimately responsible for a company's organization (its design and success), strategy (its development and execution), operations (including P&L responsibility), and results. This job is quite different from an individual producer's job, such as a trader, or the head of a function such as marketing or finance, or the head of a business unit. All the functions report directly or indirectly to the GM. It is the GM's job to ensure that these interdependent units are coordinated, integrated, and executing a common strategy that remains responsive to the changing marketplace.

The course is one in which you will have a chance to study the challenges that confront GMs and to formulate approaches to those challenges so that you will not be as daunted when you face them. TMP argues that good decisions are more likely if GMs have **a systemic and process-oriented mindset**. By system, we mean how everything is connected to, and interacting with, everything else. By process, we mean the complex ways in which people, events, issues and situations evolve and interrelate over time. The course is organized into four modules.

Module I: Taking Up the General Management Job
Module II: Systemic Thinking and Process Mindset
Module III: Top Management Dynamics
Module IV: General Management in New Era

In Module I, we discuss the challenges in making the transition from an individual producer to a general manager. *__Almost one in two GMs fail, usually within the first 18 months.__* The major 'derailers' are lack of strategy adjustment, poor working relationships, inability to build and lead a team, and difficulty in adapting to the broad scope of the job.

In Module II, we will introduce systemic thinking and the process mindset and explore how they can help new GMs handle the challenges of their job. Systemic thinking helps GMs start with the total situation and learn all the factors at work and how they might be influencing each other. It lessens the tendency to focus only in an individual or a single department to understand poor performance. Systemic thinking also helps GMs move from a managerial orientation to a leadership orientation.

In Module III, we study the organizational processes that underpin top management. We study how plan for CEO succession, how to handle top management team conflicts, and how to build and manage a board.

In Module IV, we discuss the new tasks for GMs in the contemporary era, which include reinventing companies for continuous success, responding to business disruptions caused by digital transformation, and addressing society's call to be socially responsible and engage in activism.

CONNECTION TO THE CORE
The MBA core courses, Strategy Formulation and LEAD: People, Teams, Organizations, are most relevant to the current course. Formulating competitive strategy is one of the most important tasks of top managers, but to make strategy work, top managers need to have effective organizational, group, and leadership processes. Also, we will refer to the concepts that you learned in the LEAD class but elevate them to the top level of organizations, deploy them under the guidance of organizational strategic priorities, and take into account the complexity of organizations.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS
All cases, required readings, simulations, and videos will be made available via links in the Calendar section of the course Canvas page. There is no physical casebook for this course.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Class Participation	40%
Group Presentation of "Great CEO"	15%
Final Exam	25%
Optional Final Research Report	20%

A student who only participates actively in class discussion and does a good job on the group project and final exam can receive a maximum grade of HP. Students who wish to receive an H must also submit an individual final project as

described below <u>in addition to</u> the other requirements. <u>There is no reason to do a final project unless you are going to put forth a serious effort on all components of the grade.</u>

The use of generative AI tools, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, to complete your assignments is permitted in this class; in fact, it is encouraged as long as it improves the quality of your work and does not inhibit or misrepresent your thinking and reasoning. AI is going to play an increasingly important role in the future, and so we should learn to effectively use it to improve the GM's decision making. The only requirement is that when you do use an AI tool to generate text for your poll question or research report, please note it in your response by appending the following text: [Partially generated by AI] - or - [Entirely generated by AI]

Class Participation

An important course requirement is active involvement in class discussion. Your participation is essential for both your own learning and that of other students. Much of the learning will take place in our discussion of cases and role-play exercises. I expect that every student will arrive well prepared and able to answer the pre-assigned guiding questions. 40% of your overall course grade will be your participation grade, which is further decomposed of three components: 1) poll question completion (10%), 2) frequency and quality of YellowDig participation (10%), and 3) frequency and quality of class participation (20%).

Poll question: There is one poll question for each session (starting with session 2, and with the exception of sessions 5 and 11). Poll questions will be posted as assignments in your Canvas Calendar. They require you to read the relevant case or article and give a short response to 1-2 questions. You must submit your answer to the poll question through Canvas by 11:59 PM on the day before the session is scheduled for class.

Frequency and quality of your participation in class discussion: Both the frequency and quality of your class participation will be affected by non-attendance. Not coming to a class means that you will not have a chance to take part in class discussion, which is a critical component of your overall grade. In terms of the quality of participation, the *best class comments*:

- Articulate a clear stance or argument
- Raise issues from past classes or current events or other anecdotes that are relevant to the discussion
- Show curiosity and a willingness to experiment
- Use data or your own professional experience to support arguments
- Are respectful when disagreeing by summarizing the contravening opinion before delivering your own

If you are comfortable with participating in class, I encourage you to help others feel safe about participating by inviting further discussion or referring to points that have already been made by your classmates. Students are also expected to be present, prepared, and participate per the Columbia Core Culture. *Use of electronic devices in class is not allowed except in answering Poll Everywhere questions during class.*

YellowDig Engagement: YellowDig access instructions are detailed at the end of the syllabus. In short, YellowDig is a blog-like platform that helps you engage more deeply with the course material and with one another. Our expectation is that **you consistently create posts or make comments** and interact virtually with your classmates. YellowDig posts count towards your participation grade but does NOT <u>substitute</u> your in-class participation.

