Critical Thinking and Decision Making
MGMT 4340.001
Fall 2017

Contact Information
Instructor: Dr. Robert Allen
Telephone: 361-825-3416
Office: OCNR 372
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:00 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. (or by appointment)
To communicate electronically, use Bb messages found within the class Blackboard website.

Course Description:
This course integrates theory and practice in order to develop and accumulate problem solving skills—the ability to analyze, think, perform, evaluate, and adapt to the changing needs of organizations. The course focuses on complex decision making processes, critical thinking skills and creative problem solving techniques for the learning organization; motivation and coaching of others; and development of conflict resolution skills.

Learning Objectives:
By the end of this course, students will able to:

- Understand and apply various decision-making approaches and models to cases and examples.
- Apply various creativity approaches to expand options, increase organizational innovation, and enhance problem-solving.
- Engage with an organization to identify and resolve problems.
- Diagnose the sources of poor performance, and where appropriate, apply motivation theories to recommend solutions.
- Identify the antecedents of conflict and apply conflict management and negotiation techniques to manage conflict situations.
- Recognize critical ethical issues and differentiate between good and bad ethical choices when making decisions.

An overview of MGMT 4340
The most useful approach to this class is to view it as three one-hour courses connected by a common theme. The initial class focus will focus on the decision-making process and the important role that critical thinking plays when managers make decisions. In this section of the
class, developing an understanding of the rational decision making process will be emphasized by building on what you already should know. In your MGMT 3312 course, rational decision-making was discussed in terms of a four stage process:

Stage I: Identify the problem or opportunity

Stage II: Think of alternative solutions

Stage III: Evaluate alternatives and select a solution

Stage IV: Implements and evaluate the solution chosen.

While this is a useful introduction to the rational decision making process, it was simplified by the authors of the textbook that was used in the class. We will look at a more detailed version of the rational problem-solving process in this class. Here is a seven step approach to the rational problem-solving process that will guide us this semester:

Step 1: Define the problem.
Step 2: Look at potential causes for the problem.

Step 3: Identify alternative approaches to solve the problem

Step 4: Select an approach to resolve the problem

Step 5: Plan the implementation of the best alternative (this is your action plan)

Step 6: Monitor implementation of the plan

Step 7: Verify if the problem has been resolved or not.

The definition of decision-making is rather straightforward. It is defined by Kinicki and Williams (2018) as the process of identifying and choosing alternative courses of action. In theory, the rational decision making process is intended to ensure that when making a decision you are selecting among all the possible alternative solutions to your problem. This means that the best decision is before you as part of your list of alternative solutions. You just need to be smart enough to identify it when you see it. The steps of the rational decision-making process are designed to help ensure that you do not rush to making a decision prematurely, that is, before all of the elements of the problem have been identified and explored. Effective managers keep the steps of the rational problem-solving approach in mind when they make decisions, even routine decisions.

Part 1 of MGMT 4340

The first part of the MGMT 4340 course goes beyond this traditional approach to rational problem-solving. It recognizes that rational problem-solving can have its limits when problems are best solved by identifying novel and innovative solutions. When this is the need, rational problem-solving might not provide you with a thorough understanding of the problem and with a full range of creative solutions to the problem. This is where the book *Creative Approaches to Problem Solving* (CAPS), which is assigned reading in this class, becomes very useful. The CAPS book introduces you to a number of techniques that can be applied at each stage of the rational decision-making process. These tools and techniques will help ensure that you are thorough and creative in your approach decision making. As a result of applying the rational decision making process as augmented by the CAPS approach, you will be more likely to identify solutions that will be novel and innovative, if that is what is needed. In addition to an emphasis on creative decision making, the first part of MGMT 4340 also looks at critical thinking and the role it plays in the decision making process.
The approach taken in Part 1 of MGMT 4340 will require you to do the assigned readings and to apply what you learn to a real-world problem through a series of structured exercises. In these exercises, you are asked to assume the role of a consultant to the CEO of a chain of large department stores. You have been hired by the CEO because she had noticed that a number of her stores had been plagued by increasing losses due to shoplifting and/or employee theft. Each exercise will isolate a step in the rational decision making process and the CAPS tools and techniques that can be usefully applied in that step. By the end of the first five weeks, you will have successfully applied a creative approach to rational decision making. In the process, you will learn a lot about serious management problems, shoplifting and employee theft. By the end of Part 1 of the class, you will have a solid understanding of creative approaches to the rational decision making process.

