

Business Consulting

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: DBLN 3561

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: Onsite Faculty

Term: Fall 2024

Course Description

Management consulting will continue to be a significant and popular career option, as it provides an opportunity for challenging work, continued self-development, access to important social and professional networks, traveling, and financial rewards.

In this course, students will explore the art of using expertise in a field to advise client organizations on high-level strategic issues and provide them with management counsel. Throughout the course, students will experience the opportunity to work on solving executive-level problems and simulate consulting project activities and situations by working on business cases, exercises, and a team assignment based on real-life consulting challenges. The class will be taught using a combination of discussion, cases, and guest lectures. The class environment will be highly interactive and participative. The course will culminate with a Team Project Competition, in which students will be organized into 6 consulting teams: Strategy Consulting, IT Consulting, Marketing Consulting, Human Capital Consulting, Operational/Process Consulting, and Organizational Consulting. While elaborating the course project, students will receive coaching and guidance from the professor in two Consulting Labs to provide students with an intensive on-the-job training experience. The consulting proposals will be presented in the last class and will be judged by a guest consultant.

The goal of the course is to provide students with a hands-on experience of management consulting. Therefore, students will be taken on a journey departing from experiencing what business consultants do, who they work for, how they spot consulting opportunities, and how they develop proposals, perform business diagnostics, develop solutions, create an effective implementation plan, and skillfully present it to the client. In the process, students will have

the opportunity to meet and learn from practicing experts: a management consultant from a large consulting group and an independent consultant, who will be invited to provide information relevant to their firms, their professional experience, and their particular expertise in the profession.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students are able to:

- Explain the nature and rigor of business consulting as practiced in the field
- Develop skills to work in a competitive setup under pressure and short deadline
- Debate opinions and arguments with evidence obtained from research and analytical techniques when discussing case studies
- Design a thorough business proposal aimed to address client's needs and objectives
- Apply qualitative/quantitative research skills, creative problem solving, and design for consulting

Methodology

Experiential Learning & Field Visits

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

- Site visits to local businesses

Required Reading / Materials

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course, but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting the instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

Required

Block, P. *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used (4th edition)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2023.

Selected Readings

- Case Study 1a: Bonner case (www.flawlessconsulting.com)
- Case Study 1b: Developing Professionals: The BCG Way (HBS)
- Case Study 1c: When consultants and clients clash (HBR, Nov. 1997)
- Case Study 2: Deloitte & Touche Consulting Group (HBS)
- Case Study 3: Bon Star Hotel (HBS)
- Case Study 4: East Central Ohio Freight (HBS)
- Case Study 5: SMA micro-electronic products division case (HBS)

Recommended

Greiner, L. and Poulfelt, F. *Management Consulting Today and Tomorrow—Perspectives and Advice from 27 Leading World Experts*. Routledge Publishing. 2009/2010.

Rasiel, E.M. *The McKinsey Way*, McGraw. Hills, 1999

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade.

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Engagement	20%
Guest Speaker Assignment	15%
Case Studies Preparation	20%
Final exam	20%
Team Competition Project	25%
Overall Grade	100%

Assessment Details

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

Engagement (20%): Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the CEA CAPA Engagement Policy, and to understand the Class Engagement Rubric that outlines how engagement is graded.

Guest Speaker Assignment (15%): During the visit of a guest speaker, students will work in class on a team assignment proposed by the guest speaker. The assignment will not be available prior to class. Its aim is to prepare students to work in a competitive setup under pressure and short deadlines.

Case Studies Preparation (20%): Throughout the course students will read five short business case studies based on current real-life consulting challenges and prepare for a class discussion by answering questions corresponding to the case. Their preparation will be tested in class using quizzes, open questions, or written deliverables. Case study preparation for in-class discussion constitutes individual work. Students will be expected to provide cogent arguments, defend opinions, and support their proposal with evidence obtained from research and analytical techniques relevant to the topic.

Final Examination (20%): The final examination will cover all concepts from sessions –13, based on readings, lectures, videos, and class discussions. It will consist of multiple choice questions with one correct answer to each question. It will be evaluated individually.

