

Commerce 4BP3
PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP
Fall 2025 Course Outline

Human Resources and Management Area
DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University

COURSE OBJECTIVE

The objective of this course is to prepare students to take on increasingly higher levels of leadership in their organizations, creating career paths for personal success, organizational effectiveness and contribution to society at large. **Education with Purpose.**

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Mondays 8:30-11:20am, see Avenue for class

location

Professor

Yair Berson, PhD

bersony@mcmaster.ca

Office:

Office Hours: By appointment

TA

Andrew Emilrajan

emilraja@mcmaster.ca

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Leadership:	Yes	IT skills:	Yes	Global view:	Yes
Avenue:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	Yes	Written skills:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Group work:	Yes	Oral skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Experiential:	Yes	Final Exam:	No	Guest speaker(s):	Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course reviews the key concepts, approaches, models and theories of leadership. It develops students' understanding of major elements of leadership research and will equip students to critically evaluate the popular writing on leadership and consider their own leadership potential and how to develop it. Fundamental leadership skills will be introduced with opportunities for student self-diagnosis. The objective of the course is to prepare students to take on increasingly higher levels of leadership in their organizations, creating careers for personal and organizational success. Leadership progression is presented in a number of ways, including: student teams interview practicing managers about leadership progression then present their findings to the class and a written report to the professor. Students teams read and review a practitioner targeted book then present the review to the class and a written report to the professor. Content is delivered through text readings, lectures and guest lectures. There are two tests, no exam, and class participation is marked.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Understand the role of effective leadership in organizational effectiveness and career progression.
- Understand the changing nature of leadership over ascending levels of leadership
- Understand what constitutes effective leadership (e.g., visionary leadership) and experience it.
- Have considered their own leadership strengths and weaknesses and how they can further develop themselves for leadership roles.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Case Studies

The cases are:

Satya Nadella at Microsoft: Instilling a Growth Mindset. London Business School. LBS128-PDF-ENG.
https://mcmaster.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=9128212420007371&institutionId=7371&customerId=7370&VE=true

Strategic Leadership at Coca-Cola: The Real Thing. Ivey Publishing. 908M40-PDF-ENG.
<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/product/908M40-PDF-ENG>

Amazon: Cult or Culture. 421008-PDF-ENG.
<https://www.iveypublishing.ca/s/product/amazon-cult-or-culture/01t5c00000Cwq4ZAAR>

Antegren: A Beacon of Hope. Harvard Business School. 408025-PDF-ENG.
<https://www.iveypublishing.ca/s/product/antegren-a-beacon-of-hope-b/01t5c00000CweogAAB>

Required Readings

Antonakis, J., Fenley, M., & Liechti, S. (2012). Learning charisma. Transform yourself into the person others want to follow. *Harvard business review*, 90(6), 127-30.

<https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=098c796b-e015-458a-9561-99f261ec4a86%40redis>

Bazerman, M. H. (2020). A New Model for Ethical Leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 98(5), 90-97.

<http://libaccess.mcmaster.ca.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=144910747&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Benjamin, Beth, and Charles O'Reilly. "Becoming a leader: Early career challenges faced by MBA graduates." *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 10.3 (2011): 452-472.

<http://libaccess.mcmaster.ca.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/login?url=https://www.jstor.org/stable/41318067>

Bligh, Michelle C., and Jeffrey C. Kohles. "The enduring allure of charisma: How Barack Obama won the historic 2008 presidential election." *The Leadership Quarterly* 20.3 (2009): 483-492.

<https://www.sciencedirect-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/science/article/pii/S1048984309000897?via%3Dihub>

Casciaro, Tiziana, Francesca Gino, and Maryam Kouchaki. "Learn to love networking." *Harvard Business Review* 94.5 (2016): 104-107.

<http://libaccess.mcmaster.ca.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=114832974&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Corritore, M., Goldberg, A., & Srivastava, S. B. (2020). The new analytics of culture. *Harvard Business Review*, 98(1), 76-83.

<http://libaccess.mcmaster.ca.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=140216542&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Akstinaite, V. (2023). Understanding hubris and heuristics in CEO decision-making: Implications for management. *Organizational Dynamics*, 52, 1-11.