In Part 2 and Part 3 of the class, you will be asked to apply this expertise to specific problems commonly experienced by managers: employee motivation and conflict resolution. With this approach, two objectives will be accomplished. First, you will be introduced to two topics critically important to your future performance as managers: employee motivation and conflict resolution. Second, you will have additional opportunities to apply your CPS expertise to the resolution of management problems.

**Part 2 of MGMT 4340**

In Part 2 of MGMT 4340, we will examine the key theories descriptive of employee motivation to comply with organizational expectations. Although you were introduced to motivation theory in your principles of management class, in this part of the class, employee motivation will be studied more systematically and in greater depth. Also, there will be a project assigned in which you will be required to identify an employee motivation problem within an organization with which you are familiar. In this project, you will be required to apply the steps of the creative rational problem solving process from Part 1 of the class to come up with a proposal that, if implemented, would resolve the employee motivation problem you studied. In Part 2 of the class, your understanding of the employee motivation issue will improve. Also, you will become a better decision maker because you will have a chance to practice the tools and techniques of the creative problem solving process.

**Part 3 of MGMT 4340**

Part 3 of the class will emphasize situations involving conflict and its resolution. In Part 3, you will be introduced to the two major forms of conflict resolution: distributive and integrative bargaining. Greater emphasis will be placed on integrative bargaining because it provides excellent opportunities to apply rational decision making and creative problem solving tools and techniques from Part 1 of the class.
In summary, by the end of the semester you will have learned how to apply the rational problem solving process and the embellishments that encourage rigor and creativity when making decisions. You will also develop a better understanding of employee motivation and the steps managers can take to help ensure employees are properly motivated to meet organizational expectations. Also, you will learn about major forms of organizational conflict and ways to deal with it. The approach taken this semester should give you a thorough understanding of critical thinking and decision making procedures. Then, through the major projects, you this knowledge should be reinforced by having to apply it to the resolution of different real world problems.

Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent of final grade</th>
<th>Point value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative problem solving project (Uptown Department Stores)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee motivation project</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>150 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative problem solving exam</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee motivation exam</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution exam</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Required Materials:


Website Used:

Blackboard [https://bb9.tamu.cc.edu/](https://bb9.tamu.cc.edu/)

Allen’s Educational Philosophy

When approaching MGMT 4340, I assume that I am educating future managers. When serving as managers, you have to be prepared to compete effectively with the “best and the brightest.” My job is to prepare you for this competition, and by doing so, contribute to your success in life and as managers. My intention is to offer you a rigorous course through which you will acquire the subject matter knowledge needed to be an effective manager. Basic knowledge transfer will take place by reading material and assigned videos, as well as the material covered in class. My intention is to create a course that rewards students who come to class prepared to work and who have read the assigned material, developed an understanding of it, and then demonstrate their mastery of the material through their performance on the exams and homework assignments that will be completed this semester. This semester’s work will be handled both individually and as group projects. By taking this course, you will be exposed to the up-to-date, relevant information
needed to improve your decision making capabilities. You will also develop the ability to take this information and apply it to the resolution of real-world problems.

However, becoming an effective decision maker involves more than acquiring knowledge. It also involves the acquisition of attitudes and skill sets needed to effectively perform the wide range of tasks performed by managers in contemporary organizations. Although having a strong knowledge base is essential to managerial success, it is not enough. You also have to have good problem solving skills, verbal and written communications skills, a dedication to high quality work, and the ability to think critically. Therefore, it is part of my responsibility to provide you opportunities to develop these necessary skills.

