ODKM720
Socio-Technical Systems and Collaborative Work*
George Mason University
Fall 2017
Cohort 21
Instructor: Mary Lou Theobald

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Phone: 703-217-8091
Office Hours: Fridays before class at 4:00 pm on days the course meets and by appointment.

Course Title: ODKM 720 Socio-Technical Systems and Collaborative Work

Course Description: This course examines the nature of collaboration and the impact technology has on collaboration and sharing of information within an organization.

The course design is based on the following belief: Collaborative tools can act as a catalyst for cultural and organizational change. The belief is that when people are put in a new tool they think of their work differently and therefore act differently giving the organization a moment in time to affect a change in the culture.

Course Objectives

• Gain understanding of the nature of collaboration and the intricate connections to technology
• Gain practical experience exploring and using collaborative tools
• Examine current technology challenges organizations face, contrasted with opportunities to engage organizations in knowledge sharing opportunities
• Combine knowledge from previous ODKM courses to apply consulting, collaboration, and knowledge sharing principles to design effective technical solutions
• Understanding technology as a consulting tool, assessing collaboration needs and match it with the right tool

It is an assumption that parts of this course will be co-created. Students are expected to probe challenges within technology and its impact, to bring forth topics for discussion.

* Sections of the syllabus come from the version conceived and created by Anne Washington.
Topics:
1. Explore the meaning of collaboration and assess our strength in collaboration
2. Explore virtual teams and virtual communities
3. Learn to evaluate user groups in an organization and create personas for the type of knowledge workers represented in the organization
4. Practice use of tools and decisions about the appropriate tool to use
5. Explore impact in society of technology tools and social media
6. Explore trends in technology such as BYOD (Bring your own device); Digital Workplaces and Data Literacy
7. Discuss consulting opportunities within technology

Classroom Tools:
- ODKM SharePoint  http://policysharepoint.gmu.edu or https://policysharepoint.gmu.edu/programcourses/odkm/cohort19/odkm720/

Overview:
This course balances theory and practice. For example:

- How do we define collaboration vs. how do we practice collaboration?
- What role does social media place in our society vs. what tools are available and how do we use them?
- What role does social media play on a personal level vs. what is the impact on our personal brand?

This class investigates how technology supports knowledge sharing between people. The course offers a conceptual foundation to support the practical work of evaluating, choosing, or using technology systems in organizations. This course is designed to increase your competency in understanding how people construct meaning through available tools.

Technology is everywhere. Some electronic devices are even designed to attach to our clothing so we are never without them. Are the devices attached to us, or are we attached to our devices, or are we attached to each other through our devices? A traditional view considers technology as static yet we all experience technology as constantly changing. How frequently do we upgrade mobile phones? A different view considers technology as dynamic mirroring the human communities it is designed to support.
Our perspective will be that technology is a tool to negotiate boundaries between people. While we will consider the intrinsic properties of technology tools, our main focus is how they are fundamental to identity, meaning and purpose. We will discuss how organizations use these tools to both constrain and support behaviors. Our goal is to understand how technology is used to construct meaning, share knowledge and build human relationships. A socio-technical perspective accounts for this dynamic of dual change.

The course material invites students to consider substantive issues about the role of technology in society. This is not a technology training class, however, familiarity with state-of-the-art software is a marketable skill for any professional. We will take the time to make sure everyone is familiar with standard tools used by corporate virtual teams. Information communication technology is a medium of the written word.

We will study technology while using technology. We will study collaboration while collaborating with each other. We will study knowledge sharing while sharing what we have learned. The reflexive nature of the material invites us to consider how we position ourselves in relationship to the technology objects around us. Drawing on engagement, observation and inquiry, this course will increase your competency identifying effective tools for collaboration.

Teaching Philosophy

Just as technology is ever evolving our approach to this class we be evolving. The philosophy is to take what we know, and push the boundaries of our thinking about knowledge and information and how we make meaning individually, in small groups and within an organization. Then ultimately the role that technology tools play in making meaning.

It is expected that a part of the curriculum will be co-created as a group. Just as we talk about collaboration as a concept, we expect to practice it in the course. So student generated articles about technology and its impact will be woven into the curriculum and will be part of our online discussions. The assignments are designed to push our collective thinking about how we interact and engage with technology and its impact. To that end, experiential learning is critical.

