

# Course Outline

## CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS THINKING

### UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

SUMMER 2020

#### General Information

Course #: **COMM 210/1, Section AA**  
Time: Monday & Wednesday: 18:30 to 21:00  
Credits: 3

Instructor: **Jeffrey H. Sacksner, B.Eng, MBA**  
Telephone:  
Email: [jeff.sacksner@concordia.ca](mailto:jeff.sacksner@concordia.ca)  
Office: MB-013-108  
Office Hours: By appointment



## 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course presents a broad survey of the world of business and helps students develop a critical perspective on the contemporary business discourse. Students explore influential business texts, both contemporary and classic, and evaluate the validity and usefulness of the authors' central ideas. The course also fosters students' inclination to keep well informed about contemporary issues in organizations and business

## 2. COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

COMM 210 is an introductory course that will expose you to fundamental business theories and develop your ability to apply them to current organizational and business events. Through an in-depth reading of various texts reporting on current business activities and trends, you will learn to think critically about the quality of the arguments presented, uncovering the assumptions underlying them and comparing them with classic and contemporary texts that highlight foundational business concepts.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Recognize examples and counter-examples of fundamental management theories in reports of current business activities
- Improve thinking skills and perform critical analyses of business texts
- Construct persuasive arguments using the language of business
- Write an effective persuasive essay
- Demonstrate awareness of and interest in current business events
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively in groups

## 3. COURSE DELIVERY

This course will be delivered in an online setting using a blend of synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning approaches. Slides will be uploaded to the course Moodle site for you to view prior to the scheduled class time. Virtual classes will be conducted via Zoom. You will have the opportunity to engage with your fellow classmates via web Zoom breakout rooms, videoconferences, teleconferences, live chatting, and discussion forums.

To join Zoom, all students must first register for Zoom using their First and Last Name and Concordia email (students not properly identifying themselves may not be admitted into the Zoom Online Lecture). Students must join the online lecture at least 5 minutes prior to Lecture start time. Please register using below link.

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJArceGurz0sG9AkIHUU-55XPvwkuvC5JiWa>

## 4. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

A number of diverse instructional methods will be used throughout this course. Students are advised to engage in self-learning prior to class. One suggested approach is to complete assigned readings, develop concept maps (visual representations) of important ideas, and analyse assigned texts to prepare for class. Virtual classes will include a blend of lectures, discussions, and skill-building exercises. Taken together, these activities will extend your knowledge and understanding of business concepts, encourage you to develop your own ideas, and strengthen your ability to present a logical and persuasive argument.

## 5. REQUIRED TEXTS

**Textbook** (available at the bookstore and online): Dyer, L. (2019). Critical Thinking for Business Students, Third edition, Captus Press. **You may purchase access** to the ebook via the **publisher's web-site** (\$23.75; Term-based Subscription). The title will appear like this: Concordia - COMM 210 Summer - Critical Thinking for Business Students, 3e

**Classic business theories (Harvard Coursepack):** These articles are written by (in alphabetical order): Barney, Chandler, Collins & Porras, French & Raven, Greiner, Handy, Herzberg, Hill, Kaplan & Norton, Mintzberg, and Tannenbaum & Schmidt. Most of these were published in the Harvard Business Review (HBR). <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/724222>

**Business articles:** These articles are generally drawn from the business press. They will be posted in the Library's Course Reserves system and some have an external link included in the Course outline.

## 6. COURSE EVALUATION

The final grade for this course is determined as follows:

(1) Class Contribution .....	10%
(2) Midterm Examination*.....	30%
(3) Team Project*(20%) and 2 progress reports* (5% each).....	30%
(4) Final Examination*.....	30%
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>100%</b>

\*Note: Please see Section 6.5 regarding Late Submissions

### 6.1 Class participation:

Participation refers to any discussion/interaction/exchange, written or oral, during the course of classroom lecture, discussion, or small group work. This component is mainly based on your preparation ahead of time for class, completion of assignments and the quality of your contribution to online class discussions. Naturally class attendance is a pre-requisite for a good grade.

### **6.1.1 Basic courtesy:**

All students are expected to be logged on to Zoom at least 5 minutes prior to the start of the lecture and follow Zoom online lecture Etiquette during class.