Join YellowDig through canvas and do a FIRST POST-- an introduction of yourself and your background (and a photograph of yourself) by the first week (Jan. 29).

"Great CEO" Group Presentation

This is a group assignment. At the beginning of the semester, I will ask each group to nominate three great corporate CEOs in history. From this list and other sources, I will assign one CEO for each group to analyze and set a class time for each group to present their analysis and teach us the lessons from this great CEO.

Great CEO nomination. While you may intend to nominate household names such as Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, their successes and stories are well known. Instead, I would encourage you to follow three criteria when nominating CEOs, (1) there is a clear lesson(s) that we can learn from this person, (2) the takeaway(s) is not cliché so that there are novel insights to learn from this CEO, and (3) there are some interesting aspects about this CEO that help your group to engage and interact with the rest of the class when presenting.

Group Presentation. The group is responsible for conducting an analysis of the designated CEO and then presenting to the rest of the class. Suggested lecture components include: (1) life experience and career trajectory, (2) the greatest achievements of the CEO and the leadership style (3) the limitations, challenges, missed opportunities, and pitfalls for the CEO; (4) the lessons that you learn from analyzing this CEO; (5) anecdotes or fun facts about this person. However, you do not have to cover each of these components, but can tailor your content and highlight particular component(s). The presentation should be about **15-20** minutes long, and follows by 5-10 minutes of Q&A by the class. Novel forms of presentation that facilitate class interaction are welcome. When preparing your presentation, you are welcome to reach out to me for advice to improve your presentation.

Presentation Evaluation. When a group is present their "Great CEO," I expect everyone in the class will be able to ask questions. After group presentation, everyone in the class will be asked to provide evaluation based on (1) the insights learned, (2) the novel and interactive format of presentation, and (3) the overall quality of presentation (including Q&A).

Peer evaluation of group contribution. You may divide the task among team members but I expect all of you make equal contributions to the group work. For example, some of you who are not presenting the visual materials should take on more work in answering questions or doing analyses. Not everyone has to participate in every part of the team work. Each of you will complete a peer evaluation of the members of your team with respect to their team contributions. Scores for individual student contributions to the team final project are assigned by me, based on my assessment of the team's project quality, the class rating of your presentation, my observations of the team's working dynamics and thoughtful consideration of the information provided through your peer evaluations.

Final Exam

Take-home, April 27th (9:00 AM) – April 29 (11:00 PM). Three hours uninterrupted time required. **NOTE: Final exam period is non-changeable.** The exam is open book; you are welcome to refer to all of the cases, course readings, and your notes during the exam.

Optional Final Research Report

The final project is for students hoping to receive an H in the course. However, doing a final project does not guarantee that a student will receive an H, and receiving an H also requires doing well in other parts of the evaluation. I ask that you analyze and evaluate a particular top management decision or (set of decisions) facing a company using the concepts from the course (essay form, 1,800 word limit, including all exhibits). While providing some details is necessary, you should emphasize analysis over description. Do not use cases covered in this course or other courses at Columbia Business School. You are welcome to make use of industry contacts. I am also happy to provide research ideas if you have trouble deciding on your own. Students who wish to do a final project must sign up by **Friday, March 22** to confirm the project's topic. Not signing up with a proposal by March 22 means that you will not have an opportunity to submit a final project. Discussing your topic with me in advance is advised but not required. The optional final project is due on **Friday, April 26, at 11:59 PM.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session	Topic	Case and Pre-Readings	Assignments Due
Module 1: Taking Up the General Management Job			
1 **1/23/2023**	Introduction to GM	Ron Johnson: A Career in Retail Strategic Leadership: A Road Map for the General Manager's Journey	Read syllabus Self-intro on YellowDig
2 **1/30/2023**	Career transition to GM	Silvio Napoli at Schindler India (A) Team formation exercise	Form groups Poll Question
Module II: Systemic Thinking and Process Mindset			
3 **2/6/2023**	Systemic thinking	Friendly Fire Movie: Thirteen Days	Each group nominates three Great CEOs Poll Question
4 **2/13/2023**	High-stake decision-making	Mount Everest – 1996 CEO guest speaker	Poll Question
5 **2/20/2023**	Leadership simulation	Leadership and Team Simulation: Everest	"Great CEO" Presentation
6 **2/27/2023**	Response to ambiguous threat	Columbia's Final Mission	"Great CEO" Presentation Poll Question

Session	Topic	Case and Pre-Readings	Assignments Due
Module III: Top Management Dynamics			
7 **3/19/2023**	Top management team	The Resignation of a Star Top management team role play	"Great CEO" Presentation Poll Question
8 **3/26/2023**	CEO succession	CEO Succession at Cisco Group exercise on succession planning	"Great CEO" Presentation Poll Question
9 **4/2/2023**	Managing the board	Startup firm: Pixability's Board Guest speaker: senior executive & board member of prominent companies	"Great CEO" Presentation Poll Question
Module IV: GM in the New Era			
10 **4/9/2023**	Corporate reinvention	The Reinvention of Kodak The success and failure of reinvention	"Great CEO" Presentation Poll Question
11 **4/16/2023**	Business model disruption	Group Simulation: General Management in the Digital Era	"Great CEO" Presentation
12 **4/23/2023**	CEO Activism and course review	CEO Activism and Course Wrap	Poll Question Peer Evaluation