



HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS (MGMT-UB 7; Fall 2026)

DRAFT AND SUBJECT TO BE CHANGED UNTIL 1ST DAY OF CLASS

Professor: Mary (Molly) Kern
E-mail: mkern@stern.nyu.edu
Office: KMC 7-83

Classroom:
Class times: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11am-12:15pm
Drop-in hours: Wednesdays, 9:00-10:00am, & by appointment

Graduate Teaching Fellow: TO BE ADDED

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Whether you plan to work in finance or fashion, be an entrepreneur, a high-tech CEO, or a management consultant, your success in the workplace will depend on your ability to work in and lead teams.

It is now commonplace for organizational members to find themselves engaged in team-based projects, sometimes without a clear structure, stable roles, or dedicated commitment. In these more fluid and dynamic leadership situations, effective performance requires frameworks for analyzing collaborative (as opposed to individual) decision making and facilitating successful informal relationships (as opposed to formal organizational structures).

This course builds upon the Management and Organizations course and pursues the following objectives:

- The primary goal is to provide models for collaborating effectively. To this end, we will be developing frameworks for analyzing teams' goals and options. This involves issues such as choosing team members, structuring decision-making, and managing the conflict that arises in collaborative work.
- The approach of the course is based on the belief that a conceptual understanding of optimal strategies (*the science of collaboration*) is of little use without the behavioral skills required to implement these strategies (*the art of collaboration*). Thus, we will pursue our understanding of these ideas with an emphasis on experiential exercises and cases that afford the opportunity to apply concepts concretely, as well as hone one's team, leadership, and management skills.
- We will learn how organizations can improve their effectiveness through better management of people and how individual team members can be more effective in working with and leading others.

COURSE FORMAT

The course is built around a series of exercises (simulations in class) and debriefs (discussions following each exercise). You will have the opportunity to work in teams in a variety of settings on a variety of tasks. Typically, we will have an experiential exercise on Tuesday and then a discussion of that experience grounded in the theory on Thursday. Each student will be assigned to numerous teams throughout the semester for individual exercises. In addition, each student will be assigned to one stable team for semester-long work.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. *Course Syllabus.* You are responsible for the information contained in this syllabus.
2. *Online coursepack.* The coursepack can be accessed at: **TO BE ADDED**
You will need to create an account at Harvard Business School Publishing if you have not purchased any material at this website before.
3. *Additional readings.* Links and references for all readings not in the online coursepack are included in the class-at-a-glance within the syllabus.

Note: We will make extensive use of Brightspace. All lecture slides will be posted, as will additional materials. We will also use it for the submission of assignments.

OUR CLASS (AKA LEARNING COMMUNITY)

As with most classes, what you get from the experience is directly related to how much you put into it. However, distinct from many classes, in this course your learning is also directly related to how much your classmates put into it. Forty percent of your grade will be based on your effectiveness in working with others. And in every week, you will be working with multiple classmates in a simulation. Your experiences in each of those sessions will be maximized to the extent that each of you is prepared and fully engaged.

I expect you to arrive on time and to stay for the entire class session. Because the majority of learning in this course takes place in the classroom, you are expected to attend all class meetings and participate in every exercise.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

At NYU Stern we seek to teach challenging courses that allow students to demonstrate differential mastery of the subject matter. Assigning grades that reward excellence and reflect differences in performance is important to ensuring the integrity of our curriculum. In general, students in this elective course can expect a grading distribution similar to that used in our core courses, where:

- 25-35% of students can expect to receive A's for excellent work
- 50-70% of students can expect to receive B's for good or very good work
- 5-15% of students can expect to receive C's or less for adequate or below work

Note that while I will use the above as a general guideline, the actual distribution for this course and your own grade will depend on how well each of you actually performs in both individual and team work.

Your grade will be made up of both individual and team components:

| INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS | | | TEAM COMPONENTS | | |
|--|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Portion of grade | Due date | | Portion of grade | Due date |
| Contribution to the Learning Community | 10% | Throughout semester | Team decision making exercise | 10% | |
| Personal reflections & goal statement | 5% | | Team project, AAR & peer feedback | 30% | Paper: AAR: Peer feedback: |
| Learning memos (10) | 25% | | | | |
| Midterm Exam | 20% | | | | |

Assignments should be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Early submissions will of course be accepted; late assignments will be graded down 10% per day late for up to one week (nothing will be accepted more than 1 week late). The only exceptions are for serious illness, family emergency, or religious or civic obligation. If you face one of these situations, let me know as soon as possible.