### **6.2 Midterm Examination:**

The midterm examination will cover the topics covered in the first 6 classes. It will be an open book, take-home exam that focuses on higher level learning. It will include one or more business articles and 3-4 questions that require you to apply the concepts discussed in class and formulate a concise response. You will be provided with a 36-hour window to take the exam. It will be posted to Moodle on May 26<sup>th</sup> at 9 AM (36-hours prior to end of Class #7). Class #7 has been set aside for completing the exam. That is, there will be no new content or activities scheduled for Class #7. Your complete examination will be due at the conclusion of Class #7 (at 9PM on May 27<sup>th</sup>). To submit your completed examination, save your responses to a single WORD file, and upload the file to the Moodle assignment dropbox for the midterm examination. Additional information about the midterm examination will be provided during class/Moodle. No makeup exam will be offered without proper official justification.

### **6.3 Team Project:**

In the team project, you will work in a group of up to five students, applying the concepts discussed in class. Instructions for completing the project will be available on the course Moodle site. In addition, more information about the team project will be provided throughout the course. Progress reports 1 and 2 are due before the start of Classes #5 (May 20<sup>th</sup>) and #9 (June 3<sup>rd</sup>) respectively. The final report is due prior to the start of Class #12 (June 15<sup>th</sup>).

**Peer Assessment:** You will be asked to assess your team members' contribution to the Team Project. The Peer Assessment provides valuable feedback to the students, professor and team members. In addition, peer assessments help JMSB in the AACSB accreditation process. Information on Peer Assessment will be posted on MOODLE. Information provided by your teammates about your participation in the team project may (positively or negatively) impact your team project or participation grade.

### **6.4 Final Examination:**

The final examination will be a cumulative exam, in that it will cover all topics and concepts discussed throughout the course. It will be the same format as the midterm examination. That is, it will be an open book, take-home exam that focuses on higher level learning. It will include one or more business articles and 3-4 questions that require you to apply the concepts discussed in class and formulate a concise response. You will be provided with a 36-hour window to take the exam. It will be posted to Moodle on June 16<sup>th</sup> at 9AM (36-hours prior to the end of Class #13). Class #13 has been set aside for completing the exam. That is, there will be no new content or activities scheduled for Class #13. Your complete examination will be due at the conclusion of Class #13 (June 17<sup>th</sup> at 9PM). To submit your completed examination, save your responses to a single WORD file, and upload the file to the Moodle assignment dropbox for the Final examination. Additional information about the Final examination will be provided via Moodle. No makeup exam will be offered without proper official justification.

## 6.5 Late Submission

**Project Report.** For every day a project report is late, 10% of the maximum score will be deducted from the assignment score. **No assignments will be accepted once they are five or more days late. The following chart summarizes the penalties.**

Time Submitted	Penalty
0-24 hours after deadline	-10%
24-48 hours after deadline	-20%
48-72 hours after deadline	-30%
72-96 hours after deadline	-40%
96-120 hours after deadline	-50%
More than 120 hours after deadline	-100%

**Midterm and Final Examination.** The examinations require you to demonstrate your acquisition of course material in a constrained amount of time. If you are unable to download an exam once it is released, contact the instructor immediately to make alternate arrangements for acquiring it. In the exceptional case that you are unable to upload the file with your answers to Moodle, email it directly to the instructor. The following summarizes the penalties for submitted an examination or essay writing assignment late. **An examination will not be accepted once it is more than 6 hours late.**

Time Submitted	Penalty
0-1 hours after deadline	-10%
1-2 hours after deadline	-20%
2-3 hours after deadline	-30%
3-4- hours after deadline	-40%
4-6 hours after deadline	-50%
More than 6 hours after deadline	-100%

## 7. MOODLE

Throughout the term, vital information will be available on the course Moodle site. For example, information about lectures, joining web conferences, participating in discussion forums, completing assignments, and taking examinations will be provide via Moodle. It is your responsibility to log on to the course Moodle site regularly so that you are well prepared for the class meetings and other activities.

