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INFO 903-01-02 Systems of Operations and Technology

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Systems of Operations and Technology

INFO 903-01 and 903-02

Spring 2007

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Course Description

An examination of systems and technology involved in the production of goods and the delivery of services. The predominant focus is on the manager's use of information and technology to influence the design, operation and control of systems in order to enhance competitive advantage. Topics covered include analysis of current information systems, identification and assessment of an organization's strategic use of information systems and trends of information technology development. This course explores foundational business processes and information systems; it is highly integrative and will draw heavily from other functional areas in business.

Because this course explores foundational business processes and information systems, it is highly integrative and will link closely to the other courses in the MBA program.

Texts and Course Materials

We have no text book for the course but will be required to order Harvard case studies from study.net (link to the exact web address provided in Blackboard). Other required readings will be linked from the course schedule. (link in Blackboard)

General Course Objectives.

1. To understand facts, concepts, and principles related to *managing* with technology.
2. To understand factors involved in attempts to apply technology to real-life situations.
3. To develop an awareness of the possible limitations of technology.
4. To focus on technology and how it relates to the strategy of a business.
5. To apply different IT concepts to the workplace.

Williams College of Business Mission

"We educate students of business, enabling them to improve organizations and society, consistent with the Jesuit tradition"

How this course relates to this mission

Technology has had a major impact on nearly every organization and on society at large. The course will critically examine these impacts via case analyses, readings on current topics, and in-depth discussions about the social issues of technology and the Internet.

Description of Graded Activities:

Participation 20%

You will be assessed primarily on the quantity and quality of your messages in discussion boards. Quality messages will be those considered insightful, those that provide outside information, or that challenge opinions, that initiate new or related topics. Quantity of messages will include both the number of postings and the number of discussion board "hits" (how many postings you read). You will be also be assessed based on your attendance and whether you participate adequately during online meetings.

Case Analyses 25%

You will conduct ten case analyses during the term. For two of these cases, you will be a "case leader" requiring the preparation of a 3+ page (single spaced) case analysis to be posted in the Assignments link in Blackboard prior to the online meeting in which the case is discussed. Analyses should focus on identifying key issues, researching background information, providing recommendations and updating the case with news and recent facts. Announcements will be posted in Blackboard to provide grading guidelines, resources and advice for case analysis.

For the remaining cases, you will be a "case participant", requiring the posting in the Assignments link in Blackboard of a 1/2 page list of issues and recommendations. These documents will not be graded, but failure to post adequate lists will result in a reduction of your case analysis grade.

Information Technology (market) Research Study 20%

A 4-5 page single spaced paper examining a research question related to IT. A typical paper might have the following sections: Introduction, Background, Research Questions and Methodology, Findings (or Preliminary Findings), and Conclusions. Sample research questions might be (there are hundreds of potential relevant topics):

What impact does user feedback have on bid prices in Ebay auctions?

What role does gender play in responsiveness to email advertising?

What is the relative effectiveness of pop-up ads versus banner ads in user recall?

What factors do users versus IT departments view as most important in a corporate Intranet?

What is the correlation between fear of Identity Theft and dollars spent online?

To make such analyses, you will need to find relevant articles on your topic (preferably published articles as opposed to just web sites). You'll likely need a minimum of 5-7 references. You will also need to determine a research method for answering the question - a survey, interviews, or experiment are the most common choices. You should identify a research method that would provide the best data to answer the research question. In many cases, you will not have the resources or time to actually conduct the full study. If so, your paper will detail how the study should be conducted then your findings could be based on preliminary data or a pilot study (say, a group of 20 students who participate in your survey). More details about the paper will be provided later in the course.

Executive Interview: 10%

Interview a key manager regarding the strategic importance of IT in their organization. Solicit their opinions by asking them to strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:

Information Technology is very important to the strategic success of our organization.

Our use of IT helps differentiate us from our competitors.

Most of our investments in IT have resulted in positive return on investment. We have implemented mechanisms that effectively measure and justify IT expenditures

In examining new information systems, we typically seek to purchase solutions rather than develop them in-house.

We are looking increasingly at outsourcing many of our IT functions.

We are looking increasingly to reduce costs by using offshore IT outsourcing.

+ Any additional issues that you feel would be enlightening.

The writeup should include a description of the interviewee (can be anonymous, but should identify the general responsibilities of the interviewee), detailed responses for each question (both scaled response and comments), and personal reflection and reaction to the interview. An announcement will be posted describing the grading criteria for the assignment.

Note: if you are unable to conduct such an interview (full time student, very small organization, etc.), you may request to have an alternative assignment on an examination of an IT Social Issue.

Exam 25%

An exam will be posted in Blackboard before the end of the course. A window of time will be given for students to take the exam. Students will log onto Blackboard and follow the link to the exam. Exams will be "open book" but they will also be timed (you may have only 2-3 hours to complete the exam), so students must be organized and prepared. Exams will primarily cover weekly readings (those that precede each case). While the exam will not explicitly refer to facts in case studies, students may wish to use incidents in the cases to illustrate their answers. Blackboard's exam feature is relatively easy to use. However, it is very important that you complete the exam in one session without closing your browser or allowing your Internet connection to time-out. You do not have to come to class to take the exam, it may be taken from home, work, or a computer on campus. I can provide you with a quiet private space to take it, if necessary.

Grading Scale

Overall Avg.	Letter Grade
93-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-87%	B
80-83%	B-
77-80%	C+
73-77%	C
70-73%	C-
60-70%	D
59%&below	F

Academic Integrity:

Cheating (using or attempting to use unauthorized materials in an academic exercise), fabrication (falsifying or inventing information), facilitating academic dishonesty (helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty), and plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of another as your own) will result in a grade of F for the course. If you have any doubt about whether you're plagiarizing, ASK. Xavier uses turnit.com to check papers for plagiarism.