Please adhere to all page and word limits. Consult the grading rubric on Brightspace before you begin the assignment. Remember to cite appropriately, even when drawing on ideas from the textbook, your classmates' Popular Press pieces, and of course any AI.

1. Contribution to the Learning Community

Learning in this course is a collaborative enterprise. You will not only learn from the readings, cases, exercises, and me, but it is expected that you will also learn from one another. This will occur through our in-class discussions and exercises, teamwork inside and outside of class, and completion of brief assignments and surveys. As a result, a component of your grade is tied to the contribution you make to our learning community.

Class will be focused on cultivating a set of shared experiences and a deeper understanding of those experiences. I endeavor to create a sense of psychological safety in class – a concept that we will discuss at length. Therefore, **anything** that has potential to distract your classmates and/or me (e.g. technology, arriving late, private conversations during class) or that I view as unprofessional can impact your contribution to the learning community, as far down to zero or negative points (please read that again: if your behavior is egregiously disrespectful or harmful to the learning environment, I reserve the right to give you negative points for this component of your grade).

NOTE: Some people are uncomfortable with presenting viewpoints in a large group setting. However, contributing to discussions is an important part of your career development. I will warm call. If you are unprepared for class on a given day, please let me know in advance, and I will not call on you. If there is anything that may interfere with your ability to contribute on an ongoing basis, let's discuss it sooner rather than later. I am happy to work with you off-line to develop a strategy for deepening your comfort and performance in class participation. If you are not sure where to start, please talk to me and we will figure out a plan together – there are many ways to contribute to a team's performance!

2. Personal Reflections and Goal Statement

Clear and optimistic, yet realistic, goals motivate performance. We each have our own team-related experiences, strengths, and weaknesses, and thus you likely have different goals for this course, and you will each take away different ideas.

This assignment asks you to (1) describe your most effective and your most ineffective team experiences – why was the effective team successful, and what could have been done to make the ineffective team more successful; (2) identify your strengths related to teamwork as well as the areas that you would like to develop, (3) then to articulate 1-2 specific goals for yourself, and finally (4) imagine it is the last day of class and complete the statement, "This was a great class because I...". This memo should be no more than 2 pages and should use concepts from the assigned readings and class discussions to support both parts (1) and (2) (i.e. [Chapter 1 by Leigh Thompson](#)).

3. Learning Journal

Reflection is critical to learning. For each exercise conducted in class, write a 1 page journal memo. These analyses help you reflect on your behavior, help me get a sense of your individual progress, and also indicate to me your ability to analyze your own strengths and weaknesses.

In this memo:

- provide a brief description of the part of the experience that you are focusing on
- analyze the experience using course concepts (specific concepts that I would like you to consider from the week's assigned reading may be specified on the assignment on Brightspace)
- share detailed actionable take-home messages for yourself

Bring the journal entry to the class following the exercise (so typically Wednesdays), as you will discuss it in small groups at the start of class. Please also submit this on Brightspace by the beginning of class time.

Papers will be graded according to depth, and how well you use class concepts and strategies to evaluate the process and outcome of the exercise. A good analysis will integrate the theories of the class with the actual events of your experience and will describe how you can apply what you have learned to future teamwork. Please be as honest as possible with yourself, and with me, in your analysis.

The 10 exercises to reflect on include:

1. Farmers
2. Super Lego
3. High Impact Teams
4. The Hunt
5. The Best Choice
6. Deneqco
7. CREATE
8. Experiential Design Team
9. Blind Faith
10. Team Project

4. Midterm Exam

Exam questions will be drawn from lectures, readings, exercises, and discussions. The exact format will be shared in class at least one week in advance of the exam, but it will largely be composed of multiple choice and short-answer questions.

5. Team Decision Making Exercise

This will be an in-class exercise completed by your team. You will work together on a decision-making exercise and will each earn the same grade. More details will be provided the week before the challenge.

6. Final Team Project & Presentation

You will be asked to build a team of 5 classmates and engage in a project that will last throughout the semester. Each team will choose a real group or working team to observe and analyze its performance using the concepts learned in the course. You should use observation and personal interviews from several sources to obtain information for your analysis.

