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BMIS 479.01: Consulting

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Course Information

Dates:	Monday August 30 th – Wednesday December 8 th (instruction)
Times:	12:30 pm – 1:50 pm (MST)
Venue:	L09
	There are TWO Moodle sections: 1) Consulting Common Area which is for ME to provide information to YOU 2) Consulting Assignment Area which is for YOU to provide assignments to ME

Professor Information

Professor:	Dr. David Firth
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Web Site:	http://www.business.umt.edu/faculty/firth
Phone:	(406) 243-5979
Office:	Gallagher Business Building 360
Office Hours:	Mon/Wed 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Or by appointment made via e-mail Or by Zoom with an appointment umontana.zoom.us/my/davidfirth

Mission of the UM College of Business

The University of Montana's College of Business (COB) is a collegial learning community dedicated to the teaching, exploration, and application of the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a competitive marketplace. As part of our assessment process and assurance-of-learning standards, the College of Business has adopted the following learning goals for our students:

- **Learning Goal 1:** COB graduates will possess fundamental business knowledge.
- **Learning Goal 2:** COB graduates will be able to integrate business knowledge.
- **Learning Goal 3:** COB graduates will be effective communicators.
- **Learning Goal 4:** COB graduates will possess problem solving skills.
- **Learning Goal 5:** COB graduates will have an ethical awareness.
- **Learning Goal 6:** COB graduates will be proficient users of technology.

- **Learning Goal 7:** COB graduates will understand the global business environment in which they operate.

Mission of the MIS Department:
To help our students get great MIS careers.

Course Description

This course is aimed at those who wish to be successful consultants or entrepreneurs. The skills needed to be a successful consultant fall into three categories; 1) technical skills, 2) interpersonal skills, and 3) consulting skills. We will not be addressing the technical skills aspect in this course – it is assumed that you will acquire these during your other classes (MIS, Finance, Accounting, Economics, Media Arts...).

We will be addressing the interpersonal and consulting skills categories. This means that we will be learning the craft of consulting, from who you are, how to present who you are, how firms make money, how you can be successful with a firm, what goes into a proposal and why, taking meetings with the client, document the work you do, billing for that work, and such. We will have a good number of consultants come talk to us, from an internationally recognized lone wolf, to local consulting firms doing work globally, to global firms doing work locally. We will also visit a local consulting firm to get an inside look at a firm.

Learning Objectives

The overall course objective is to provide the concepts and skills you need to be a successful consultant. We will concentrate on learning and implementing the tools and skills that you will need on any consulting engagement.

Upon successful completion of the course, you are expected to be able to:

- Craft a sensible and articulate proposal for the consulting work you will be doing.
- Be able to budget and track the work that you are doing.
- Communicate in and effectively run interviews and presentations – that means learning how to listen and learn.
- Develop a personal plan for improving yourself to become a better consultant, by understanding your own strengths and weaknesses, and how to position yourself to firms and clients.
- Understand basics of body language as a fundamental source of information from your client, your team members, and those you work for
- Understand your communication style and how to use it to your advantage
- Clear and competent online communication including emails and Zoom/Hangout/Microsoft Team meetings

Instructor's Expectations

In general, the students should assist the instructor in creating a positive, supportive environment for learning. Consulting in the business world depends on a successful “team” approach. Characteristics of successful teams include: diversity in background and skills; tolerance of diversity, uncertainty and ambiguity; clear and complete communication; and mutual respect of others views. Therefore students are expected to attend classes on a regular basis, arrive to class on time, remain in class until it ends, participate in discussions when appropriate, turn in assignments on their assigned due date. Most importantly, all participants in the class should be considerate of the other class participants and treat them (and their opinions) with respect. Insensitivity in this area will not be tolerated.

Students with disabilities documented through U of M Disability Services for Students (DSS) will be accommodated and have the responsibility to contact the instructor to initiate the appropriate actions. Please see me to discuss any concerns on this matter. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult the [DSS website](http://www.umt.edu/disability) (<http://www.umt.edu/disability>).

Course Requirements and Expectations

The course will consist of some or all of the following: lectures, in-class activities, exams, team assignments.

Lectures

The majority of the course content will be delivered via lectures. Since it has not been possible to find a textbook that adequately addresses the material we want to cover in this course, we will not be using one. As a result, other material has been selected to expand your exposure to various aspects of consulting. It is your responsibility to access this material from Moodle, print it off and read it. Since there is no book, the costs of doing this compensate.

In-Class Exercises and Discussions

Students are expected to read the assigned material or perform the assigned activities prior to coming to class. These activities and exercises are designed to reinforce the lecture material. Therefore, failure to do so will severely hamper your understanding of the lecture and, ultimately, your class participation grade.

Exams

There will be one “take-home” exam.

Team Assignment

The team assignment has critical significance. Effort and strength in the team assignments will substantially impact your final grade. Team assignment peer reviews will help me assess your effort and strength. A poor peer review from two or more of your peers will impact your grade significantly.

