

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS AND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

JULY 2025

Any general questions for the Summer School support team? Contact amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl.



Course Details

Title	Introduction to Business and International Management
Coordinator(s)	Dr. Oli Mihalache & Dr. Emilia Bunea
Other lecturers	
Form(s) of tuition	On campus
Approximate contact hours	45
Approximate self-study hours	39

Teaching staff (in order of appearance)

Dr. Oli Mihalache

Dr. Emilia Bunea

Course description

Business shapes nearly every aspect of our daily lives, making a foundational understanding of core business concepts valuable for professionals across all career paths. You'll gain insights into each functional area of business, including marketing, finance, human resources, operations, and strategy, within both local and international contexts. This course introduces you to essential business principles—how companies are structured, how effective teams operate, how products are marketed, and how a firm's financial health is evaluated. By exploring these fundamentals, you'll build a versatile toolbox to successfully navigate and thrive in any professional environment.

Building on these fundamentals, the course places a strong emphasis on leadership development. You will discover how to motivate and guide multicultural teams, harness emotional intelligence, and employ storytelling and debate to influence stakeholders. By engaging with real-world leadership challenges, you'll cultivate ethical, transformational, and adaptive leadership practices that prepare you to lead with confidence in diverse organizational settings.

This interactive course teaches students the basics business, through simulations, games, movies, and in-class team assignments. The course will address the following topics:

- How to structure a business
- The functional aspects of business: marketing, finance, human resources, operations, strategy
- Leadership: How to motivate, lead, and work in a (multicultural) team.
- Business management across borders
- Understanding the global business environment

Learning objectives

After completing the course, you will be able to:

- Discuss the differences and relationships between different areas of a business.
- Solve practical business problems (e.g., how to organise a business, lead (multicultural) employees, market a product at home and abroad, and assess the financial health of a company).
- Understand the foundations of leadership
- Have developed your self-reflection, emotional intelligence, influencing, presentation, debating, and storytelling skills.

Assignments and Assessment

Written exam (end of week 1) – multiple choice (40%)

Individual Reflection video-journal (week 2) (20%)

Team assignment (end of week 2) (20%)

Participation (attendance and engagement) (20%)

Notes:

- Minimum passing grade: 5.5
- Students must get at least a 5 on each course component to pass the course.
- Students cannot miss more than 2 classes to pass the course.

The Individual Reflection video-journal. Students will be asked to record a one-minute video of themselves after class on Days 6-9 of the course, reflecting on their learning in class. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of what was taught during the day, nor to repeat what is on the handout slides, but rather your own thoughts on one or maximum two leadership concepts that arose in class, that especially caught your attention and maybe made you see things in a different light.

The reflection video-journal is an important tool in consolidating and deepening your learning, as well as good practice for the key leadership skills of reflection and self-reflection.

Final team assignment. The final team assignment consists of writing a leadership case and moderating the corresponding case discussion in class. The case should be based on a real-life situation (e.g. from the experience of one of the students or from public events). Students will work in small teams to write the case, including questions to be discussed in class, and will then moderate the case discussion.

Provisional reading list

The course readings include a textbook that needs to be purchased.

Textbook:

Courtland L. Bovee; John V. Thill . Business in Action, Global Edition 9th Edition. Pearson.

Print ISBN: 9781292330969, 1292330961

eText ISBN: 9781292330945

Article

“Five leadership lessons we’ve learned from the movies...all wrong”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/to-manage-is-human/202311/5-leadership-lessons-we-learned-from-the-moviesall-wrong>

Make sure to secure access to the textbook prior to the beginning of the course!!!

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Preparation
Week 1		
Monday (10:00-13:00)	The basics of Business	Read textbook chapters: 1. Developing a Business Mindset 5. Forms of Ownership 4. Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility
Tuesday (10:00-13:00)	Human Resource Management & Finance	Read textbook chapters: 7. Management Roles, Functions, and Skills 8. Organization and Teamwork 15. Financial Information and Accounting Concepts 16. Financial Management and Financial Markets
Wednesday (9:30-11:30)	International Management	
Thursday (10:00-13:00)	Marketing	Read textbook chapters: 12. The Art and Science of Marketing 13. Product Management and Pricing Strategies 14. Customer Communication and Product Distribution
Friday (10:00-13:00)	Exam & Start-up Challenge	Read textbook chapters: 6. Entrepreneurship and Small-Business Ownership
Week 2		

Monday (10:00-13:00)	Introduction to business leadership. Storytelling in leadership. Transformational Leadership. Cine-case discussion & debate (part 1)	Recap through Week 1 slides Record reflection video-journal.
Tuesday (10:00-13:00)	Understanding and using power. Leading across cultures. Cine-case discussion & debate (part 2).	Read and reflect on the prior day's slides and additional readings provided in class. Record reflection video-journal.
Wednesday (9:30-11:30)	Presentation skills – lecture and practice. Cine-case discussion & debate (part 3).	Read and reflect on the prior day's slides and additional readings provided in class. Record reflection video-journal.
Thursday (10:00-13:00)	Emotional intelligence and influencing skills in international organizations– lecture & roleplays. Student-led case discussions.	Read and reflect on the prior day's slides and additional readings provided in class. Record reflection video-journal.
Friday (10:00-13:00)	Student-led case discussions. Conclusions, takeaways.	Read and reflect on the prior day's slides and additional readings provided in class.

