

# Collaborative Technologies for Leading Projects<sup>1</sup>

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION FOR IS440 AND PM 440<sup>2</sup>

Study of the process of virtual teaming with emphasis on facilitation of different time project activities and facilitation of same time meetings. Students will learn how small group psychology and group communication theories inform specific behaviors in the design and leadership of meetings. Several meeting types including information briefing, focus group, document writing, decision making, requirements gathering and teaching/training will be explored. In addition, the course surveys current collaboration technologies and discusses how to select among those technologies usability and fit to purpose of a meeting agenda. DL students may be required to schedule same time sessions with the instructor and other DL students; see current quarter syllabus for more information on this point.

## COURSE CONTENT AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This is a course about how people collaborate to work virtually in organizational and project settings; and this is a course about the IT tools that can be employed to facilitate virtual work. We are interested in both discrete interventions (think: meetings) and long term interventions (think: projects). We are interested in traditional face to face work (because collaboration technology can support that), and geographically distributed (virtual and tele-) work. We will look at several related topics:

This course is organized into nine modules. They are:

- Module 1: Overview from 30,000 Feet
- Module 2: Virtual Meeting Management
- Module 3: Virtual Project/Team Management
- Module 4: Cultural Impacts on Project/Team Management
- Module 5: Specifying and Selecting Collaboration Tools
- Module 6: Collaboration Engineering
- Module 7: Divergent Processes: Ideation/Brainstorming
- Module 8: Convergent Processes: Decision Making/Authoring
- Module 9: Unified Communication and Ubiquitous Collaboration
- Module 10: Adoption and Diffusion of Collaboration Practices

Technology explorations are interwoven into each of these modules as appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> A note on the course number: This course is listed both as IS 440 and PM 440. That was a political decision, not a functional decision. I will generally refer to the course as PM 440--but it is all the same thing.

<sup>2</sup> A note on IS 440 vs. PM 440: This course has two prefixes solely for political reasons that existed a decade ago. I combine everyone registered into one large pool for this course and use the prefix PM as a matter of convenience. It matters not which section you registered for.

My goal for this course is to help you develop the following list of core collaboration competencies. By the end of this course I hope to help you be competent at:

- teleworking (more<sup>3</sup>) effectively as an individual knowledge worker;
- (more) effectively managing teleworking employees;
- (more) effectively working as a member of a team;
- (more) effectively leading a meeting in a traditional setting;
- (more) effectively leading a meeting in a virtual setting;
- (better) at designing and leading specific collaborative work tasks such as brainstorming, decision making, and collaborative authoring;
- employing collaboration engineering principles to design work practice;
- working (more) effectively in a multi-cultural environment;
- knowing what tool sets exist to support virtual meetings and virtual teamwork;
- selecting among the various collaboration tools (products) that exist;
- configuring/using collaboration tool (products) to maximum advantage;
- (better) at building a business case for selecting/implementing a tool set;
- (better) at evaluating productivity of virtual workers; and
- (better) at managing the adoption/diffusion process of collaboration technologies.

*Frankly, if you feel at the end of the course you can check off a third of these boxes, this course will be well worth the tuition you pay for it.*

Toward developing these competencies, we will survey collaboration technologies with an emphasis on web2.0 and open-source technologies. Please note that this is not a coding class; it is a managerial Information Systems class where we will survey commercial technology and discuss management implementation.

So, given these competency goals, the high level course Learning Objectives are:

1. To be able to define, research, and solve unstructured problems relating to teamwork and collaboration;
2. To be able to communicate and collaborate effectively in a virtual context; and
3. To be able to coach peers, subordinates, and occasionally superiors, through effective virtual teaming and collaboration processes.
4. To develop the competencies listed above (or at least as much as we have time for);
5. To develop sufficient grounding in the underlying collaboration concepts so one is able to choose among virtual technologies **24 months from now** when a completely new generation of products (or new versions of old products) hit the marketplace (this learning goal cannot be assessed for 24 months);

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<sup>3</sup> I add the optional word “more” to these objectives as I understand many of you already do these things in the workplace. But I am confident you will do them better in eleven weeks!