<https://www.sciencedirect-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/science/article/pii/S0090261623000220>

Oreg, S., & Berson, Y. (2018). The impact of top leaders' personalities: The processes through which organizations become reflections of their leaders. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(4), 241-248.

https://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/09637214/v27i0004/241_tiotlpobrotl.xml

Rangarajan, Deva, Betsy D. Gelb, and Amy Vandaveer. "Strategic personal branding—and how it pays off." *Business Horizons* 60.5 (2017): 657-666. <https://www.sciencedirect-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/science/article/pii/S0007681317300678?via%3Dihub>

Sharma, P. N., & Sturm, R. E. (2021). Becoming powerful at work. *Organizational Dynamics*.

<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0090261621000061?token=FA26540EDF59206D4FC04>

[066B42CBC4E2C022BFF45755497912E9381F2A3D03E888D2AD717F1BB8BBB721C438F8EB1C&originRegion=us-east-1&originCreation=20210818132041](https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0090261600000036?token=9E76A268C161762A812F922BA153800CEC63974F7BA51A6BDFE772D430AE0C023AB70B6E4C96C744B411AB2AD6EC11C8&originRegion=us-east-1&originCreation=20210818132041)

Vroom, V. H. (2000). Leadership and the decision-making process. *Organizational dynamics*, 28(4), 82-94.

<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0090261600000036?token=9E76A268C161762A812F922BA153800CEC63974F7BA51A6BDFE772D430AE0C023AB70B6E4C96C744B411AB2AD6EC11C8&originRegion=us-east-1&originCreation=20210818132130>

Watkins, Michael D. "How managers become leaders. The seven seismic shifts of perspective and responsibility." *Harvard Business Review* 90.6 (2012): 64-72.

https://mcmaster.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=9125170030007371&institutionId=7371&customerId=7370&VE=true

Yukl, G. (2009). Use power effectively to influence people. *Handbook of principles of organizational behavior*, 349-365.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcmu/reader.action?docID=624768&ppg=381>

COURSE OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

Components and Weights

Test 1 (Individual)	20%	OCT 6
Test 2 (Individual)	20%	Nov 10
Case Analysis (Team)	15%	SEP 29
Executive Interview Class Briefing (Team)	10%	Last session
Executive Interview Written Report (Team)	15%	Last session
Class Participation (Individual)	20%	All classes

Grade Conversion

The letter grade, percentage and grade point conversion scales for this course are as stated in the University's undergraduate calendar, as shown below.

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	GRADE POINTS	LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	GRADE POINTS
A+	90-100	12	C+	67-69	6
A	85-89	11	C	63-66	5
A-	80-84	10	C-	60-62	4
B+	77-79	9	D+	57-59	3
B	73-76	8	D	53-56	2
B-	70-72	7	D-	50-52	1
			F	00-49	0

COURSE DELIVERABLES

Team Assignments

The purpose of the team assignments is to familiarize students with practitioner perspectives on the importance of leadership, the changing skills necessary to transition up the levels of leadership, and career tactics for navigating the transitions. Students will form teams and each team will submit a written report of a case analysis, a class briefing and a written report about an interview they will arrange with a practicing manager/leader (see details for both team assignments below). Students will form teams of 5 during the first class. Each team will email Dr Berson (bersony@mcmaster.ca) a list of team members' names (first and last) with their email addresses. The email will be copied to all team members. If a team member does not make a fair contribution to the work of the team, the other team members may remove that person from the team by informing the Professor and not including that person's name on the team's submitted work.

Case Analysis (Team)

15%

Case: Scale AI scales up (Harvard Case #425082-PDF-ENG).

Overview of assignment. Your task is **to apply concepts from class.**

Reading about Wang's activities geared at increasing Scale's growth, please answer the following questions: (1) How do Wang's leadership style and decisions serve his purpose to grow the company? (2) What actions and leadership styles can he apply to better harness the culture of Scale towards achieving his goals for the company? (3) What is, in your opinion, unique about the type of leadership that can support the dramatically dynamic environments of AI companies?

Use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, is not only unacceptable from an ethical perspective, but also often leads to general answers that are inconsistent with successful completion of this task.

Grading: To receive the highest grade, papers will...