We have a shared interest. Both you and I want you to leave this class better prepared for life, in general, and career success, in particular. I will provide you information in class that will help clarify and expand upon the material covered in the assigned readings. As a blended class, this information will be augmented by information and assignments available through the course website. I will be thorough in my review of your work and objective in its evaluation. In addition to class time and office hours, I will be available to you by the use of Bb messages. Please do not e-mail me. I have had too many student e-mails end up in my junk mail, and as a result, communications is slowed down. This does not happen using Bb messages. I am well prepared to teach this class and have designed a course in which each component has educational value. I will not waste any of your time. I am committed to work hard to ensure that the objectives of the class are met.

As you well know, it takes more than a good professor to have a good class. The commitment of students to the course’s success is also necessary. Just like you have expectations of me, I have expectations of you. I expect you to attend class religiously (you will lose points if you do not) and to check into the class’ website on a regular basis. While there, make sure you read the class announcements that are likely to address concerns that have arisen since the last time we have met face-to-face. You are responsible for everything that I communicate in class or on line so keep in close touch with the class. I expect you to complete all of the assigned readings in a timely manner. I expect you to be rigorous in your work and thorough when completing class assignments. I expect you to pay close attention to the syllabus so that you can keep track of class meeting dates as well as when assignments must be submitted. This latter point is very important given that late assignments receive no credit.

To expand on this last point, I am a stickler when it comes to meeting deadlines. Poor time management is the factor that probably contributes the most to students failing to be successful. Late exams, assignments and projects will receive no credit unless I have been contacted before the deadline that there is a problem. Then, to receive credit for the assignment, an official university excuse from the Dean of Students office must be provided. A busy schedule, time conflicts, and computer and/or internet problems are not justifications for missing deadlines. They are incentives to start your work early so that deadlines can always be met. I expect you to think ahead, plan accordingly, and get started early on assignments.
In conclusion, I expect you to THINK. Think about the meaning of the readings. Think about the assignments and the learning that they have been designed to encourage. Think about what you need to do in order to take full advantage of your college experience. Think about what it means to be a good decision maker and successful manager. You cannot take this class on autopilot. To be successful, you need to be fully engaged in the learning process. It is your responsibility to help make this class one of the best in your college experience. If you live up to your responsibilities and I live up to mine, we should have a great semester.

**Course Policies**

**Exams** – Essay exams will be used in this class. There will be three of them: one at the end of each part of the course. See the class schedule to identify the relevant due dates for the exams. Each exam will be worth a maximum of 100 points. The exams will be comprised of four questions worth a maximum of 25 points each randomly selected from a large item pool of questions. To facilitate your preparation for these exams, you will be provided with item pool questions each week covering the week’s topics of concern. You are encouraged to answer these questions each week so that you will not be overwhelmed during the weeks in which the exams are due. You will be provided 45 minutes in which to complete the exams. That is not enough time to develop the thorough, thoughtful answers that are required to perform well on this style of exam. Because you have the exam questions in advance of the test, very demanding standards are applied when your work is evaluated. By answering the questions as they are assigned, you will be able to simply cut and paste them into your exams. Learning takes place when you write your answers to the questions, not when you take the tests. Everyone should do well on this type of exam given that you will be provided the exam questions before you take the tests. You are highly encouraged to answer the questions before you open the exam. Exams will be open for one week. Exams will be automatically submitted when the deadline is reached so make sure you start your exams at least 45 minutes before the deadline if you think you need a full 45 minutes in which to complete the test. Exams submitted after their established deadlines will receive no credit. **There will be no sharing of answers.** Evidence of collaboration will be considered academic dishonesty and will be treated accordingly, i.e., a zero on the assignment the first time plagiarism is established and an F in the course for a second offense. To check on collaboration, I will submit the exams to SafeAssign for review.

**Assignments** – Five major projects or assignments will be completed during the semester. The purpose of these projects is to provide applied experience relevant to the material being covered in class. Please view the requirements for these assignments under the Course Content heading in the Blackboard course. Required written assignments should be submitted through Blackboard. The assignments are important building blocks that will enable students to understand the material and complete the projects on time. Your written assignments will be submitted to SafeAssign for review.

**Extra credit** – There are no extra credit assignments available in this class. Therefore, make sure you submit quality work and meet all assignment deadlines.