## 8. DETAILED WEEKLY OUTLINE

LECTURE (Date)	BUSINESS THEORY TOPIC	CRITICAL THINKING TOPIC	READ AND PREPARE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
<b>L1</b> May 4	Course Introduction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COURSE OULINE posted on Moodle</li> <li>• Dyer, chapter 1: What is Critical Thinking?</li> </ul>
<b>L2</b> May 6	Building Successful Organizations	Claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 2: Claims</li> <li>• Dyer, Appendix 1: Business Terms in the Popular Discourse</li> <li>• Chandler, A. D. (1990). The enduring logic of industrial success. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, March – April, 2-11.</li> <li>• Counter, R. (2018). How a Canadian Company Older than Confederation Has Stayed Nimble. <i>Canadian Business</i>, Aug 9. <a href="https://www.macleans.ca/economy/business/oppenheimer-group-nimble/">https://www.macleans.ca/economy/business/oppenheimer-group-nimble/</a></li> <li>• Charbonneau, O. (2016). Essential tutorials for COMM 210 Contemporary Business Thinking - <a href="#">Is Google a search engine?</a></li> </ul>
<b>L3</b> May 11	Structure, Function and Growth of Firms	Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 3: Evidence</li> <li>• Greiner, L. (1998). Evolution &amp; revolution as organizations grow. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, May-June, 3-11.</li> <li>• Lev-Ram, M. (2017). How to Manage a Bunch of Clowns: Q&amp;A with the CEO of the Cirque du Soleil. <i>Fortune</i>, February 24. <a href="https://www.f3nws.com/news/how-to-manage-a-bunch-of-clowns-q-a-with-the-ceo-of-cirque-du-soleil-vGFPmE">https://www.f3nws.com/news/how-to-manage-a-bunch-of-clowns-q-a-with-the-ceo-of-cirque-du-soleil-vGFPmE</a></li> <li>• Charbonneau, O. (2016). Essential tutorials for COMM 210 Contemporary Business Thinking - <a href="#">How to train your Google.</a></li> </ul>
<b>L4</b> May 13	Strategy, Resources and Capabilities	Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 3: Evidence</li> <li>• Barney, J. B. (1995). Looking inside for competitive advantage. <i>Academy of Management Executive</i>, 9(4), 49-61.</li> <li>• McIntyre, C. (2017). A Place to Run. <i>Macleans</i>, Sept., 50-51.</li> <li>• Charbonneau, O. (2016). Essential tutorials for COMM 210 Contemporary Business Thinking - <a href="#">What can you learn from Wikipedia?</a></li> </ul>

LECTURE (Date)	BUSINESS THEORY TOPIC	CRITICAL THINKING TOPIC	READ AND PREPARE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
<p><b>L5</b> May 20</p>	<p>Values and Vision</p>	<p>Underlying Assumptions</p>	<p><b>PROGRESS REPORT #1 DUE PRIOR TO START OF CLASS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 4: Underlying Assumptions</li> <li>• Collins, J. &amp; Porras, J. (1996). Building your company's vision. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, Sept-Oct, 65-77.</li> <li>• Goler, L., Gale, J., Harrington, B. &amp; Grant, A. (2018). The 3 Things Employees Really Want: Career, Community, Cause. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 20 February <a href="https://hbr.org/2018/02/people-want-3-things-from-work-but-most-companies-are-built-around-only-one">https://hbr.org/2018/02/people-want-3-things-from-work-but-most-companies-are-built-around-only-one</a></li> <li>• Gallo, C. (2017). How Mark Zuckerberg Effectively Communicates Facebook's New 5-Word Mission Statement. <i>Forbes</i>, 25 June <a href="https://www.forbes.com/sites/carminegallo/2017/06/25/how-mark-zuckerberg-effectively-communicates-facebooks-new-5-word-mission-statement/#237a59641377">https://www.forbes.com/sites/carminegallo/2017/06/25/how-mark-zuckerberg-effectively-communicates-facebooks-new-5-word-mission-statement/#237a59641377</a></li> <li>• Grant, A. (2019). Stop Asking Kids What They Want to Be When They Grow Up. <i>New York Times</i>, Apr 1, 2019. <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/01/smarter-living/stop-asking-kids-what-they-want-to-be-when-they-grow-up.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/01/smarter-living/stop-asking-kids-what-they-want-to-be-when-they-grow-up.html</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Charbonneau, O. (2016). Essential tutorials for COMM 210 Contemporary Business Thinking - <a href="#">Finding the best sources for your business paper.</a></b></p>
<p><b>L6</b> May 25</p>	<p>Organizational Change</p>	<p>Writing Workshop (Midterm Preparation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handy, C. (1994). The Sigmoid curve. In: <i>The age of Paradox</i>, Chapter 3, pp. 49-67. Boston: Harvard Business Press.</li> <li>• Charbonneau, O. (2016). Essential tutorials for COMM 210 Contemporary Business Thinking - <a href="#">Pro tips on bibliographies and referencing for business students.</a></li> <li>• <b>NOTE:</b> There will be a writing exercise in class based on Handy's article. You should critically read Handy's article and develop a robust understanding of his sigmoid curve concept before class.</li> </ul>
<p><b>L7</b> May 27</p>	<p><b>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</b></p>		