Schedule and Room Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep-9 Sat</td>
<td>ARLFH 121</td>
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<td>Sep-22 Fri</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct-14 Sat</td>
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<td>Oct-20 Fri</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
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<td>Nov-17 Fri</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec-02 Sat</td>
<td>ARLFH 121</td>
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Readings:
The majority of the readings are available through the University library e-reserve and e-journal systems.

Required Readings
Two books are required. Try to finish *The starfish and the spider* before class, chapters 1-4 at a minimum. All books are available electronically as e-books through independent bookstores unless noted with an asterisk. **Those not available electronically are not required, but will be a part of class.**


Additional Books
Additional books explore class topics in-depth. These books are not required, although a chapter may be assigned as required reading.


Assignments Fall 2017 ODKM720:

Consulting Project: Students will engage with an organization and consult on the use of technology as a tool for knowledge and sharing of information. The consultation will be in coordination with ODKM 725 as you will utilize the same organization for consulting in both classes. In your team you will assess the current collaborative tools used in the organization and
whether or not those tools are effectively serving the needs of the organization. To assist in your assessment you will create personas for the types of knowledge workers within the organization, and assess the tools according to the needs of those knowledge workers. Detailed information about the project is included at the end of this syllabus.

To start your work as a team you will create a charter with a slightly different focus than the charter used for the 725 course. While the 725 charter focuses on the work within your consulting team, the charter for the 720 course is a modification, and abbreviated version of a project charter that would be used within a technology project. You will notice that while the charter assignment for 725 is fairly wide open, the charter for 720 is in a template form. One of the goals of the course is to assist with the transition to speaking the language of a technology department and the charter is one example of that transition. The template is attached at the end of this document and attached. The charter will be completed together in your group on Saturday, September 9.

**Journal:** You will keep a journal of your experiences with technology throughout the course. The journal will be submitted at the same time as your group paper at the end of class and will be factored into your grade for your group project.

**Online participation:** Post articles for reflection; read and comment on articles others post, etc.

**Class participation:** It is important to be an active and engaged participant in class. As we explore other communities it will be important that we try out concepts and ideas with each other.

**Web conferencing tool critique:** The October 20 class will be conducted as a virtual class examining four different web conferencing tools. The purpose of the sessions will be to compare and contract features sets of the various tools, but also to analyze personal reactions to the various tools and experience as a remote participant. Your reflections of your experience will help to frame your thoughts on socio-technical design. Students will submit a written reflection on the experience. Detailed information will be provided in class prior to the session.

**Tool Talks:** Each student will deliver a short presentation on a tool they use or have heard about and would like to know more about. The presentation is expected to be about 10 minutes long and will cover the basics of the tool, pros and cons of the tool, how it is or isn’t effective for collaboration and information sharing, and some possible use cases for the tool.
Scoring:

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tool Talks</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool critique and assessment</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consulting Presentation</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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Assessment:

Rules of the Road:

- Assignments are due at the beginning of class.
- If for any reason you need an extension, please let me know as far in advance as you know.
- Please include your full name in the upper right corner of the assignment.

Attendance:

In such a compressed time frame, each class is critical. I realize there are times when there are things outside your control. If you need to miss class, please email me as soon as you know and we will discuss ways for you to make up the work missed. But keep in mind that a missed class should be a rare occasion. **You are only allowed one absence from the course to pass the class.**

Attendance in practice:

Attendance is not just being physically present. Active listening, respect for others speaking and actively engaging in the conversation is also part of your attendance in the class. That means that cell phones and devices should be stowed during class discussions. That said, this is a technology course and active participation might also include testing out tools, working on an online presentation. So I encourage to bring devices that you can use at appropriate times. Just keep in mind a couple things:

- I’ll ask that they all be put away during discussion time.
- You are responsible for securing any devices you bring with you. So consider that during breaks, dinner, etc.
Class Participation:
Class and group participation is critical both during class and in the online discussion. Your voice is needed to help propel our collective learning. Being part of a community necessitates aiding in the constructive creation of the group. Therefore class participation isn’t limited to the words you speak in class or write online, but also actions that are conducive to community building.

Writing
Detailed instructions for each written assignment will be presented with ample time before the assignment. Plagiarism detection software may be used if there is concern about whether the work is original.

