

Notes On Key Pedagogical Concepts and Praxis

Jan. 2021 Alessia Contu & Jared Poole

Bobby's Event Decolonize The Business School

My current teaching: Management 303 Online. Fully asynchronous class all on Blackboard.

This is one section of a course that has 4 or 5 other sections per term offered by other instructors. This calls for a minimum of coordination in terms of the curriculum and what we offer.

**University of Massachusetts, Boston
College of Management**

**MGT 303
Managing Organizations
Course Syllabus
Spring 2021^[1]
Instructor:**

**Prof. Alessia Contu, MA, PhD
Chair of the Management Department
College of Management**

Office:

Phone:

Email:

Office hours: Tues/Wed. between 3.00 and 4.30pm

- please do email me in advance to book a spot! Or, set a meeting with me at another time during the week.

Course website:

On Blackboard <https://umb.umassonline.net/>

Teaching assistant (TA):

Course Delivery, Class Times and Location

This is an online course you find on Blackboard. This course is fully online, and asynchronous. There are not set class times. However, there is a detailed structure of work and deadlines so please check tasks and deadlines for post submissions on discussion forums and other assignments!

If you need training to navigate Blackboard, use different applications, or you are experiencing technical problems with the platform please contact elearning@umb.edu

Course Description

Management 303 is designed to help you understand the skills, practices and dilemmas involved in Managing Organizations. It also aims to help you develop a basic toolkit you need (or will need) to manage well. The course examines theories, research, and practices that have been developed in different disciplines on the management of organizations.

Students learn to make use of analytical tools for recognizing, diagnosing, and acting on managerial problems related to organizations, to their objectives, and to the development of human resources.

The course emphasizes issues at the macro level, such as organizational analysis and design, and at the micro level, such as managerial behavior, motivation, and interpersonal relations.

MGT 303 is organized according to the following underlying principles:

- **Interdisciplinarity:** The course draws from various disciplines (e.g., political science, economics, development studies, ethics, philosophy, psychology, sociology etc.) to appreciate the complexity of managing organisations and the skills and mindset required to manage well.
- **Inspiration:** The course aims to inspire bold thinking, moving beyond conventional ready-made answers to appreciate the complexity of management and organizational dilemmas considering options, nuances and opportunities.
- **Interactivity/dialogue:** The course aims to foster interactions with faculty and all students to create an empowering learning community and to foster position-taking exercises, considering different stakeholders' needs and viewpoints and the uncertainty and conflicts often present in a given situation. Since this is done all online it is essential that you participate in an active manner.
- **Self-Reflection and Critical Thinking:** The course aims to center on you, where you are situated in your life journey. The aim is to offer you thinking tools that are important for managing well, such as the practice of reflecting on oneself, one's position in the world, one's reactions to, and questioning of the ideas, models and dilemmas studied, and the consequences and impact they have on oneself and others. All of this is key to the way we learn in MGT 303
- **Flexibility:** The course is always open for change. Do send me your suggestions

Learning Objectives:

To understand and practice how to deal with managerial issues and problems

To understand and apply the four frames approach to analyze and reframe managerial dilemmas and organizational practices.

The frames are: Structure Frame, People/HR Frame, Culture/Symbolic Frame and Power/Politics Frame.

To develop a critical self-awareness about how you tend to – or intend to – manage well. This is the part of your journey to become a critical reflective professional/manager.

To use the online classroom to practice communication skills: expressing ideas, sharing analyses, appreciating other opinions, listening respectfully, debating productively, giving and receiving feedback, etc.

To learn from and across differences in order to work effectively in diverse workplaces

To understand how an organization, including its design, culture, structure and people might impact individual, group and collective behaviors and values.

To appreciate the multi-cultural and global context in which students and managers operate

To build your toolkit of useful skills

Course Format & Communication

The course combines online discussions and individual coursework based on the study of written (newspapers, or academic and business media & articles) and visual materials (such as films, video-clips etc.).

Make sure on Week 1 you digest fully the structure and rhythm of the course and the work required. You need to manage your time well. This means fitting MGT 303 work onto your weekly work/uni schedule making sure you engage properly and dedicate enough time to study the material fully. This is the way to get the best out of it.