Team Competition Project (25%): Students will be organized into 6 consulting teams: Strategy Consulting, IT Consulting, Marketing Consulting, Human Capital Consulting, Operational/Process Consulting, and Organizational Consulting. The consulting topics for the project will be based on local companies. In groups of 3–5 students, students must leverage class learnings to elaborate and present a case analysis. Two in-class workshops, called Consulting Labs, will take place throughout the course to help teams in the development of the project. Proposals will be presented in the last class. The oral presentations will be accompanied by a written report. The competition will be judged by a guest consultant. Teams will be evaluated based on the following criteria: research review, client proposal, business diagnostics, consulting engagement, solution and implementation plan, and finally presentation and support materials. The most successful proposal will be announced the winner of the Team Competition, and the members of the winning team will be offered a recommendation on LinkedIn by the instructor and the guest consultant.

Course Content

Unit 1

Topics

- Course Introduction
 - Review Syllabus, Classroom Policies
- Consulting as Profession
 - The role of the consultant
 - Required skills
 - Types of consulting projects
 - Professionalism and ethics

Activities

- Course Overview
- Lecture & Discussion

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 1, 2 and 7

Unit 2

Topics

- Challenges of Consulting

Activities

- Discussion of 3 case studies “Case 1”

Readings & Assignments

- Submit Case 1

Unit 3

Topics

- Marketing & Selling of Consulting Services
 - Understanding the client's business and industry
 - Making a good first impression
 - The proposal development process

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Discussion of Case 2
- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 3
- Submit Case 1

Unit 4

Topics

- **Consulting Methodology**
 - First client meeting dynamics
 - Needs assessment: listening actively
 - Consulting contract

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 4, 5, and 6

Unit 5

Topics

- From Diagnosis to Discovery
 - Implementing consulting methodology and recommendations: mobilizing, aligning, assessing risk, project teams

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Discussion of Case 3

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 10, 11, and 12
- Submit Case 3

Unit 6

Topics

- Data Gathering Techniques, Business Research Basic Strategic Tools & Frameworks
 - SWOT analysis, profitability/financial analysis, marketing/positioning, operations/productivity, market entry and expansion, market sizing and estimation

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Handout on The Introduction to Strategic Tools

Unit 7

Topics

- Key Success Factors of Business
- Industry Analysis

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Work on Exercises
- Consulting Lab 1

Readings & Assignments

- Handout on Analytical Industry Tools

Unit 8

Topics

- Analysis & Delivering Results
 - Presenting action proposals to the client
 - Developing alternatives

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 13, 14, and 15

Unit 9

Topics

- Engagement & Implementation
 - Project management, team effectiveness, communication with the client, customer satisfaction, assessment metrics, follow-up on recommendations

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Discussion of Case 4
- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 16 and 17
- Submit Case 4

Unit 10

Topics

- Guest Speaker
 - Large consulting group and/or an independent consultant

Activities

- Work on Guest Speaker Assignment

Readings & Assignments

- Submit Questions to Guest Speaker

Unit 11

Topics

- Resistance to Change

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Discussion of Case 5
- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 8 and 9
- Submit Case 5

Unit 12

Topics

- Consulting in the Public & Not-For-Profit Sector
- Small Business Consulting

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Work on Exercises
- Consulting Lab 2

Readings & Assignments

- Greiner and Poulfelt, Ch. 11

Unit 13

Topics

- Managing Problems & Challenges in the Consulting Practice
 - Aligning, success factors, ethics, collusion between consultant and client

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion

- Work on Exercises

Readings & Assignments

- Block, Ch. 18

Unit 14

Topics

- Consulting Best Practices
- The Future of Consulting

Activities

- Lecture & Discussion
- Final Examination

Readings & Assignments

- Prepare for Consulting Team Competition

Unit 15

Consulting Team Competition

Policies

Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our Academic Policies and Engagement Policy. CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified Student Learning and Development Objectives (SLDOs) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration. These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it in a larger learning context.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).