LECTURE (Date)	BUSINESS THEORY TOPIC	CRITICAL THINKING TOPIC	READ AND PREPARE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
<b>L8</b> June 1	Managers and Leaders	Causal Claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 5: Causal Claims</li> <li>• Hill, L. (2007). Becoming the Boss. Harvard Business Review, January. <a href="https://hbr.org/2007/01/becoming-the-boss">https://hbr.org/2007/01/becoming-the-boss</a></li> <li>• Mintzberg, H. (1990). The manager's job: Folklore and fact. Harvard Business Review, March-April, pp. 3-16.</li> <li>• Bhatia, T. (2018). Do Frequent Feedback Conversations Guarantee Employee Performance Improvement? Talent Management Excellence Essentials, July, 15. <a href="https://emptrack.com/blog/frequent-employee-performance-feedback/">https://emptrack.com/blog/frequent-employee-performance-feedback/</a></li> <li>• Sebenius, A. (2016). CEOs Behaving Badly. The Atlantic, April. <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/ceos-behaving-badly/471513/">https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/ceos-behaving-badly/471513/</a></li> </ul>
<b>L9</b> June 3	Power and Motivation	Techniques of Persuasion	<p><b>PROGRESS REPORT #2 DUE PRIOR TO START OF CLASS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 6: Techniques of Persuasion</li> <li>• French, J. R. &amp; Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In: D. Cartwright &amp; A. Zander, Group dynamics, pp. 150-166. New York: Harper &amp; Row. <a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/215915730_The_bases_of_social_power">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/215915730_The_bases_of_social_power</a></li> <li>• Herzberg, F. (1987). One more time: How do you motivate employees? Harvard Business Review, Sept-Oct, 5-16.</li> <li>• Jenkins, S. (2016). Our Fixation with Maths Doesn't Add Up. The Guardian, March 10. <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/10/fixation-maths-doesnt-add-up-targets">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/10/fixation-maths-doesnt-add-up-targets</a></li> <li>• Chu, J. &amp; Weiss, J. (2013). The Cobbler's Conundrum. Fast Company, July/August: 98-112. <a href="https://www.fastcompany.com/3012568/blake-mycoskie-toms">https://www.fastcompany.com/3012568/blake-mycoskie-toms</a></li> </ul>
<b>L10</b> June 8	Performance and Measurement	Writing an Effective Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyer, Chapter 7: Writing an Effective Essay</li> <li>• Kaplan, R. &amp; Norton, D. (2005). The balanced scorecard: Measures that drive performance. HBR, July</li> <li>• Castellanos, S. (2019). Rolls-Royce Looks to CTO to Reduce Carbon Footprint. Wall Street Journal, May 6. <a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/rolls-royce-looks-to-cto-to-reduce-carbon-footprint-11557179910">https://www.wsj.com/articles/rolls-royce-looks-to-cto-to-reduce-carbon-footprint-11557179910</a></li> </ul>

LECTURE (Date)	BUSINESS THEORY TOPIC	CRITICAL THINKING TOPIC	READ AND PREPARE FOR CLASS DISCUSSION
<b>L11</b> June 10	Leadership	Critical Thinking in Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tannenbaum, R. &amp; Schmidt, W. H. (1973). How to choose a leadership pattern. Harvard Business Review, May-June, 162-180.</li> <li>• Toller, C. (2015). The case for letting teams elect their own managers. Canadian Business, Dec 22.  <a href="https://www.canadianbusiness.com/innovation/electing-managers/">https://www.canadianbusiness.com/innovation/electing-managers/</a></li> </ul>
<b>L12</b> June 15	<b>TEAM PROJECT REPORT DUE PRIOR TO START OF CLASS</b> Review for Final Exam		
<b>L13</b> June 17	<b>Final Examination</b>		

**Note:** Changes to this document will be announced in class or posted on MOODLE. It is the student's responsibility to keep informed of what is said and done in class. Student absence **IS NOT** a valid excuse for not keeping informed.

