

Assignment: Management Skills at the Movies (Written)

wayne.smith@csun.edu

[updated: Monday, June 3, 2024]

Course: *MGT 360BH*

Title: *Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior* (3 units)

“Those of us who study and conduct research on organizational and managerial phenomenon need to have our thinking stimulated and deepened by writers of fiction who are insightful observers and interpreters of everyday life.”

--Lyman Porter (1930-2015)

“Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.”

--Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)

Goal

The purposes of this assignment are as follows:

- To select, view, comprehend, and analyze a contemporary movie
- To illustrate issues of management skills, knowledge, and abilities in practice
- To apply theories from class to explain or predict outcomes, behaviors, & changes
- To draw analogies and develop insights useful in a management skills context
- To demonstrate business-level composition, prose, and rhetoric abilities

Instructions

In general, your task is to evaluate a few themes related to management skills development that you observe in a movie and generate a written deliverable. The movie can be a current movie or an older movie. It can also be a TV series. If a team selects a TV series, the TV series must be from a series with episodes of an hour in length or longer, and also, the analysis (including the two scenes) needs to be from the same episode.

Both team composition and selection of a movie will be done before the middle of the semester. Each person in each team must contribute both to the analysis and to the writing. The written deliverable must be printed and delivered to the instructor at the beginning of class on the due date. The written deliverable must also be submitted electronically via email to the instructor no later than 1 hour before the beginning of class on that day.

Deliverable

The due date is listed on the course outline. Before that due date, there should be enough time in or out of class to go over any questions you may have.

Length

The written deliverable must be no less than seven (7) full pages and no more than twelve (12) full pages (not including the cover page or references). Teams can use pictures from the movie as needed. There must be at least two diagrams (e.g., network diagrams) in the written deliverable. Teams can include an Appendix as needed.

Scoring

There will be 100 points allocated for breadth and depth of content. There will be 100 points allocated for language use, grammar, and mechanics.

Content

There is no single, best approach to achieve the objectives of this assignment. In general, this assignment combines ideas from several general education, lower-division core, and upper division courses. However, the following outline is provided as a working guide to help students structure and sequence their ideas into a coherent package. Each team will want to strive to obtain the maximum number of points as indicated on the scoring rubric (spreadsheet).

- Use a “Cover page” including Team Number and all the names of the Team Members.
- Movie Selection
 - Describe why the team selected the three movies, and why the three movies were ordered (ranked) as first-, second-, and third-choice. Which Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior or aspects of Management Skills Development were illuminated in each movie? What were important Management issues and Management skills demonstrated in the two movies *not* selected?
 - Describe the team discussion(s) and decision process.
- Story Summary
 - Provide a narrative of the material aspects of the movie *story*. The focus of a story narrative is, generally, on the chronological scenes, characters, action, and transitions in the movie. As used here, the word “material” means important, relevant, interesting, salient, or pertinent. Not all aspects of the movie story will be material.
 - Observing situations objectively is *hard*. Comprehending change is even *harder*. Understanding culture may be perhaps the *hardest*. One technique that management students can borrow from arts and humanities students is to understand basic literary theory and practice applying that theory often. Literary theory and practice help with improving skills with respect to organizational situations, change, and culture. From the Literary ideas below, identify at least

three ideas from **elementary**, at least *six* ideas from **intermediate**, and at least *one* idea from **advanced**.

