

PSY 806 Consulting Roles and Professional Development

Instructor

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Office Hours: Friday, 1 – 2 or by appointment Office

Zoom:

Meeting ID: Passcode:

Course Description

This course examines the roles of internal and external consultants and the knowledge, skills and perspectives needed to effectively help improve organizational systems in the workplace. As noted by Peter Block in his book on *Flawless Consultant* – anyone in a support role leading to making recommendations or giving advice is taking a consultant role. One process issue with a helper role is the importance of inquiry. The course provides multiple frameworks that can be adopted and used when addressing organizational issues, concerns, and opportunities in order to move to recommendations or actions. This includes the use of tools that consultants can use when working with teams to improve team effectiveness. The course ends with an examination of consultant values and ethical dilemmas that consultants can face when addressing work related issues.

Course Objectives

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

1. Articulate the three fundamentally different kinds of consulting/helping roles one may take
2. Apply principles underlying a process consultation approach to one's own work situation/cases
3. Use the concepts of active and humble inquiry to establish a stronger helper relationships at work
4. Articulate the value of multiple frameworks that consultants can apply for understanding work related issues and underlying psychological and social processes
5. Relate the types of ethical issues and dilemmas that consultants can face to ways of addressing those situations

Course Materials

P.. Block 2023). *Flawless Consulting* (4th Edition) (Recommended for your book portfolio but not required as chapters can be accessed through MSU Library)

Weekly assigned articles (see schedule)

Time Zones

All times and due dates listed in this syllabus are for Eastern Time. If you are taking this course in a different time zone, you will want to be aware of this and change your time zone to Eastern Time so that you don't miss any due dates/times.

Course Credit Hours

2

Course Website: D2L

This offering of PSY806 will be held entirely online through the Desire 2 Learn (D2L) course management system (<https://d2l.msu.edu/>). All lectures, discussion posts, and assignments will be administered online on D2L. Due to the online nature of this class, you will need to have a high-quality computer with consistent access to a high-speed internet connection. **You need to have access to high-speed internet when all of the course assignments are due.** If your internet connection is down when you need to turn in a homework assignment or take a quiz, it is your responsibility to get access to the internet ASAP!

Please follow these suggestions to prevent problems during your participation in this course:

1. Use a recommended browser, like Chrome or Firefox.
2. Clear your cache and cookies before starting a quiz, homework assignment, or test/exam.
3. Have D2L open only to the quiz/homework/test/exam browser. If you have the course open in a second browser then you may have guest status in the exam browser and be logged in with your NETID in the other. Your quiz could end up with blank sections even after you enter data or it can skip questions.

Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem, you can:

- Visit the Distance Learning Services Support Site at <https://lib.msu.edu/dls/>
- Visit the Desire2Learn Help Site at <http://help.d2l.msu.edu/>
- Or call Distance Learning Services (D2L Help Line) at (800) 500-1554 or (517) 355-2345
- If you experience other technological issues, including D2L outside of business hours EST, call the MSU Help Line at (844) 678-6200 or (517) 432-6200. Help is available 24 hours / 7 days a week! The help line can also help troubleshoot issues with your computer. **Time differences will not be an acceptable excuse for not reporting problems to the help line; they are available 24/7 throughout the course.**

Many professors and instructors have found the Help Line very useful. It is my recommendation to take advantage of the Help Line or MSU Help Line before emailing me with any questions or concerns about D2L or other technical issues.

Course Components

The course will consist of the following components and activities: (1) Online short lectures or videos; (2) Weekly discussion post and reactions; (3) Weekly live session; and (4) Weekly paper assignment.

Course Grading

Assignments	Number	Points each	Total points
Discussion post	5	25	125 points
Discussion reactions	10	7.5	75 points
Weekly Paper Assignment	5	100	500 points
Total			700 points

Final Course Grade Scale (based on a percentage system)

Percentage	Points	Grade
90–100	630 – 700	4.0
85–89.9	595 – 629	3.5
80–84.9	560 – 594	3.0
75–79.9	525 - 559	2.5
70–74.9	490 – 524	2.0
60–69.9	420 - 489	1.0
Below 60	419 or below	0.0

Make-up Policy

All assignments, quizzes, and posts must be completed when scheduled. Please contact me to seek permission for an alternative due date prior to when the assignment is due. I will work with you to help you continue to make progress in the class.