## 9. Assessment of Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are assessed through homework and classwork assignments, quizzes, a group project, and examinations

Learning Objective \ Learning Activity	Assignments and classwork assignments	Group Project	Examinations (mid-terms and final)
<p><b>Recognize examples and counter-examples of fundamental management theories in reports of current business activities.</b></p>	<p>Class exercises and homework based on fundamental theories and business news or business press articles</p>	<p>Exploration of contemporary issues in organizations or business to find evidence supporting or challenging fundamental theories</p>	<p>Exam questions based on business press articles reporting on organizations or business</p>
<p><b>Improve thinking skills and perform critical analyses of business texts.</b></p>	<p>Evaluating the arguments presented in business press articles or popular business books</p>	<p>Gathering and analysis of secondary sources such as books, articles, and company annual reports</p>	<p>Exam questions based the critical thinking process</p>
<p><b>Construct persuasive arguments using the language of business; Write an effective persuasive essay.</b></p>	<p>In-class essay writing exercise, structured debates</p>	<p>Progress reports, oral presentation, group final report</p>	<p>Short-answers and essay exam questions</p>
<p><b>Demonstrate awareness of and interest in current business events.</b></p>	<p>In class discussions about current business illustrating fundamental theories</p>	<p>Monitoring of current news pertaining the business issues studied in the group project</p>	<p>Exam questions based on business press articles reporting on organizations or business</p>
<p><b>Demonstrate ability to work effectively in groups.</b></p>	<p>In-class group exercises and discussions</p>	<p>Group project based on the collection and analysis of evidence from a variety of primary and secondary sources</p>	<p>Group discussion in preparation for the exams</p>

## 10. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

**Plagiarism:** The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement.” This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. In simple words: Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it! (Source: <http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/plagiarism/>)

**Cheating.** You are expected to complete the midterm and final examinations on your own. Once an examination period starts, you should not discuss the examination with your classmates or anyone else until the examination period is over. With this in mind, the following are examples of cheating: forwarding any part of the examination to another person, discussing the examination with anyone else during the examination period, collaborating on examination questions, asking someone to review or edit any part of your answer(s), submitting work contributed to by someone else, contributing to another student’s answer(s), and having another person complete your answer(s). Per the Academic Code of Conduct, if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a student has not completed an examination on their own, the instructor will complete and forward an Academic Code of Conduct Incident Report to the Dean, who may decide to interview the student or transmit the report to the Academic Hearing Panel. Please note the course grade will be recorded as “pending” (PEND) until the outcome of the charge and, if applicable, the sanction(s) is(are) imposed and final. Sanctions can range from a reprimand to expulsion from the university.

**Intellectual Property:** Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities.

## 11. USEFUL LINKS

1. **Academic Advisor:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/jmsb/programs/undergraduate/bachelor/students/advising-policies/academic-advising.html>
2. **Academic Integrity:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html>
3. **Access Centre for Students with Disabilities:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/offices/acsd.html>
4. **CSU Advocacy Centre:**  
<https://www.csu.qc.ca/services/advocacy/>
5. **Counselling and Psychological Services:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/students/counselling-life-skills.html>
6. **Dean of Students Office:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/offices/dean-students.html>
7. **Financial Aid and Awards:** <http://www.concordia.ca/offices/faao.html>
8. **Health Services:** <http://www.concordia.ca/students/health.html>
9. **HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank):** <https://classifieds.csu.qc.ca>
10. **International Students Office:** <http://www.concordia.ca/students/international.html>
11. **Le Frigo vert:** <http://www.lefrigovert.com/>
12. **Library Business Research Portal:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/library/guides/business.html>
13. **Library Business Videos:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZvPUsdgzzoe9iBXud67dkRu1GKxvbei4>
14. **Library Citation and Style Guides:**  
<https://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations.html>
15. **Student Hub:** <http://www.concordia.ca/students.html>
16. **Student Parents Centre:** <http://www.concordia.ca/offices/cusp.html/>
17. **Student Success Centre:** <http://www.concordia.ca/students/success.html>
18. **Undergraduate Student Affairs Office:**  
<http://www.concordia.ca/jmsb/programs/undergraduate/bachelor/contact-us.html>