Your deliverables are in five parts.

1. An 4-5 page report on the findings of your assessment and your recommendations is due at the end of the semester. The report should contain an analysis of the group's performance and effectiveness, any problems encountered, and recommendations for improvements (a concrete action plan) using the concepts, theory, and readings from the course.
2. In our final week of class, each team will give a brief professional presentation of your findings.
3. Each team will conduct an after-action review (AAR). The AAR will be a space for your team to process how you worked together this semester.
4. Each team member will also share peer feedback. The peer feedback will provide individual-level insights to help you continue to grow in the future. You will rate each other's performance on the team (e.g., quality of performance, quantity of work, knowledge, and dependability). In addition, you will be asked to evaluate your own behavior on the team. A sample of the feedback is shared on Brightspace.
5. The AAR and peer feedback will provide the foundation for you to write a final learning reflection memo indicating how you plan to grown your transportable team-related competencies going forward.

COURSE POLICIES

Gadgets and Other Tech

Regarding technology in class, let me first say this. This issue is not one of dogma but of pragmatism. *One screen can distract a dozen or more students.* And, it makes everyone in the room (including me!) desperately curious as to what you're looking at and what we're missing out on in our own emails, social media, texts, etc. Attending class is like attending a movie -- any one person's actions can affect the experience of everyone else. Thus, my #1 concern is the distraction that your screen poses for the rest of us in the room.

- As such, laptops are generally discouraged. The use of tablets or other electronic devices that are laid flat on the desk, for the purposes of note-taking only, is permitted; research shows they are far less distracting than laptop screens to other students.
- If you must take a call during class, please quietly step outside the room, and generally try to rely on the mid-class break to deal with pressing matters.

Use of AI

This course is largely built on your engagement and reflection upon experiential exercises. All of the assigned writing entails analysis of either your own or another team's experiences. I would like to read about your own personal and unique perspectives (not those generated by an algorithm). In addition, most of the writing is somewhat informal, and as such the editorial features of AI are unnecessary. The work in this course will not significantly benefit from the use of AI, and therefore using AI is discouraged. However, AI changes all of the time, and so if you see an opportunity for AI to make a real impact on your experience in this course, please reach out to me and I am happy to discuss it!

Grading

In line with grading guidelines for the NYU Stern Undergraduate College, the process of assigning grades is intended to be one of unbiased evaluation. Grading is based on detailed, consistent, and fair criteria. Students are therefore encouraged to respect the integrity and authority of the professor's grading system and discouraged

from pursuing arbitrary challenges to it. If you feel that an inadvertent error has been made in the grading of one of your assignments or in assessing an overall course grade, you may submit a request to have that the grade be re-evaluated. These requests should be submitted in writing to the professor within 7 days of receiving the grade, including a brief written statement of why you believe that an error in grading has been made. Please note that I will regrade the entire assignment/exam. This could result in a higher or lower grade. These policies are in place to make grading as fair as possible across all students.

Name Pronunciation and Pronouns

NYU Stern students now have the ability to include their pronouns and name pronunciation in Albert. I encourage you to share your name pronunciation and pronouns this way. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Religious Observances and Other Absences

Please review all class dates at the start of the semester and review all course requirements to identify any foreseeable conflicts with the midterm exam, team challenge, course assignments, projects, and in-class exercises.

NYU Stern is committed to ensuring an equitable educational experience for all students regardless of identity or circumstances and strives to recognize the obligations its students have outside of Stern. If you are aware of a potential conflict, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss the potential conflicts to determine whether/how they can be accommodated.

In addition, NYU's [Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. You must notify me in advance of religious holidays or observances that might coincide with any of these activities and assignment to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives. Students may also contact religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu for assistance.

Inclusion Statement

This course strives to support and cultivate diversity of thought, perspectives, and experiences. The intent is to present materials and activities that will challenge your current perspectives with a goal of understanding how others might see situations differently. By participating in this course, it is the expectation that everyone commits to making this an inclusive learning environment for all.

Student Accessibility

If you will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility ([212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980), mosescsa@nyu.edu) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. If you will need to take an exam at the Moses Center for Student Accessibility, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form to them at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation. For more information, visit the CSA website: <https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html>.

Wellness

Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can, and to help them overcome any impediments to that. There are multiple resources available to you. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility or the NYU Wellness Exchange 24/7 hotline at 212-443-9999; there are also drop-in hours and appointments available through NYU's [Counseling & Wellness Services](#).

