

Introduction to Leadership and Organizational Behavior. *A Global Perspective.*

SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

6-17 July 2026



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

Course Details

Title	Fundamentals of Leadership and Organizational Behavior: A Global Perspective.
Coordinator(s)	Emilia Bunea
Other lecturers	
Form(s) of tuition	On campus
Approximate contact hours	45
Approximate self-study hours	39

Teaching staff

Dr. Emilia Bunea (course coordinator) is a leadership educator and researcher, as well as co-founder and CEO of Ed.movie, a California-based company aiming to make education irresistible. Dr. Bunea previously served in senior roles at large financial corporations, most recently as CEO of an organization with 2 million customers, and currently serves on the board of directors of an asset management company. She received her Ph.D. in Management from VU Amsterdam and an MBA from University of Washington. She lectures on leadership at business schools and companies around the world. Her research was published in Corporate Governance: An International Review, Human Resource Management Review, Academy of Management Proceedings, and others and shared through outlets such as Harvard Business Review, Le Monde and Psychology Today. Her TED talk at London Business School received wide acclaim.

Course description

Every organization (whether a startup, a multinational corporation, or a public institution) depends on people. Yet people are not always predictable. Why do some employees stay engaged while others quietly disengage? Why do teams either collaborate seamlessly or fall into dysfunction? And how do leaders influence these outcomes?

Organizational Behavior is the academic discipline that seeks to answer such questions. It draws on insights from psychology, sociology, and management to understand how individuals and groups act within organizations. Leadership, meanwhile, is the practice of influencing others to achieve shared goals. While not all leaders are managers, effective managers must develop leadership skills to navigate the informal dynamics that shape real organizational outcomes.

Understanding OB and leadership is especially important in today's globalized world.

Leaders increasingly work across cultures, manage hybrid teams, and deal with shifting expectations around ethics, inclusion, and change. This course helps students build both a

theoretical foundation and a practical toolkit to understand and shape behavior in such environments.

What Will You Learn?

The course follows the structure and key themes of Organizational Behavior by Robbins & Judge – one of the most widely used OB textbooks in universities around the world. Students will explore topics across three levels of analysis: the individual, the team, and the organization. By the end of the course, students will be able to explain key OB theories, apply leadership concepts in multicultural settings, and diagnose behavioral challenges in organizational life.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Explain Key OB Concepts: Demonstrate understanding of fundamental theories and concepts in organizational behavior at the individual, group, and organizational levels (e.g. personality, motivation, team dynamics, organizational culture. This includes understanding major leadership theories and models and their applications in various contexts.
- Apply Critical Thinking to OB Problems: Analyze organizational scenarios using OB theories to diagnose issues and propose evidence-based solutions. Students will practice critical thinking to address problems related to motivation, communication, leadership, etc., in diverse business situations
- Demonstrate Leadership and Team Skills: Practice effective communication, conflict resolution, and collaboration through group activities, role-plays, and a team project. Apply interpersonal skills in team-based settings to enhance your leadership capacity in real-world organizational contexts.
- Evaluate Leadership Across Cultures: Analyze how cultural values and global contexts shape leadership behavior and organizational dynamics. - Compare management practices across cultures to assess when and how leadership styles or motivational strategies should be adapted.

Assignments and Assessment

After each lecturing session, students will receive the day's slides and (if applicable) supporting documents/information.

Grading

Students' final grade for this course will be calculated as follows:

1. **Final Exam (50%)** – A written exam testing students' understanding of key theories and their ability to apply them to novel scenarios.
2. **Daily Reflection Journal (30%)** – Students submit brief (one minute video recording) reflections after each session, fostering self-awareness and reinforcing learning.
3. **Group Project (20%)** – Teams of 3–4 students analyze a real or fictional organization using OB and leadership concepts, presenting their findings on the final day.

Final Exam. The final exam will take place on the last day of the course, for 1 hour (net time). The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions testing foundational knowledge as well as application of concepts learned.

The Daily Reflection video-journal. Students will be asked to record a one-minute video of themselves after each day's course session (except for the last two days 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 (whether in teaching, case discussion/debate or simulations) 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.

Deadlines: Each daily reflection journal should be submitted before 9pm of the day being reflected upon. Assignments submitted later on will be considered as missing. If students missed a day's class, they cannot submit the corresponding reflection journal.

Group Project. The group project consists of writing a case relevant to organizational behavior 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 minimum three questions to be discussed in class, and will then moderate the case discussion. Detailed instructions on this assignment will be provided in the first week of the program.

Deadlines: The team should submit the written case and questions before 9pm on the day prior to presentation of the case in class.

Preparation and reading/watching list

Mandatory

1. Take the Big 5 Personality Questionnaire at <https://aidaform.com/templates/big-five-personality-test-ipip-neo.html> Save your results.
2. Read the case “Clara Banu at Crossroads Life” (A) – will be uploaded on the course site 10 days prior to the course. Reflect on, and be prepared to discuss, the questions included.

Optional

3. Emilia Bunea, “Why leaders should take their leisure seriously”
https://www.ted.com/talks/emilia_bunea_why_leaders_should_take_their_leisure_seriously_jan_2019
4. Bunea, “5 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>

Course Schedule

Monday 8 July, 10:00-13:00

Course introduction. What is Organizational Behavior (OB)? Leadership and OB.
Individual Differences – Personality, Values and Diversity.
Creativity Exercise.

Tuesday 9 July , 10:00-13:00

Introduction to the Crossroads cinematic case.
Attitudes, job satisfaction, and emotion and cultural variations. Country culture.

Wednesday 10 July, 09:30-11:30

Perception and individual decision making. “The Gator and the Judge”: Dual systems theory.
Seven Influencing Strategies – Part 1. Roleplays.
Understanding employee motivation.

Thursday 11 July, 10:00-13:00

Group behavior and team dynamics. What makes an effective team?
Seven Influencing Strategies – Part 2. Roleplays.

Friday 12 July, 10:00-13:00

Communication and conflict management in global teams.
Seven Influencing Strategies – Part 3. Roleplays.

Monday 15 July, 10:00-13:00

What is “Leadership”? Evolution of leadership theories. Leadership styles, from charismatic to authentic, ethical, humble, and servant leadership. Full-range leadership as the “root” style. Culturally endorsed leadership attributes.

Tuesday 16 July 10:00-13:00

Organizational structure and power dynamics. Politics and political skill.
Organizational culture. Leading change.

Wednesday 17 July, 09:30-11.30

Organizational leadership in the age of AI. AI as a framework, as a co-worker, and as a leader.

Thursday 18 July, 10:00-13:00

Group Project: Student-led case discussions. Present, discuss, debrief.

Friday, 19 July, 10:00-13:00

Final exam.
Workshop: Presentation skills.
Conclusions, takeaways.