Citations
In your work it is important that you properly cite quotes and any information not derived from your original work.

The intention behind citations is to give the reader enough information to find your source. Please use APA (American Psychological Association) style for your written work. If you are unfamiliar with the APA please visit their site http://www.apastyle.org.

Below are examples of APA bibliography style.

Book:

Chapter in a book:

Article:

Online only:

Although strict adherence to APA calls for n.d. (no date) on websites, please use this sparingly and substitute the current year.
Grading Scale

Work that is below standards for a masters level course will be returned for revisions either optional or required revisions. (79 points or lower.)

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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-99</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>Generally good</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>Optional Revision</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76-77</td>
<td>Mandatory Revision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policies:

Collaboration: Each student is expected to make an individual contribution to group projects. Although students are encouraged to work with each other to discuss and solve problems, submission of identical or nearly identical work will be seen as an infraction of the university honor code. See the George Mason University Honor Code for more information. [http://honorcode.gmu.edu/](http://honorcode.gmu.edu/)

Academic Integrity: It usually takes more effort to cheat than to simply complete an assignment. Before submitting someone else’s work, find out what will happen when it is discovered. The George Mason University statement on academic integrity can be found here: [http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/academicintegrity/](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/academicintegrity/). The plagiarism policy for the School of Public Policy is stated below. If you are in doubt about the line between paraphrasing, quoting and plagiarism, ask. When in doubt, cite.

SPGIA Policy on Plagiarism: The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s
work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources are essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F."

This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the university. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPGIA policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPGIA policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Special Needs Policy: Any student in need of accommodation based on the impact of a special need or disability should contact the University Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor of any accommodation at the beginning of the semester so there will be time to make modifications to assignments.

Office Hours: Friday from 4:00 - 5:00 on days class meets. Please make arrangements so I can anticipate your meeting. I am also available by appointment including evenings and weekends.
**Email:**
Feel free to communicate through email. Keep in mind that I might not see emails sent at the last minute. Please put ODKM720 in the subject line as it will help me to filter for course emails.

**Attendance:**
Attendance in all class meetings is essential. Class participation is part of the calculation for the final grade.

**Electronic Devices:**
Please turn off your cell phone during class sessions. Please no SMS texts, email or phone calls in the class. If you must respond to a message or a call, leave the room quietly so the rest of the class can stay focused. Use of any electronic device such as an iPhone, iPod, iPad, Blackberry, PDA, tablet or laptop during seminar discussions is discouraged.

Please let me know if you have an emergency situation that requires you to be connected during a particular class period.

**Class Notices:**
The most recent syllabus, assignments and in-class projects will be posted on the classroom technology platform. Remember to check for any updates before class. Important updates will be sent to your GMU email address. It is your responsibility to make sure that your GMU email account is set up properly, including the ability to forward emails to an account you check more regularly.

**Classroom Tools:**
ODKM SharePoint
http://policysharepoint.gmu.edu

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**720 Consulting Project**

- This project is the major body of work for the semester.
- It is in conjunction with ODKM 725
- It is an opportunity to integrate cumulative knowledge of other courses in the ODKM program and apply them to a practical situation in an organization.

**Goals of the project:**
• Analyze current state of collaboration in the organization as well as the organizations readiness to collaborate.
• Conduct a practical analysis of tools and whether the tools are aiding in the sharing of knowledge and information or hindering it.
  o Survey and document current tools in use
  o Document use cases
  o Create personas for users and use cases
• Analyze the impact of technology and collaborative tools when sharing information across an organization.
• Explore, in the context of an organization, where tools aid in the sharing of knowledge and making meaning. Apply consulting tools and techniques to assess and advise on knowledge and information sharing.

Following are thoughts about the current state of technology and its impact on the sharing of knowledge and information.

• In a matrixed organization the tools that are used don’t always match the needs of the organization.
• Large organization often find it difficult to “control” rogue tools and users seek out and install their own.
• There is a tug-o-war in theories about supportability and security vs. the ability to be flexible in the use of tools. Often organizations say things like, “We are a Microsoft shop,” or “We like the Google suite because our people are used to it in the consumer space.” But the helpdesk folks prefer to have one suite they can support while CIOs don’t always want to enforce one tool suite. Some feel it stifles creativity and prefer to allow their users to gravitate to what they want and like.
• Many software companies develop “freemium” models of their tools as a means of marketing? As security risks become of more concern, companies have increased their concern about these models. But many organizations don’t have the funding to purchase the paid version of the tools, and it has already been adopted as “the people’s choice”. So they struggle with the best way forward.