## IMPORTANT RESOURCES AND URLS:

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1. This quarter we will be using Desire2Learn (D2L) as the basic CDM online course repository. [d2l.depaul.edu](http://d2l.depaul.edu) Assignment submissions, readings, discussions, videos, PowerPoint slides, and other course collateral will be distributed via D2L. You will submit your course assignment through D2L. There will be an online community accessible through D2L.
  - a. Please bookmark D2L in your regular browser as you will access it regularly.
  - b. Within the course site in D2L, **please SUBSCRIBE to course news** so that items I post as news will be sent to you. You do this from your account view (your name) in the top row of D2L. You will see you have some control over notification settings.
  - c. As we develop an online discussion community, please consider subscribing to discussion forums or threads to help you follow conversations.
2. We will make use of <http://pm440.pbworks.com> as a course wiki. This wiki contains team projects from the last several years; and you will be depositing your team project deliverables into this wiki as well.
3. D2L has a web conference tool built in to it that is available for your use. This tool, called Online Rooms, is similar to WebEx, Adobe Connect, or GoToMeeting in functionality. Simply let me know if you--or your team--wish to make use of it and I will set it up for you.
4. We may make use of other online discussion forums. As of this draft of the syllabus, I am negotiating across-course collaboration.
5. There will be a Useful Links menu item in D2L (I hope) that will provide an organized set of links for useful collaboration products (leaning heavily toward free stuff). We will be trying out several products over this course.

## NOTES ON TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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As this is a course about virtual collaboration, we are going to do a whole lot of virtual collaboration and then reflect upon this work. This means several that you should read very closely:

- **This class will be unlike any other course you've taken.** I am decidedly **NOT** working to fill your head with information via lecture and have you spit it back to me on a final exam.
  - ✓ If you approach this course as though that is the case, you will not get very much out of the course and you will probably be frustrated with me.
  - ✓ If you approach this course with an attitude of "let's see how little work I can do to get an A" you will not get very much out of the course and probably won't get the A.
- This course unfolds as an **opportunity for you to be proactive and learn about collaboration** tools and techniques, many of them in the web2.0 domain. This course is an **opportunity for you to structure your own learning** and experience. If you are reactive and passive, your

experience will not fare well: you will be frustrated and think I am a bad teacher.<sup>4</sup> If you are proactive and curious—and allow me to be more of a coach than a teacher—this can be a very rewarding experience.<sup>5</sup>

- **Your work is tightly coupled and interdependent with the work of other students in the class.**<sup>6</sup> You absolutely cannot view this as you as self-paced learning in a silo. Other students will be dependent upon you communicating with them on a regular basis and upon you getting your work done on time. If you fail to become an active member of this class's community, you get less out of the course—and your grade suffers significantly (due to the peer grading component of the course.)<sup>7</sup>
- Further, you will be required to work interdependently with virtual teammates who may not live in your town and not function on the same clock as you.<sup>8</sup> They may well be working full time and/or have a busy family. You (and they) have to figure out how to work among these constraints to get your tasks completed. **While this is not exactly the same as real life – it is a lot like real life:** much of the conflict and barriers are similar. This is hard; and this is intentional. You get to reflect on all of it several times during the course. Hopefully the reflection will guide some of your learning.

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps I am a bad teacher; it is still **your** responsibility to create your own learning goals and achieve them.

<sup>5</sup> Case in point: if you aren't reading this document carefully because you think reading the syllabus is a waste of time, you are already in trouble in this course (you just don't know it.)

<sup>6</sup> Yes, I am repeating this.

<sup>7</sup> I've taught variations of this course for 17 years and last summer--for the first time--I had a student team peer grade one teammate with a zero. It didn't matter what grade I gave; my grade times zero is zero. But that situation was an outlier.

<sup>8</sup> We usually have a several students who live outside of Illinois. Other students may be on extended business assignments, in the military, or otherwise outside our time zone. As I look at the roster on April 1, we have 9 students who list a Chicago area address, two in MA, and one each in OH, MO, WA, NC, GA,CA, and AZ (the last of whom likely shares my angst of the University of Arizona losing its basketball game last Saturday.)