Integrity

Integrity is critical to the learning process and to all that we do here at NYU Stern. You are expected to abide by the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct. In submitting an assignment to me, you are thereby agreeing to the following statement. "I pledge my honor that I have not violated the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct in the completion of this [examination/assignment]." Honor Code violations will be dealt with very seriously.

CLASS-AT-A-GLANCE

OCP = available in online HBSP coursepack; NYUL = available at NYU Library; Linked = hyperlinked to source

| Date | Topic | In-class | Assignments due today | Please read in preparation for class. |
|------|---|----------------------------------|---|--|
| | Introduction; The Best and Worst of Teams | Class "team" contract | | The syllabus 😊 |
| | Writing Our Team Contract | <i>Farmers Exercise</i> | * Personal reflection & goal statement | Leigh Thompson. Ch. 1 – Types of teams (linked) |
| | | Debrief <i>Farmers Exercise</i> | * Learning memo #1 | |
| | Leadership Within Teams | <i>Super Lego</i> | | Ethan Bernstein. Leading Teams (OCP) |
| | | Debrief <i>Super Lego</i> | * Learning memo #2 | James Driskell et al. Foundations of teamwork and collaboration (NYUL) |
| | Team Cohesion & Trust | <i>High Impact Teams</i> | * T-P Leadership Scale | Tsedal Neeley. Leading global teams (OCP) |
| | | Debrief <i>High Impact Teams</i> | * Learning memo #3 | David DeSteno. How to cultivate gratitude, compassion, and pride on your team. (NYUL) Naz Beheshti. Try this gratitude practice with your team to build better morale and relationships at work. (linked) |
| | Designing the Team | A practical question | | |
| | | Implementing your ideas | * Self-assessments as chosen in the prior class | |
| | Performance & Productivity | A surprise | | The IPO Model (linked) |
| | | Project Team Contracts | * Learning memo #4 * Team contract due (at end of class) | Google re:Work. Understand team effectiveness (linked) Keith Ferrazzi. A new social contract for teams (NYUL) |
| | Communication and Collective Intelligence | <i>The Best Choice</i> | | Chidiebere Ogbonnaya et al. Why meetings need a constructive Devil's Advocate. (NYUL) |
| | | Debrief <i>The Best Choice</i> | * Learning memo #5 | The Lewis Model: https://redtangerine.org/the-lewis-model/ Anita Williams Wooley et al. Evidence for a collective intelligence factor in the performance of human groups (NYUL) |

| Date | Topic | In-class | Assignments due today | Please read in preparation for class. |
|----------------------|--|---|--|--|
| | Creativity & Innovation | <i>CREATE</i> | | Chris Rider et al. Proven tactics for improving teams' psychological safety (NYUL) Amy Edmondson & Michaela Kerrissey. What people get wrong about psychological safety. (NYUL) |
| | | Debrief <i>CREATE</i> | * Learning memo #6 * Team CARE assessment (via ITP Metrics) * Psychological safety self-assessment | Ethan Bernstein et al. Improving the rhythm of your collaboration. (NYUL) |
| NO CLASS TBD | | | | |
| | Stimulating and Stymieing Team Conflict | <i>DenEqCo</i> | | Randall Peterson et al. 4 common types of team conflict – and how to resolve them (NYUL) |
| | | Debrief <i>DenEqCo</i> | * Learning memo #7 | |
| | Team Decision Making | 12 Angry Men | | |
| TEAM WORKING MEETING | | | | |
| | Working Across Modalities | <i>Experiential Exercise Design Team</i> | | Frank Siebdrat. How to manage virtual teams. (NYUL) |
| | | Debrief <i>Experiential Exercise Design Team & Midterm Review</i> | * Learning memo #8 | |
| | Midterm | | | |
| | Putting it all together | Team Decision Making Exercise | | |
| | Creativity, Decision Making, Conflict, and Teams | <i>Blind Faith</i> | * Final Team Project – Paper | |
| | Applying HPT in the Real World | Team presentations | * Team presentation slides Learning memo #9 | |
| | | Team presentations | | |
| | | Team After Action Review | * Team Project - After Action Review due (at end of class) * Peer feedback by 9pm | |
| | Wrapping it all up | | * Final learning memo #10 | |