- Be written and organized in a clear and concise manner
- Have a clear perspective/thesis
- Demonstrate an understanding of course concepts through their appropriate application to the case. Integrate the chosen concepts in addition to discussing them individually
- Ground the analysis in the content of the case (i.e., use the content of the case to support the claims in the analysis).
- Follow the guidelines of the assignments

Length and format of the analysis: This analysis is limited to 850-1000 words (excluding the reference list). Papers should be formatted as follows: Double-spaced, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman font.

References: You will need to cite any material you include from the case and class readings. I'm not particular about which style guide you use (e.g., MLA, APA) as long as it is clear whom and what you are citing.

Submission guidelines: The written analysis will be submitted **on Avenue** no later than October 20th. There is a 5% (of the mark for the report) penalty for each day it is late.

Executive Interview Class Briefing (Team)

Each team will identify a middle manager or higher to interview about the manager's leadership style and how it contributed to promoting the strategic goals of the unit he or she leads. To accomplish this task, you will create an interview protocol based on any typology (e.g., transformational leadership, ethical leadership) that we discuss in class as well as on surveys or other measures that capture the leadership characteristics associated with the typology you chose. Lastly, the team will ask the leader for recommendations for a successful career as a leader. The team must identify their interviewee to the professor by the second class session. The identification must include the name and formal position title of the interviewee, a contact email address for the interviewee, the name of the firm and its industry, as well as the current leadership position. Before you schedule the interview and no later than the third session, you will submit the interview protocol for my approval. Ideally, you will videotape or record the interview with the manager, however, this is (of course) subject to the interviewee approval, and hence is not a requirement.

Each team will report the results of their analysis in a 20-minute briefing on the last session of the class. The presentation will include, but is not necessarily restricted to, slides which clearly specify:

- A brief description of the organization in which the manager is employed.
- A more detailed account of the unit headed by the manager you interviewed, emphasizing the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of this unit.
- A detailed analysis of the leadership styles of the manager and their contribution to addressing the challenges the unit he or she manages faces. If approved by the leader, I encourage you to use brief video clips from the interview to support your analysis.
- Three or more points from the team on a strategy for successful leadership career.

All members of the team must participate substantially in the presentation. The mark for the briefing will be based 80% upon the professor's assessment and 20% upon class rating. The class rating will focus on the value of the discussion for them and the presentation skills of the team. The professor's rating will include these criteria as well as the accuracy and depth of the content of the presentation, the degree to which it includes original analysis, the degree of participation by all members of the team, the degree to which the class was engaged and whether the presentation ended within the time limit. The briefing will be formal, resembling those that are made to executives in work settings, making use of audiovisual aids and computer technology. It is the team's responsibility to control the timing of the briefing including bringing it to a conclusion at the end of 20 minutes with an appropriate wrap up statement. An electronic copy of the slides for the briefing is to be emailed to the Professor ([email](#)) on the day before the briefing.

Executive Interview Written Report (Team)

After the interview, each team will prepare an eight-page report to be submitted electronically and in hard copy to the professor by the date assigned. The written report will have the following sections.

Cover Page: No information on the cover page or in the report should identify the interviewee. The cover page should show the names of all students who are to receive credit for the report, the name of the professor, the name and number of the course and the submission date.

Pages 2 through 8: These will cover the same points as were specified for the class briefing, above, in greater detail than is possible in a 30-minute presentation (more details will be provided in class). Please submit the project on **Avenue**. There is a 5% (of the mark for the report) penalty for each day it is late.

Test 1 (Individual)

This two-hour, in-class test will cover all classes till the test. It will consist of multiple-choice questions about the material covered in the readings and classes.

Test 2 (Individual)

This two-hour, in-class test will cover all classes after the first test except the leadership development sessions (the last two sessions). It will consist of multiple-choice questions about the material covered in the readings and classes.

Class Participation (Individual)

Class discussions of student, professor and (possibly) industry speaker presentations are an important component of the learning experience in this course. Therefore, 20% of students' marks for the course will be based upon their class attendance and substantive participation in the discussions.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students that are uncomfortable in directly approaching an instructor regarding a course concern may send a confidential and anonymous email to the respective Area Chair or Associate Dean:

<http://mbastudent.degroot.mcmaster.ca/contact/anonymous/>

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Administrative Assistant.