## THE COURSE INSTRUCTOR

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**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/dmittleman](http://www.facebook.com/dmittleman)

### *How best to reach me?*

**Discussion Forum:** If you have a question for which my answer might have general interest, it is probably best that you ask it on a course forum or discussion board so my answer can be seen by all. If you want to make sure I know right away the question is out there, you might text me to clue me in to look.

**Email:** I am usually pretty good about responding to email, but I need to tell you that each of the last two quarters around week seven I hit a threshold and just couldn't keep up with everything coming in.

**Telephone:** I've found as I've gotten older that I'm much less of a phone person. My office phone is less preferred by me than text communication. And my Skype line is more preferred over my office phone (as I have headsets for Skype but not the DePaul number AND Skype permits you to send me a chat message if I don't answer the call.)

**Virtual Office Hours:** I will hold a virtual office hours 3pm on Thursdays, and am available after class on Mondays (with some advance notice). ***I am also very happy to schedule a custom meeting time*** (either face to face or virtually) with any individual or team in the course should the regular hours we determine not be convenient for you. Send me email (or Skype text) if you would like to do this.

### *What are my qualifications to teach this class?*

- I created this course at DePaul in the Spring of 1998 (when there was nothing similar being offered almost anywhere.) I've evolved and taught this course more than 30 times over the past 20 years;
- I am a professional meeting facilitator (one of the founding members of the ***International Association of Facilitators***) and have led somewhere over 700 meetings over the past 27 years;

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<sup>9</sup> Voicemail at my office is not optimal as I may not see it for a while. But if you leave voicemail, know that the system has voice recognition and will try to transcribe what you said to text (which gets sent to my email). So talk slowly and clearly, especially your name as the software scrambles names very badly.

<sup>10</sup> My policy about friending students on LinkedIn and Facebook is that I won't initiate it, but will accept if you initiate. I tend to use LinkedIn for professional contacts only, and Facebook is a hodge podge of everyone from former students, to grade school friends, to people I have no idea who they are, to my mother, to the President of Yale, and a lot of other assorted people. Managing our virtual identities is an "on topic" subject for this course.

- I have consulted with several Fortune 500 corporations and several Federal government agencies on material relating to this course;
- I have designed and built collaboration software;
- I have planned and designed several war rooms for the US Department of Defense, and several “smart” classrooms;
- I have published over 50 journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers on topics related to this course.

### TEXT AND READINGS:

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There is no text this quarter, at least none in the bookstore. Reading materials will be made available to you or accessible online.

There will be several reading assignments assigned each module from the web or PDF files. The amount of reading will vary by module, but it will almost certainly be more than you are accustomed to doing in a DePaul CDM course.

There will also be some video viewing, again provided to you or available on the web.

There will be a discussion forum we will use for discussion about the readings and the content of the modules. Active participation in this discussion community is expected and constitutes a significant portion of your course grade.

There are some documents you will find on D2L you will want to read:

- Team Project Guidelines
- 321 Assignment Guidelines
- Discussion Forum Guidelines
- Reflection Essay Guidelines

If you can't find a document, [ask](#).

### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

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#### 1. **Participation/Online Discussion. [10 percent of the course grade]**

You are expected to be a regular, active, and vital participant in the PM 440 online community. The reasons for this are multi-fold:

- a. While not all of you are online students, learning about online communication--and exercising online communication skills--are learning goals for the course;
- b. The online discussion community integrates online students with classroom students; classroom students help provide critical mass for effective engagement;

- c. The online discussion community enables you to **explore** course materials in greater depth, **coach** each other on points that are problematic for some, and **bring in external resources and experiences** as they inform the conversation;
- d. The online discussion community enables me to integrate current events topics into course material as appropriate;
- e. This community provides you with **experience at engaging in a community of practice** discussion; My experience from previous 440 classes is that while some of you do this all the time, many of you have rarely--if ever--posted to a blog, and many just aren't comfortable with the concept; my goal here is to ramp you up to a high level of comfort with virtual discussion technologies.

How discussion gets graded...