This online class is successful when there is full engagement with me and your classmates; with me because I can understand your learning needs and help you to make the course an enriching learning experience; with your classmates because we are building together the online learning community. MGT 303 is not an isolating or lonely endeavor. It requires the work of everyone! For these reasons I expect to meet with you regularly, at least every three/four weeks. I am happy to meet during my office hours (book your place in advance via email!) or to set a different time if you cannot make my office hours. I am available to meet via WhatsApp, telephone, Messenger, Facetime or Zoom.

Please follow the calendar of tasks each week; and make sure you read the announcements I post on Blackboard. Also do check your emails regularly.

Assignments/Coursework

(Details on Blackboard under ‘Assignments’ & ‘Discussion Forums’)

- Postings in the Discussion Forums: Worth overall 40% of your final grade.
- Journal/diary entry: Worth overall 30% of your final grade.
- Final Reflection Paper: Personal Reflection Worth 30% of your final grade.

Grading and Feedback

I use rubrics for the assessed written assignments, which are available on Blackboard. Please do read the rubrics. You will receive a grade and a written feedback on your coursework via Blackboard. I also write general comments on the coursework in the Announcement section of Blackboard.

Concepts/principles/ issues for teaching praxis I work with

Decoloniality with Intellectual Activism:

- Unlearn and resist the appeal of newness, labels, and the prêt-à-porter little new dress impetus. Question hegemonic, neo-imperialist, neo-colonialists temptations (in whatever guise), support/cherish the work and imaginary of in-common (Mbeme, 2019)
- This is not a metaphor (Tuck and Yang, 2012).
- Learn history above and beyond the hegemonic neo liberal capitalist/patriarchal/imperialist/colonialist/racist/heteronormative archive.
- Read widely history of critical political thinking and praxis from different disciplines and approaches, and also and especially in education (again nothing new here others have done a lot of work before us!); make sure to learn specifically about your geographical location and the specific conditions of your university and your students and beyond considering how they are situated in the global geo-politics of different hegemonic configurations, the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018)
- This work is integral part of teaching philosophy and practice.
- Most importantly: Find Your Way.

Social Change with Social, Economic, Epistemic Justice and Equity

- We are all walking on the footsteps of giants and the intellectual and material work of millions before us and now.
- This teaching is part of a progressive struggle that has gone on for centuries.
- It addresses structured systems of oppression and their interlocking relations (Keeanga-Yamahttha Taylor, 2017)
- Colonialism is with imperialism with capitalism with racism with patriarchy with heteronormativity with xenophobia, with casteism the specific configurations and saliency changes in different locations
- Where are you located? What is your specific web of interlocking power relations?
- These are in practice and subjectivity that get reproduced constantly. They are in policies, institutions, processes, beliefs, values & knowledges. These forces are always at work and we are integral part of them.
- The results are hierarchies that shifts and move at the individual level that reproduce at the macro level asymmetries of opportunities and privileges and subordination, marginalization, silencing, tokenism, appropriation, extraction.

Reflexivity/Diffraction

- Think/teach Intersectionally (Collins, 2013; Collins, 2019)
- Think/teach critically with and through differences (Freire's work and bell hooks's work)
- This work makes ripples: generate and foster them.

In teaching practice:

Design principles with actual practices

Student-centered principles:

- Meet the students where they are at developing sensitivity towards their place, their lives and what consequences these have for their education in class and beyond.
- This notion of sensitivity is compounded by an attention and care for:
 - the context,
 - the needs of the students;
 - the degrees of perceived freedom I and they have
 - what perceived boundaries there are;
 - what intersections are critical and salient

My current students:

Gender diversity
diverse in terms of ethnic, racial, nation of origin background.
Some are new migrant to the US, some are second generations Asians and Africans and from Latin America and Caribbean and local African American and Black, Irish, Italian American and other European Americans;
Tend to be in the majority working class, lower middle classes some have parents with businesses
First generation to college, most have financial aid; some experience housing insecurity, mental health issues; some have served or are on active duties.
Most work full time as office workers in financial and healthcare industry, but also many are in retail and restaurant industry; many have a family they support/care for
Some community college transfer. The university entry is GPA 2.75. The level of academic proficiency is overall lower than my previous experiences at LUMS and WBS
A portion is of international students.
Aspiration/career path often very unclear and nebulous or parent-directed (i.e. accounting, family business) but some have already small businesses (e.g. construction) or are in full-time permanent jobs (e.g. work in the financial industry). Want to learn concrete skills to get better jobs in accounting, marketing, HR type roles, information system/data analytics type work; make more money and be more successful at what they do.