Course Schedule

Week 1: The Role of an Organizational Consultant

Key Topics

- Defining consulting and internal and external consultant roles
- Key consulting skills and competencies
- Different kinds of consulting/helper approaches
- Principles underlying a process consultation approach

Required Readings

Schein, E. Process consultation revisited: Building the helping relationship, Chapter 1
Block, P. Flawless consulting. Chapters 1, 2 & 9

Dal, D.(2025). 11 Core consulting skills to meet client expectations in 2025
Alerting Clients to Risk Case

Online lectures/Videos:

- Introduction to Week 1
- Schein on Process Consultation
- Introduction to Facilitating Organizational Change
- Step 1: Creating a sense of Urgency

Live Lecture (also online): Helping Principles

Discussion posts (I encourage you to provide your post no later than Friday so people can respond to your post and you can begin to respond to other posts):

Important consulting skills were identified in three different sources this week - the article by Pal, the You Tube video on consulting skills, and Block's overview of consulting skills (Figure 1.1; p 7): What two consulting skills have the most value for you in continually improving for your current work or future career directions and why do you see that the two skills have value for you.

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. Your responses can focus on any directions, as long as they link back to the materials that we covered this week.

Weekly Assignment (due Sunday at 11:59 PM EST):

COMPLETE TWO of the following three reflection questions. Pick the two that you think would be better for you to reflect on for this week: The two questions are worth 50 points each leading to 100 points total (if you do three only the first two you do would be graded!!).

1. Think back over the last month and identify three instances of someone (at work, home, friend etc.) asking for your help or advice. Reconstruct the conversations in your mind and identify what role you took in response to the requests for help or advice. What did the person want and how did you respond – related to one of the three models of consultation from Schein of expert, doctor, or process consultant in those three instances (15 points). Describe whether the roles you took were “helpful” (see Schein’s principles) or not and why you have come to that conclusion (15 points). Reflecting on the roles you seem to take naturally and spontaneously when someone seeks your help, what would you need to do to take on more of a process consultation role when asked for help? (20 points)
2. Use your current work project or a recent one and describe (as noted by Block page 122) “the key wants you have of your boss” relative to that project (15 points). Then describe what you see are the key wants of your boss for this project (15 points). What does this analysis of wants tell you about what needs to be done to balance your needs and the wants of your boss? (20 points)

3. Schein describes five principles of building a helping relationship. Which principles do you find as most eye-opening for you (new eyes!). Define the principle that is most eye-opening to you and tell why you think this is a valuable principle to aspire to meet? (15 points). What are your strengths and weaknesses relevant to that principle? (15 points). What do you need to do to better meet that principle of helping (20 points).

Week 2: Active and Humble Inquiry

Key Topics:

- Types of inquiry and the power of questions
- The affective side of consulting
- Being authentic as a consultant
- Phases of project work

Required Readings:

Schein, E. Helping: How to offer, give, and receive help. Chapter 5 – Humble Inquiry.

Block, P. Flawless consulting. Chapter 3, 4

Brooks, A.W. & John, L.K. (2018). The surprising power of questions. Harvard Business Review

Online lectures/Videos:

- The Power of Questions pod cast
- Schein and Use of Examples
- Step 2: Building a Guiding Coalition
- Step 3: Forming a Strategic Vision
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Live Lecture (also online): Data to knowledge to action

Discussion posts:

As noted in your readings, conversational goals matter relevant to desired outcomes such as information exchange, learning, interpersonal bonding, and impression management. Describe a conversational goal you have recently had at work and discuss what type of inquiry fits that goal and how well did you do in meeting that conversational goal

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. Your responses can focus on any directions, as long as they link back to the materials that we covered this week. In particular, you might want to describe strategies that you have employed to hone your questioning skills.