- a. I am looking for timely contributions, rather than someone joining a conversation at the very end just to get their ticket stamped that they were there. Timely contributions make you part of the conversation; end of conversation "me too" comments don't.
  - b. I am looking for helpful, insightful comments and move the conversation forward. You don't have to be an expert on everything (or anything). If you don't have answers, you can always ask intelligent questions.
  - c. I am looking for inclusion of additional resources and information beyond what the class has to start the conversation.
  - d. I am looking for regular participation, recognizing that not everyone is going to speak in every conversation.
  - e. There is opportunity on every discussion thread for you to offer "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" to a post or comment. I am looking to you to help me evaluate which contributions are most helpful to your own learning.
2. **321 Submissions. [20 percent of the course grade]**
- a. This is a short writing assignment associated with several modules of the course.
  - b. Each module has a reading/viewing assignment. After you do the intake (reading/viewing), you are asked to submit a short document (called a 321) that consists of:
    - Three (3) key issues raised by the reading
    - Two (2) questions you have about the reading
    - One (1) question you would like to ask the author to extend your understanding about the subject beyond what the reading covered
  - c. I have written a document about 321 providing more guidance for you than what is provided here. That document is on D2L in Course Documents.
  - d. These are to be submitted on deadline as the material will get discussed on the discussion boards. **321's will not be accepted late** (as the material will have already been discussed).

- e. There will be an online discussion set up for each Module where the contents of 321 and be discussed further. Access to that discussion forum is triggered by submission of the 321 document (which means, even if late, you will want to submit something to the Dropbox to trigger access to the discussion.)
  - f. 321's will be graded very simply: They are out of 6 points as you either did or didn't make the six points required. I will not take time to provide detailed feedback about these submissions.
  - g. Your lowest 321 score for the quarter will be dropped from your final course grade calculation.
- 3. Team Projects. [50 percent of your course grade]**
- a. There will be three fairly short (tightly time constrained) team projects in the course. The objective is to provide you with the opportunity to try out teaming skills you are learning about, and reflect upon what went well and what did not.
  - b. I will assign team membership. You may have different teammates each project.
  - c. I will grade the deliverable each team produces; you will peer grade each other (anonymously). You will write an individual reflection about the team process.
  - d. More project information will be provided next week. There will be a team project guidance document on D2L.
- 5. Final Exam / Reflection [20 percent of your course grade]**
- a. There will be a final exam given during the eleventh week of the course. You will be asked to answer 2 out of N (N being a number around 6 or so) essay questions. You will have a couple of days window to do this, due on November 19.
  - b. The purpose of the exam is to help you to integrate reading material from different modules of the course, to exercise the skills you have learned, and to give you more incentive than the 321 reports to stay current with your reading.
- 4. Course Reflection Essay [See Exam Above]**
- a. Students are required to submit a reflection about the course and, in particular, the virtual team project experience. This essay is due on November 19. The Reflection Essay will be incorporated into the final exam submission this quarter.
  - b. In short, you are invited to reflect on your virtual teaming experience, in particular on what went right and wrong; how you would approach the team project if you had it to do again; and how you might use the lessons from the class to improve your work on future virtual teams, and in real work in the workplace. Focus might be on your own behaviors and decisions more so than those of your teammates.
  - c. Detailed guidance is provided in D2L.

### INCOMPLETE AND FX GRADES:

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Grades of Incomplete are given only in cases of medical emergency or other highly unusual emergency situations. Please note that University guidelines require that you must be earning a passing grade at the time you request an incomplete grade. You should have completed most of the course, with at most one or two major forms of evaluation missing. Incompletes revert to an F if they are not resolved within one quarter. DePaul CDM policy also is that all incompletes must be requested by the student using an online form. See CDM grading policies at

<http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

I strongly discourage incompletes in this course as it is impossible to make up the team activities of the course after the fact working on your own.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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University policies on academic integrity will be strictly adhered to. Violations of academic integrity, including (but not limited to): cheating; plagiarism; fabrication of data; and complicity, are not tolerated. It is expected and understood you are familiar with DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy, at:

<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/AcademicIntegrityPolicy.pdf>, which defines the terms used above and provides a complete statement about the rules. Consult the Academic Integrity website for further guidance: <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>

### CHANGES TO SYLLABUS

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This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If that occurs, reasons for the change and options available to students will be thoroughly addressed on the course D2L site. Changes are not made lightly as this syllabus is considered a contract between instructor and student.