In this project you will follow the guidelines of the 725 knowledge project and also assess the impact of technology on the organization. Areas of possible exploration include:

• Determine what tools the organization is using and the benefit. Is there a difference between the benefit and the perceived benefit?
• How are tools selected? Who makes the decisions?
• Can you measure the success of the tools? What approach might you use?
• What business use cases might your organization have that a collaboration tool might solve? What is the right tool for the users?
• How does the size of the organization impact decisions about the tools that are used?
• What would a digital workplace look like for the organization? Is the organization ready for such a change? What change management efforts would be needed, and what would the impact be on the sharing of information?
• Is the organization centralized or decentralized? How does that impact the sharing of knowledge and the tools used?
• What is the organization’s stance on teleworking? How are teleworker communicating and collaborating currently? How effective are they?
• How do people learn about the tools? (formal training, word of mouth, ask a friend?)
• Has the organization maximized usage of their tool investment? Are people using the collaboration features or are they using the tools like they would in a 10 year old version of the software?

Preparing for the project:
By September 22 please present a charter of your project. Attached is a charter template to use. It is intentionally designed to look similar to a project management charter you would use in an IT project, but includes a place to list group norms for your team. The collaboration of your team is a crucial component of the project in addition to the work you do for the client.

Final Report and Presentation:
Report: You can chose the format for your report, but be creative and think about whether there are tools at your disposal that would be an effective vehicle for your report.

Presentation: Your team presentations will be during class on December 2 and will be a presentation for both 720 and 725. Think of a creative, compelling way to tell the story of the organization and the knowledge work taking place at the organization.

Charter Template for 720 consulting project

**ODKM Team Name/Project Name Here**

**PROJECT CHARTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Sponsor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Start Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed End Date</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Project Description
2. **Project Goals**

3. **Deliverables**

4. **Project Risks and Risk Planning**
   (What barriers might prevent you from success in the project and what plans do you have to mitigate those risks.)

5. **Team Risks and Risk Planning**
   (What risks might inhibit your team success? Use this space to identify and articulate group norms and expectations for team participation.)

6. **Communication/Collaboration Methods used for team work**
   (Determine what tools or methods of communication you will use as a team during the project. How will you make sure everyone on the team has access and is familiar with the tool?)

7. **Proposed Timeline & Key Milestones**

   Date: XX/XX/2017
Bibliography – Fall 2017

Below are the readings that will be the basis for class sessions. Readings in bold are critical and will be discussed in class. This list is subject to change. If the book is not available electronically it is not required, but information from the book will be shared in class.


• Teo, Thompson S. H., Rohit Nishant, Mark Goh, & Sameer Agarwal. (2011). Leveraging collaborative technologies to build a knowledge sharing culture at HP Analytics. MIS Quarterly Executive, 10 (1), 1-18.


Reading Schedule – Fall 2017

This list is subject to change before the first class.
Below are the readings to prepare for class and to consider on the discussion board.

Suggested readings to help prepare and write assignments


Calendar – Fall 2017

Tentative Topic Schedule (subject to change based on student and instructor needs) **Shorter readings will likely be added in the coming weeks.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Class!</td>
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<td>Read Starfish &amp; Spider! Complete technology survey <a href="#">Click Link</a></td>
<td>Starfish and the Spider, at a minimum chapters 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-9, Sat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The nature of collaboration Creating personas</td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 14, Thurs</td>
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<td>Email me about your Tool Talk topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep-22, Fri</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tools What tools to use when User Adoption of tools</td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-14, Sat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Virtual Teams and Virtual Communities</td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 5 &amp; 6</td>
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<td>Trends in Technology</td>
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<td>Digital Workplace</td>
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<td><strong>Virtual Communication</strong></td>
<td>Social Life of Information</td>
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<td>Online session to compare and contract web</td>
<td>chapters 7 &amp; 8</td>
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<td><strong>Enterprise Social</strong></td>
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<td>Balancing Technology: personal and professional</td>
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ODKM720 Fall 2017 syllabus