Instructors are encouraged to conduct an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery. Instructors should provide evaluation feedback for at least 10% of the final grade to students prior to Week #8 in the term.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at:

www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

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The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

ON-LINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Missed Mid-Term Examinations / Tests / Class Participation

Where students miss a regularly scheduled mid-term or class participation for legitimate reasons as determined by the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office, the weight for that test/participation will be distributed across other evaluative components of the course at the discretion of the instructor. Documentation explaining such an absence must be provided to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office within five (5) working days upon returning to school.

To document absences for health related reasons, please provide to Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office the Petition for Relief for MBA Missed Term Work and the McMaster University Student Health Certificate which can be found on the DeGroot website at <http://mbastudent.degroot.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-applications/>. Please do not use the online McMaster Student Absence Form as this is for Undergraduate students only. University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) medical certificates per year after which the student must meet with the Director of the program.

To document absences for reasons other than health related, please provide Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office the Petition for Relief for MBA Missed Term Work and documentation supporting the reason for the absence.

Students unable to write a mid-term at the posted exam time due to the following reasons: religious; work-related (for part-time students only); representing university at an academic or varsity athletic event; conflicts between two overlapping scheduled mid-term exams; or other extenuating circumstances, have the option of applying for special exam arrangements. Such requests must be made to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office at least ten (10) working days before the scheduled exam along with acceptable documentation. Instructors cannot themselves allow students to unofficially write make-up exams/tests. Adjudication of the request must be handled by Student Experience – Academic (MBA).

If a mid-term exam is missed without a valid reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for course work at the outset of term. Students must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor normally, within the first three (3) weeks of classes by setting up an appointment with the instructor. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is:

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

POTENTIAL MODIFICATION TO THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) to the various learning activities of IBH 4LD3/4BA3 will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Commerce 4BP3: PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP

Area	Topic	Class	Date	Case/Exercise	Readings
The Basics	Introduction: Making a Difference as a Leader	1	9/8	<i>Case: Jack Welch (no preparation required)</i>	How Managers Become Leaders
	The Characteristics of Effective Leaders	2	9/15	Experiential Exercise: Values survey <i>Case: Satya Nadella at Microsoft</i>	Oreg, S., & Berson, Y. (2018). The impact of top leaders' personalities: The processes through which organizations become reflections of their leaders. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i> , 27(4), 241-248. Read Satya Nadella Case
	Power and Influence	3	9/22	Assess your influence style	Understanding hubris and heuristics in CEO decision-making: Implications for management.
	Transformational and Visionary Leadership	4	9/29	<i>Case: Barack Obama's Visionary Leadership</i> Submit Interview Protocol	Antonakis, J., Fenley, M., & Liechti, S. (2012). Learning charisma. Transform yourself into the person others want to follow. <i>Harvard business review</i> , 90(6), 127-30. The enduring allure of charisma: How Barack Obama won the historic 2008 presidential election.
	Team Leadership Exercise and Exam 1	5	10/6	Team Leadership Exercise and Exam 1	
Strategic	Decision-Making and Context Management	6	10/20	Leadership Decision Making Exercise Submit Case Analysis	Vroom, V. H. (2000). Leadership and the decision-making process. <i>Organizational dynamics</i> , 28(4), 82-94.
	Managing Culture and Change	7	10/27	<i>Case: Amazon: Cult or Culture.</i> <i>Case: Tony Hsieh at Zappos</i>	Corritore, M., Goldberg, A., & Srivastava, S. B. (2020). The new analytics of culture. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 98(1), 76-83. Read Amazon Case
	Ethical Leadership	8	11/3	<i>Case: Antegren: A Beacon of Hope</i>	Bazerman, M. H. (2020). A New Model for Ethical Leadership. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 98(5), 90-97. Read Antegren Case
	Vision-Building Exercise and Exam 2	9	11/10	Vision-Building Exercise and	Prepare a vision statement

				Exam 2	
	Vision-Building	10	11/17	Vision-Building Lecture	
	Career Opportunities	11	11/24	Self-leadership exercise	Learn to Love Networking. Harvard Business Review. Strategic Personal Branding – and How it Pays Off Becoming a Leader: Early Career Challenges Faced by MBA Graduates
	The Leadership Pipeline	12	12/1	Executive Interview: Group Presentations	