ODKM720
Socio-Technical Systems and Collaborative Work
George Mason University
Fall 2018
Cohort 22

Class location is available on your Patriot site. Please include

Instructor: Mary Lou Theobald

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Phone: 703-217-8091 for calls or text
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.
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
5. Explore impact of technology tools in society 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

Overview:

The digital workplace is an increasingly complex organism. Advances in technology accelerate almost faster than we can comprehend. Artificial intelligence, machine learning and cognitive technologies are common vernacular in system designs.

In this course we will attempt to unravel some of the mystery around social technical systems understanding the role people play at the intersection of technology. This course will draw on previous courses on topics of organizational culture and change management in the understanding of collaborative work, a mobile society and the modern workplace.

We will strive to balance theory with practical work experience to explore collaborative tools, their uses, advantages and disadvantages.

For example:
- How do we define collaboration vs. how do we practice collaboration?
- What role does social media play 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?
- How do we prepare for the digital workplace in 10 year vs. managing the work we need to do now?
Teaching Philosophy

Just as technology is ever evolving our approach to this class will be evolving. The philosophy is to take what we know and push the boundaries of our thinking about knowledge and information. We explore how we make meaning individually, in small groups and within an organization. Then ultimately delve into 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>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 8 Sat</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 21 Fri</td>
<td>Remote or ARLFH 466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 13 Sat</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 27 Sat</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 9 Fri</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 7 Fri</td>
<td>ARLFH 466</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Readings:
The majority of the readings are available through the University library e-reserve and e-journal systems.

Required Readings
The required books are listed below. Read The Starfish and the Spider before the first class. We will discuss it during the first session.

All books are available electronically as e-books through independent bookstores unless noted with an asterisk. Those not available electronically are not required but may be a part of class.

  [http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=1373666](http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=1373666)
Additional Books
Additional books that will be used in class, but it isn’t required to purchase.


Assignments Fall 2018 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 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. The charter will be completed together in your group on Saturday, September 8.

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 September 21 class will be conducted as a virtual class examining four different web conferencing tools. The purpose of the sessions will be to compare and contrast 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 no longer than 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:**

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

**Assessment:**

**Rules of the Road:**

- Assignments are due at the beginning of class. You can email them prior to class as well. Include ODKM in the subject line.
- If for any reason you need an extension, please let me know as far in advance as you know.
- Please include your full name on each page 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. According to ODKM policy you cannot miss more than one class and still receive a passing credit for the course.
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. 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 you 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.

Use APA (American Psychological Association) style for your written work. You can find information about APA style at [http://www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org). Also, there are many online resources with examples of APA style.
Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Exceptional and rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-99</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Below 79.99</td>
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Policies:

**Collaboration:**
Group work and collaboration is a key component of this course. The largest part of your work will be a group project consulting with an organization. Each person is expected to contribute equally on project work.

**Academic Integrity:**
Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code.

Please make sure you are familiar with the academic integrity policy and honor code. You can find the information here. [https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/)

**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
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: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Office Hours: I'm available on 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. You can also send me an SMS text to my phone number listed. You can send to my GMU email or my work email. Both are listed at the top of the syllabus. 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: As stated, ODKM policy allows only one absence from a class to successfully pass the course. Please give as much advanced notice as possible for a missed class. And remember class participation is
| **Electronic Devices:** | As stated earlier class participation is a significant part of your grade. Likewise showing respect for your classmates during presentations and discussions is important. The use of electronic devices for purposes other than note-taking takes away from that sense of community.  
If you need to respond to an important message or take a phone call during class time quietly leave the room to take care of the matter so as to not disrupt conversations for other students. |
| **Class Notices:** | Email to your GMU email address will be the primary form of communication about updates to class information. It is critical that you frequently check your GMU account or ensure that you have properly forwarded your account to an email address that you check more frequently. Make sure you check your GMU email prior to each class in the event there is an update to information for that class. |
| **Classroom Tools:** | We will explore multiple collaborative tools. More information will be provided during the first class. Initially we will utilize the ODKM SharePoint – http://policysharepoint.gmu.edu. |

### 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.
  - Survey and document current tools in use
  - Document use cases
  - 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 creating what is referred to as Shadow IT.
• 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 organizations 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 21 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 the 725 class on December 8 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>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Sponsor(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Start Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed End Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</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/2018
Reading Schedule – Fall 2018

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.

Calendar – Fall 2018
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Class!</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read Starfish &amp; Spider! Complete technology survey Click Link.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 8, Saturday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The nature of collaboration Creating personas</td>
<td>Starfish and the Spider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13, Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Email me about your Tool Talk topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 21, Friday</td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Virtual Communication</strong> Online session to compare and contract web conferencing tools with assessment of the user experience.</td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 1 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 13, Saturday</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Virtual Teams and Virtual Communities</strong></td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Trends in Technology</strong> Digital Workplace Data Literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 27, Saturday</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Tools</strong> What tools to use when User Adoption of tools</td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 5 &amp; 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 9, Friday</td>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Enterprise Social Balancing Technology: personal and professional</strong></td>
<td>Social Life of Information chapters 7 &amp; 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 7, Friday</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Technology and consulting Course evaluations</strong></td>
<td>No readings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography – Fall 2018

Following are supplemental readings that provide additional insight on the course topics.


• 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.