Weekly Paper Assignment due Sunday at 11:59PM EST

Complete BOTH of the following questions:

1. To what extent do you see value in incorporating the affective side of the client-consultant relationship rather than a focus on the technical side as you are working on a project (25

points)? How can you grow more skilled in putting your sense of the relationship into words and action where you are seen as authentic while not increasing defensiveness on the part of the client (25 points)

2. Take a current (or recent) project you have been asked to work on and complete the checklist #1 in the Flawless Consulting book chapter on assessing the balance of responsibility (25 points). Analyze your own data and discuss how you might restructure the project (or your next one) to take full advantage of using client involvement to increase your chances of success (25 points).

Week 3: Frameworks for Understanding Organizations

Key Topics

- Four frames for understanding issues in the workplace
- Understanding resistance
- Dealing with resistance to change
- Analysis of a case using the four frames

Required Readings

Howard, C., Longue, K., Quimby, M., & Schoeneberg, J. (2009). Framing change. OD Practitioner. Block, P. Flawless consulting, Chapter 10, 11

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. Reframing organizations. Case: Borman and Deal: Bringing it all Together

Online lectures/Videos:

- Kotter Resistance to Change
- Step 4 – Enlisting Volunteers
- Step 5 – Enabling Action and Removing Barriers
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Live Lecture (also online): Multiple Frameworks and Approaches Revisited

Discussion post:

“Resistance is a necessary part of the learning process” (page 127 Block). Agree or disagree with this statement and give your rationale. What is ONE face of resistance you have seen or had to deal with when working on a project in your job (pages 128 -135; and pages 148-150)?

Weekly Paper Assignment due Sunday at 11:59PM EST

Briefly describe a problem/project that you have been part of that ran into challenges (10 Points). Use the four frames to understand the issue and create a table like Exhibit 20.1 in the Borman and Deal case writeup (40 points). Pick the frame that you think is most likely a good place to start and explain what is going on and what the best option is (would be) and why (30 points). What do you see as the strengths (2 strengths) and limitations (2 limitations) of using this framing approach to understand underlying issues of your case and moving to implementation of strategies to address the issues (20 points)

Week 4: Factors Impacting Team Effectiveness

Key Topics

- When is a team a team
- Drivers of team effectiveness
- Models of team processes
- Making meetings more productive

Required Readings

Tannenbaum and Salas Teams that Work, chapters 1, 3, 14. Appendices Tool C, D and E

Rogelberg, S. (2019). Why your meetings stink and what to do about it. Harvard Business Review

Online lectures/Videos:

- Psychology In Action
- Step 6 – Generating Short Term Wins
- Step 7 – Sustaining Acceleration

Live Lecture (also online): Team Observations and Possible Interventions

Discussion posts:

Reflect on meetings you have attended recently. Briefly describe a meeting that was not run effectively and describe what could have been done to improve the meeting OR describe a meeting that WAS run effectively and describe what was done that led to an effective meeting.

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. Your responses can focus on any direction, as long as they link back to the materials that we covered this week.

Weekly Paper Assignment due Sunday at 11:59PM EST

Imagine you have been called in to help a team that is struggling to be effective (assume we are talking about a team requiring fairly high levels of interdependency and shared objectives not a pseudo team!). You want to identify what is going on with the team to understand why it is not as effective as it needs to be so you can help determine an intervention to help the team improve. Describe one strength and one weakness of EACH of the following three approaches to understanding team issues: (1) Tannenbaum and Salas 7 drivers of team effectiveness; (2) Schein's team observation model; or (3) the Team Performance Model (50 points). Which model or approach to understanding and identifying team effectiveness issues would you most likely use and why? (50 points)

Week 5: Positive Framing and Ethical Dilemmas

Key Topics

- Appreciative inquiry and discovery
- Labeling typical ethical dilemmas
- Strategies and approaches when dealing with ethical issues in the workplace

Required Readings

Lefkowitz, J. (2021). Forms of ethical dilemmas in industrial-organizational psychology: Industrial and Organizational Psychology” Perspectives on Science and Practice, 14(3), 297-319.