- Elementary Literary Ideas—(e.g., [Character](#), [Plot](#), [Setting](#), [Style](#), [Theme](#))
 - Intermediate Literary Ideas—(e.g., [Analogy](#), [Antagonist](#), [Conflict](#), [Diction](#), [Humor](#), [Imagination](#), [Protagonist](#), [Soliloquy](#), [Symbol](#), [Transition](#))
 - Advanced Literary Ideas—(e.g., [Irony](#), [Sarcasm](#))
- Plot Summary
 - Provide a narrative of the material aspects of the movie *plot*. The focus of a plot narrative is, generally, on the cause-effect relationships in the movie. A plot summary is different from a story summary. As used here, the word “material” means important, relevant, interesting, salient, or pertinent. Not all aspects of the movie plot will be material.
 - Plots—(e.g., [Freytag’s Pyramid](#))
 - Observing cause or effect objectively is hard. Comprehending both cause and effect together is even harder. One technique that management students can borrow from philosophy and engineering students is to both understand basic causal theory and practice applying that theory often. Broadly, the audience is interested in both the *direction* of the cause to effect (i.e., which causes what), and the *magnitude* of the cause to effect (i.e., by how much). 1), Describe a situation from the movie that is an example where a *necessary and sufficient* condition (i.e., the condition is a complete cause) was present for a cause to have an effect, and 2), describe a different situation from the movie that is an example where a *necessary but insufficient* condition (i.e., the condition is an incomplete cause) was present for a cause to have an effect. **Example:** (*Necessary and Sufficient*): In a memo about holiday bonuses, a boss might write: “Assisting the firm in meeting all of its established goals under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic is a necessary and sufficient condition for everyone to receive their full holiday bonuses this year.”” **Example:** (*Necessary but Insufficient*): In a memo about coming back into the office (after the pandemic), a boss might write: “Coming together physically is a necessary but insufficient for strong mental health. It is also necessary for colleagues to know that the work they do matters.”
 - Causality—(e.g., [Necessary/Sufficient Conditions](#))
 - Example of “Noise”
 - Our class is titled Management Skill Development. An important aspect of that Development is decision-making. One important reason decisions can go wrong is “noise”. Use the two WSJ articles on “Noise” in this course: Zweig and Kaheman. Your team’s task is to identify an example of “Noise” in the movie (in a different scene than your first/second transition scene). The example will probably be one where “noise” is inhibiting a person’s good decision-making or judgment. Also, be specific: is the noise 1), *level* noise, *pattern* noise, or *occasional* noise?
 - First Scene

- Describe the situation and setup the context. Identify a key individual. Why is this particular individual important?
- What major *gap* in a theory/model/framework regarding Planning, Leading, Organizing, or Controlling from your MGT 360 (Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior) course that helps justify why this scene, as part of a two scene transition, is important? A gap means what is *missing* (invisible) not what is *present* (visible). Again, describe what MGT 360 idea *isn't* in the scene. Think about it for a second: it's that specific gap in MGT 360 theory (first scene) at a detailed level that requires a MGT 370 theory (second scene) at a detailed level in order to fix or fill that gap. Use a Principles of Management textbook in your MGT 360 analysis. At least one such textbook is on reserve in the CSUN Oviatt Library Reserve Bookroom. Additionally, a complete, online, free Principles of Management textbook is available at:

Carpenter, M., et al. (2011), *Principles of Management*, Flat World Knowledge
<https://ocw.smithw.org/mgt360/textbook/carpenter.pdf>

A relatively new Management textbook is at:

<https://openstax.org/details/books/principles-management>

A relatively new Organizational Behavior textbook is at:

<https://openstax.org/details/books/organizational-behavior>

Be specific. Don't just say the gap is about "Planning". Which aspect—at a detailed—level is it about? If your team believes that more than one MGT 360 theory/model/framework is applicable, then use a secondary theory from MGT 360 in addition to a primary theory; however, don't use more than two (there isn't enough space or time).

- Many gaps in the management skill development originate from biases. Even well-educated individuals with much experience have biases; the issue is how we acknowledge and understand biases. Researchers have identified many biases. Many of the most common biases found in organizational settings are detailed in the following article:

Halvorson, H. G., and Rock, D. (Autumn, 2015) "Beyond Bias", *Strategy and Business*, PWC|strategy&
<https://ocw.smithw.org/mgt370/halvorson-rock-beyond-bias.pdf>

Be specific. Don't just say "it's about Confirmation Bias". Which aspect—at a detailed level—is it about? If your team believes that more than one Bias is applicable, then use a secondary bias in addition to a primary bias; however, don't use more than two (there isn't enough space or time). An "explicit bias" is overt or observed; an "implicit bias" is subtle or non-obvious.

- Second Scene
 - Describe the situation, setup the context, and describe any details needed to explain elements of the transition (i.e., unseen scenes between the first and second scenes).
 - Describe the primary Management skill you now see in the key individual or others. Explain how this key individual acquired that skill. This is a MGT 370 skill that fixes or fills in the MGT 360 gap was missing in the earlier scene but has since been developed. Be specific as to the detailed element or elements of a specific theory from our MGT 370 textbook.
 - Describe a secondary Management skill you now see in the key individual. Again, explain how this key individual acquired that skill. This is a MGT 370 skill that fixes or fills in the MGT 360 gap was missing in the earlier scene but has since been developed. Be specific as to the detailed element or elements of a specific theory from our MGT 370 textbook.