On Process:

Reflection and self-reflection on work and organizational complexity and uncertainties becoming critical reflective professionals

- Individual video presentation intro week
- Diary Log for each learning block
- Individual meetings with me every three, four weeks to tailor the course
- Direct questions embedded with the material inviting personal reflections
- Voice in dialogue: discussion forum for each block with position-taking practice
- Final Reflection Paper on learning journey

On Content:

Tactics:

- **Subversion** of the traditional management curriculum and its knowledge. In such tactic the traditional content (i.e., principles of management, hierarchical structures, etc.) is questioned by activating critical social theories and philosophies that are ignored and marginalized in the mainstream, therefore making it possible to question taken-for-granted and de-legitimizing the “there is no alternative” trope; it shows that other versions of organizing are possible and are actual. This tactic also subverts the traditional management archive of who is the legitimate producer of management and organizational knowledge and actively counter deficit-based representations of black and brown people including scholars.
- **Deviation** from the traditional business school curriculum. This means a critical focus on sexuality, gender, ethics, race, and difference. This enriches students’ perspectives and their abilities to discern complexities and viewpoints, as well as the dilemmas and paradoxes.
- **Hybridization** of the traditional business school curriculum. This means the inclusion of critical political economic accounts, broadening views of what counts as managing, organizing and accounting; or, focusing on alternative forms of organizing and experiences of lives living beyond private capital accumulation.

Examples:

Example 1

Issues of inequality introduction and resources (some readings and videos) on the myth of meritocracy and inequality explained through the lenses of cultural, economic and social capital.

Example 2

Zoom in on African American management its history, some of the key principles that characterized it in terms of management and leadership principles and experiences. Material utilizes video and readings Key reference Prieto and Phipps (2019).

Example 3

Zoom on workers cooperatives identifying connections with African American History, offering resources on different examples in terms of size, locations, and highlights of key management issues. Showcase of a Boston-based cooperative delivering digital solutions and training actively involved in open software and collective forms of digital work.

Example 4

Work on difference and diversity with attention to gender and race
Definitions and readings on occupational discrimination, glass ceiling and glass cliff; and focus on racial inequities at work.
Case study with gender and race issues.

Example 5

Diversify who is speaking with authority and as the expert

Keeping things in perspective:

Breath in and breath out:

“Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content” Fanon,1963:27

References and Useful Resources:

- Bambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu eds 2018 Decolonizing the University Pluto Press
Chavez. FL 2021 The Anti-Racist Workshop Haymarket Books
Collins, P. Hill on Intellectual Activism Temple University Press
Collins P. 2019 Intersectionality Duke University Press
Emejulu A and Sobande F 2019 eds To Exist is To Resist Pluto Press
Freire, P. The Pedagogy of the Oppressed
Fanon, F. 1963 The Wretched of The Earth, Penguin Books
Freire P. 1974 Education for Critical Consciousness Bloomsbury
Hooks B. 1994 Teaching to Transgress Routledge
Hooks B. 2010 Teaching Critical Thinking Routledge
Kebede M 2004. Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization VIBS, Rodopi
Keeanga-Yamahttha Taylor, 2017 How We Get Free Haymarket Books
Membé, A. 2019 Necropolitics Duke University Press
Mignolo. W. and Walsh 2018 On Decoloniality Duke University Press
Prieto and Phipps 2019 African American Management history Emerald Points
Rodriguez, C. O Decolonizing Academia Fernwood Publishing
Tuck and Yang, 2012 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor' Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1, 1: 1-40
Watson, D Hagopian J Au W. eds Teaching For Black Lives A Rethinking Schools Publication