Block, P. Flawless consulting Chapter 15 Discovering Gifts, Capacities, and Acting on What we Know Chapter 15:

Bushe, G. Appreciative inquiry is not about the positive. OD Practitioner 39.4 (2007): 33-38.

Confidentiality at What Prince Case

Online lectures/Videos:

- Appreciative inquiry Cooperrider
- Step 8 – Institutionalizing Change
- Recap and Final Thoughts on Facilitating Change

Live Lecture (also online): Ethical decision making

Discussion posts:

What is your perspective as to the value of identifying problems versus discovering gifts (e.g., appreciative inquiry (e.g., do you agree that the focus on problems is pursuing a path of diminishing returns or that the focus on gifts ignores underlying issues that need to be identified in order to resolve them)?

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts.

Weekly Paper Assignment due Sunday at 11:59PM EST

Use the framework from Lefkowitz and identify an ethical dilemma that you have faced or observed. Describe your role in the situation (e.g., “I was the person actually faced with the ethical issue, I observed the situation but was not involved etc.) (10 points). Then describe the situation and label it (see Table 3 in Lefkowitz) (30 points). Then explain why you view this situation as “ethical” in nature and

what led to a successful or unsuccessful conclusion of this situation (30 points)? Describe two lessons learned for you from this analysis of this ethical case (30 points).

University Policies and Guidelines

Limits to Confidentiality

Essays, discussion posts, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the MSU Police Department) if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Inclusive Environment

MSU is committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive community in which students, faculty, and staff can work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination. The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) reviews concerns related to discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, national origin, religion, disability status, and any other protected categories under the University Anti-Discrimination Policy (https://www.hr.msu.edu/policiesprocedures/university-wide/ADP_policy.html) and Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (<https://civilrights.msu.edu/policies/rvsm.html>). If you experience or witness acts of bias, discrimination, or harassment, please report these to OIE: <http://oie.msu.edu/>.

Religious Holiday

The official university policy is as follows:

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

As Michigan State University has become increasingly multicultural, the incidence of conflicts between mandatory academic requirements and religious observances has increased. In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, the claim of a religious conflict should be accepted at face value. Be aware that some degrees of observance may have a more extensive period of observance. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of requests by any one student. Some

instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. If this is meant to extend to religious observances, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine the content of the exams and the conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

Misconduct

Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in failure of the course.

The official university policy is as follows:

The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

- 1. claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.*
- 2. procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.*
- 3. complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.*
- 4. allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.*
- 5. alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.*
- 6. fabricate or falsify data or results.*

Disruptive Behavior

Article 2.III.B.4 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 of the SRR states that "The student and the faculty share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility." General Student Regulation 5.02 states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action."

Incomplete Policy

The official university policy is as follows:

The I-Incomplete may be given only when: the student (a) has completed at least 6/7 of the term of instruction, but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reason; and (b) has done satisfactory work in the course; and (c) in the instructor's judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course.

Provided these conditions are met, the instructor electing to give an I-Incomplete files an Agreement for Completion of (I) Incomplete at the time course grades are due. This agreement specifies what the student must do, and when, to remove the I-Incomplete. The department or school office gives a copy to the student, and retains a copy for at least one year.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by

contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me **at the start of the term and/or one week prior to the accommodation date** (test, project, etc.). Requests received without sufficient lead time will not be honored.

Attendance

Attendance to the live lecture session is not mandatory but strongly encouraged. The live lecture will be recorded so if you have a conflict, you can still watch the recorded session. You are expected to be aware of any changes to the course schedule and dates when assignments are due. Communication will occur via your MSU email and through D2L course announcement.

Generative AI policy

MSU has general recommendations for use of generative AI tools (<https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/generative-ai/>) and allows faculty members to set our own policy regarding the use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools for coursework. For this course, please note that students are expected to generate your own work, particularly in terms of the content. If you use ChatGPT or other generative AI tools to edit, change, rephrase, or expand your work, you must make it clear by providing a description of what tool was used, how you used the tool, and how it changed the document or discussion posts that you submit for grading.