- Supporting Analogies
 - Although the textbook is the primary source of reading support (theory) for this assignment, that textbook theory should be supported by two strong analogies. The first, primary analogy must be one of the “Library” readings from our course outline. Be careful. Weak analogies are easy to make and often misleading; strong analogies are hard to make but can be persuasive. Also, since “noise” was specifically used earlier in this assignment, don’t use the “noise” readings as your analogies.
 - The second, secondary analogy must be from a source than you find on your own. That secondary source must be from the Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The London Times, Fortune, Forbes, Bloomberg BusinessWeek, or the Economist. These sources embody a high degree of investigative journalism regarding business-related activities. To make a strong analogy, you want sources that emphasize authority, educational value, intent, originality, and quality. The article must be from a date since at least one member of the team has been in college.

- Network Analysis
 - Draw an initial, first “sociogram”—i.e., a network chart. Add entities (actors or themes) and relationships (links or ties) as needed to help describe your overall analysis to an audience that likely did not see the movie. Use the [Metrics](#) and [Key Terms](#) parts of the Wikipedia Social Network Analysis page. At a minimum, use at least three network *entity* ideas: size (e.g., small, large), density (e.g. number of connections for each entity), centrality (e.g., importance), bridges (e.g., boundary-spanning), cliques (e.g., distinctiveness, isolation), and holes (e.g., gaps). Entities always have important attributes also. Identify at least three important attributes of the entities: e.g., gender, ethnicity, rank, seniority,

education, experience, etc. Vary the shapes or colors of the entities by type of attribute if needed. Label your entities well. At a minimum, use at least three network *relationship* ideas: valence (e.g., number of relationships between any two entities), cardinality (e.g., one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many), direction (e.g., one-way, two-way), strength (e.g., strong, weak), impact (e.g., positive, negative), and reciprocity (e.g., balanced, equal) in your discussion of your network chart. Vary the thickness of the line by relationship if needed. Label your relationships well. Beyond using the common language of network analysis, there is no single “one way” to draw a sociogram.

- Draw a second “sociogram”. Using the language of network analysis, show how the entities or relationships (or both) change over time. Use the sociograms to demonstrate and reinforce the theories and analogies that were previously used to analyze the main management skill development (transition). Ensure that the change or transition is clear both in the presentation and on the second diagram.
- Current Event
 - Describe a current, substantive organizational event from the world of organizations (for-profit or not-for-profit). Use the list and dates of the sources as described in the “analogy” section above. Of all the possible current events you could selected, what is your reasoning and rationale for selecting this one? That is, why is this one important?
 - Describe a Management Skill you feel is needed. Be specific. Why? Use the language of our textbook to explain (the recent past) or predict (the near future). What is the evidence? Be detailed.
 - Draw an analogy between the management skill development illustrated in the movie (two scene transition) and the management skill development needed in the current event.
- Concluding Thoughts
 - Describe any limitations of your management skill development analysis. For this “Limitations” section, focus on the limitations of your analysis of the management skill development associated with the movie, especially in the area of understanding how the key individual developed one or both of the management skills.
 - Describe how, if you have more time and more resources, you would research this management skill development issue. For this “Future Study” section, focus on the study of the development of the management skills related to the current event. Ground your answer in one or more qualitative research methods such as [In-depth Interview](#), [Oral History](#), [Focus Group](#), [Ethnography](#), [Content Analysis](#), or [Case Study](#).

- Use a “References” (or “Works Cited”) page. Make sure you also use “In-Text” Citations as well.

Movie

Each team will select (with my approval) their own movie. I’ll ask for the names of the movies by the middle of the semester in order to eliminate any duplicates and help with applicability.

Sources for Articles (current events)

The sources for the articles for this class will be drawn from the following set:

- Newspapers (Dailies)
 - Los Angeles Times
 - New York Times
 - The (London) Times
 - Wall Street Journal
 - Financial Times
- Magazines (Weeklies or Monthlies)
 - The Economist
 - Bloomberg BusinessWeek
 - Forbes
 - Fortune

The current event can be anything of interest during the time period that the students in the each team have been in college. Also, the current event should be substantial enough so that more than a single article has been written about it.

Tips on analyzing a Literary Work

While this analysis is a management-level analysis in an organizational context such as a business, the movie itself is a “literary work”. In addition to the requirements in this document, it is helpful to have some general tips on how to analyze a literary work (including movies). The following document can help with that particular task:

<http://ocw.smithw.org/mgt370/movie-analysis-ideas.pdf>