Client Meeting

The main element of your team assignment will be the meeting with the client (me). The idea behind the client meeting is two-fold: 1) see how you as a team analyze and then present the analysis of your material, 2) record you as a team and give you personal post-class feedback on your presentation style and skills. During the meeting your client will be “potentially hostile”. You should expect the questions you receive to be hard focused, and to press you on your thinking. Thinking nimbly and articulating your thoughts on-the-fly is a critical consulting skill that we’ll test here.

Homework

The TV show Lie To Me, on Fox TV.

I have posted season one of Lie to Me in Moodle. There are 12 episodes. We use this show because it very capably demonstrates and teaches the art of understanding body language. Since professional consultants often cite their ability to read people as being a critical component of their success, learning the fundamentals of body language is important to your success in this field. You can make the very best use of this show and what we cover in our *Body Language* segment of class by watching episodes 1, 2 and 3 before that segment of class.

Required Textbook

None.

A review of the available textbooks and professionally oriented textbooks found none that adequately supported this course, particularly at the price points of the books. **"Consulting for Dummies"** Nelson and Economy, is the best book I've found if you want a book to support what we are doing in class.

Grading

Final grades will be based on the following:

Individual Assignments

- 30 Second/ 2 Minute Intro
- LinkedIn Profile
- Consulting Resume
- Client Proposal
- Analysis of a complex IPO document

- 2 minute “tell me about yourself” reflection video

One Exam

We will have one exam, covering important things that have been addressed in class. This will be a "download and complete within 1 hour" exam.

Client Meeting

Meet in teams. Some sort of handout will be needed to guide the meeting. A two-page "**Here's what you need to do**" report is due after this meeting. There will be a peer evaluation to determine that there was even contribution from all team members. Significant variation in grades amongst team members based on peer evaluated effort can occur.

Write up of visiting consultants (Five Things I Learnt FTIL)

The list of who is coming/ for who we have a podcast for is on the course timeline, but is subject to change based on the availability of guest speakers. The timeline for this class, in Moodle, will be the most accurate version of who is coming, and when.

Write up of site visit to local consulting firm

This visit occurs (hopefully) on a Friday afternoon during the semester. I will give you as much notice as I can as soon as I know when this will occur. We will skip a regular class to make up for this visit.

Portfolio of Key Charts and Insights from class

A self-help document, prepared from materials culled from class, for you to refer to later when you are consulting.

It is important to recognize that grading necessarily reflects the instructor’s judgment regarding the quality of your work. Although an objective criterion for grading exists, all grading is somewhat subjective. If you have a question about a grade, please see me. However, requests for re-grading are likely to meet with skepticism unless an obvious grading mistake or unfairness is presented.

Grades will be conferred on a ± basis and comply with the ranges shown below. Please note that the College of Business requires students to attain a C or better in all core classes.

Overall Percentage	Letter Grade
pct >= 93%	A
93% > pct >= 90%	A-

90% > pct >= 87%	B+
87% > pct >= 83%	B
83% > pct >= 80%	B-
80% > pct >= 77%	C+
77% > pct >= 73%	C
73% > pct >= 70%	C-
70% > pct >= 67%	D+
67% > pct >= 60%	D
60% < pct	F

Class Attendance

As with any business profession, attendance is extremely important to succeed. Attendance is mandatory, meaning that students are expected to attend to all material posted in Moodle, complete all assignments for this course, and where group work is required to be available (in a reasonable fashion) to meet with your assigned team in a timely fashion as dictated by the class schedule.

Academic Integrity

Integrity and honesty are hallmarks of the consulting profession. It is your duty to abide by the University's academic policies, and it is the instructor's duty to enforce those policies. Cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Cheating, failure to follow instructions, and/or failure to follow course policies may result in a reduced grade or a failing grade at the instructor's option. The following message about academic integrity comes from the Provost's office: *All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php) (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).*

Email

According to University policy, faculty may only communicate with students regarding academic issues via official UM email accounts. Accordingly, students must use their GrizMail accounts (fname.lname@umontana.edu). Email from non-UM accounts will likely be flagged as spam and deleted without further response. To avoid violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, confidential information (including grades and course performance) will not be discussed via phone or email.

Guest Speakers and Visitors to Class

- We think it is incredibly valuable for students in Consulting, and our other classes, to see students who have graduated and have a fulfilling career that they love.

- Students will always have plenty of opportunity to ask questions. Getting questions answered is obviously a very important part of a guest speaker or visitor's visit to class.
- Showing what professionalism looks like in the Consulting class is incredibly useful and important for our students. This hits directly at the College of Business **Learning Goal 1**: COB graduates will possess fundamental business knowledge and **Learning Goal 3**: COB graduates will be effective communicators.
- Class visitors will engage students on topics such as what their own LinkedIn profile looks like, and why it is important, enhancing the topic of global connectedness which is a core underpinning of the consulting field.
- We work very diligently with guest speakers and visitors to send female alums into Consulting and our other classes as we believe that it is critical to highlight the important role of women in business and MIS in particular.

Guest speakers and visitors to class should be treated professionally and accorded a great deal of courtesy. They are taking valuable time away from their own work and professional responsibilities to help you. Some will be coming to class during their visit to UM for recruiting but their attendance at Consulting is not part of a recruiting effort but is to address the bullet points listed above.