**Electronic Device Usage** – Computers or tablets are required to complete the homework assignments and projects.
Grading: (scores are generally not rounded up to the next higher grade)

A  675 - 750
B  600 – 674
C  525 – 599
D  450 – 524
F  below 450

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism - University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a zero the first time and failing the course for any additional offense.

Dropping a Class - I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 15, 2017 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Preferred methods of scholarly citations – APA style is the only accepted method, as determined by the faculty of the Department of Management and Marketing, that can be used for citations and referencing during this class. All work should be paraphrased rather than copied directly, i.e., no direct quotes are allowed. Material used from sources including assigned reading material must use the APA style for in-text citations and for referencing purposes. Here are two links to sites provided by TAMU-CC that can help you effectively apply the APA style when referencing the work of others:

http://casa.tamucc.edu/downloads/CASAWritingCenterHandouts/APAintext-Final.pdf  (for citations embedded in the text of your work)

http://casa.tamucc.edu/downloads/CASAWritingCenterHandouts/APAFormattingReferences-Final.pdf  (for formatting a reference section at the end of your work)

Each of the written assignments this semester needs to be viewed as having a research component given that the class does not require a formal research-based paper (i.e., a term paper). Points will be lost if research beyond the assigned reading material is not incorporated into your work. Given that research is required in each assignment, you must also properly cite it. A failure to do so will cost you points. I have tried to be nice about this in past semesters by deducting only a small number of points for not effectively
applying APA requirements. Because the effective use a APA standards is a requirement of the Department of Management and Marketing, a breath taking number of points will be lost if this requirement is not taken seriously. Check each assignment rubric to determine the number of points you will lose by not mastering the APA style of citing and referencing.

**Classroom/professional behavior** - Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Grade Appeals** - As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

**Disabilities Accommodations** - The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Statement of Academic Continuity** - In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.
**Class Schedule** - Expected schedule (any changes will be announced in class and in Blackboard): Please see the Blackboard course for a more detailed schedule of course material and information on homework assignments.

Text notations - *Creative Approaches to Problem Solving (CAPS) and Pearson Custom (PearC)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 8/28 to 9/3</td>
<td>An introduction to critical thinking and decision-making</td>
<td>See the class web site under the <strong>Course Content</strong> heading for the specific assignments due each week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 9/4 to 9/10</td>
<td>Creative problem-solving process (understanding the problem)</td>
<td>Task A of the Uptown Department Stores case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 9/11 to 9/17</td>
<td>The creative problem-solving process (framing the problem)</td>
<td>Task B of the Uptown Department Stores case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4 9/18 to 9/24</td>
<td>The creative problem-solving process (idea generation)</td>
<td>Task C of the Uptown Department Stores case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 9/25 to 10/1</td>
<td>The creative problem-solving process (developing solutions and building acceptance)</td>
<td>Task D of the Uptown Department Stores case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6 10/2 to 10/8</td>
<td>The creative problem-solving process exam week</td>
<td>Complete the exam covering the assigned reading from Weeks 1 through 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7 10/9 to 10/15</td>
<td>Employee motivation (the integrative model)</td>
<td>Start the employee motivation project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8 10/16 to 10/22</td>
<td>Content theories of employee motivation</td>
<td>Work on the employee motivation project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9 10/23 to 10/29</td>
<td>Process theories of employee motivation</td>
<td>Work on the employee motivation project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10 10/30 to 11/5</td>
<td>Employee motivation project and exam</td>
<td>Both the employee motivation project and the employee motivation exam must be submitted this week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11 11/6 to 11/12</td>
<td>Introduction to conflict resolution</td>
<td>See the assignments in the class website for this week’s reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>11/13 to 11/19</td>
<td>Distributive bargaining</td>
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<td>10/15 is the last day to drop a class without a penalty will</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>11/20 to 11/26</td>
<td>Integrative bargaining and the CPS process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>11/27 to 12/3</td>
<td>More on integrative bargaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>12/4 to 12/10</td>
<td>Conflict resolution exam week</td>
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