Overview
This course will offer a unique window into the world of executive thinking and decision-making, and a series of opportunities to put the theoretical constructs from other courses to the test. You will have the chance to meet and interact with an outstanding roster of top executives, each of whom will focus on a different industry or managerial topic, and will share with you an “insider’s view” of the tensions, inputs, considerations and strategies they have encountered in their professional work. The objective is for you to emerge with an enhanced understanding of the factors that influence decision-making in today’s executive suites so that you will be better prepared to put your “learned experiences” to use and be a more effective manager and leader right out of the chutes. It’s one part applied learning, one part War Stories 202, one part highly relevant skills practicum.

Coursework
This class is unlike any other you will take. It features a disparate set of topics, loosely collected under the rubric of “decision-making.” It has not been taught before, and is being led not by a professional educator and lecturer, but by a marketing executive. Hence, it will not follow a rigid lesson plan, relying instead on the flow of conversation and input from students and speakers. The course will draw heavily on reading to provide context and background for each of the topics, and on thoughtful, incisive participation by everyone in the room.

Schedule
In order to accommodate our many guest speakers, several of whom will be flying in from other parts of the country, this course will meet on an irregular schedule – primarily on Saturdays, sometimes for a marathon double session (three hours in the morning, three in the afternoon); caffeinate appropriately. There is also one Thursday night session, which will be videotaped for the benefit of those who are also taking MGP 260. Enrollees must commit to this schedule, with a willingness not just to attend but to participate actively throughout, despite the somewhat inconvenient times. See specific schedule below.

Tentative List of Class Sessions (subject to change):

#1 Saturday, April 4 9 a.m. – noon
- Topic: Introductions; "Effective Real-World Presentations and Business Meetings"
- Guest Speaker: none
- Reading Assignment: none
#2 Saturday, April 11 9 a.m. – noon
- Guest Speaker: Denis Ring, Founder of Bode International
- In-class Exercise: Hurricane Survival
- Reading Assignment [appx. 86 pages]:
  - Selection 1 (on SmartSite): “Groupthink of Irving Janis” archived chapter by Em Griffin
  - Selection 2 a through d (in textpak): Introduction and chapters 1, 2 and 3 from The Practice of Creativity by George M. Prince

#3 Saturday, April 11 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- Topic: “Why Some Startups Can’t Get Past Start: Legal, Technological and Organizational Hurdles”
- Guest Speaker: Edward Reines, Partner at Weil Gotshal and expert on technology companies & patent litigation
- In-class Movie: Startup.com
- Reading Assignment: [appx. 149 pages]:
  - Selection 3: chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19, 26 and 30 from Founders At Work by Jessica Livingston (Apress Publishing, 2008)

#4 Saturday, April 18 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. [NOTE UNUSUAL START TIME: P.M. SESSION ONLY DUE TO PICNIC DAY]
- Topic: “The Importance of Company Culture”
- Guest Speaker: Walter Robb, Co-President and COO of Whole Foods Market
- Reading Assignment [appx. 300 pages]:
  - Selection 5 (in textpak): chapter 4 from The Future of Management by Gary Hamel
  - Selection 6 (on SmartSite): “No Preservatives No Unions Lots of Dough…” article by Julia Boorstin, in Fortune
  - Selection 7 (on SmartSite): “The Anarchist’s Cookbook” by Charles Fishman, article in Fast Company
  - Selection 8 (on SmartSite): “Whole Foods Looks for a Fresh Image in Lean Times” by Andrew Martin, article in The New York Times

#5 Saturday, May 2 9 a.m. – noon
- Topic: “Disruptive Thinking: Re-Imagining Transportation”
- Guest Speakers: Dan Sturges, President and Founder of Intrago Mobility and inventor of the GEM car; JJ Millard, Director of Business Management, Global Fixed Income at Barclays Global Investors and former CFO of Flexcar; Dan Sperling, Director – Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Davis; Griff Long, Senior Director of Global Carsharing at Hertz
- Reading Assignment [appx. 313 pages]:
  - Selection 12 a and b (in textpak): chapters 2 and 6 from Two Billion Cars by Daniel Sperling and Deborah Gordon
  - Selection 13 (in textpak): “Car On Demand” by Dan Sturges, article in Automobile Magazine
  - Selection 14 (in textpak): “Car-Sharing Merges into the Mainstream” by Sara Kahaulani Goo, article in Washington Post
  - Selection 15 (on SmartSite): “Can You Live Without a Car?” by Jacob Gordon, article on MSN.com
  - Selection 16 (on SmartSite): “Zipcar Redefines the Rental Car” by Katy Marquardt, article in US News & World Report
#6 Saturday, May 2 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- Topic: “Sustainability, Environmentalism and the Nonprofit Mindset: Marketing Strategy or Movement?”
- Guest Speaker: James Elsen, President and CEO of SustainLane
- Reading Assignment [aprx. 227 pages]:
  - Selection 17 (on SmartSite): “Twenty First Century Leadership,” speech by Lee Scott
  - Selection 18 (on SmartSite): “Green-Light Specials, Now at Wal-Mart” by Stephanie Rosenbloom and Michael Barbaro, article in The New York Times
  - Selection 19 a through d (in textpak): chapters 1, 4, 5 and 8 from The Cathedral Within by Bill Shore
  - Selection 20 (on SmartSite): “Nothing But Green Skies” by Allison Stein Wellner, article in Inc. Magazine
  - Selection 21 (in textpak): “The Birth of Blue,” speech to the Commonwealth Club by Adam Werbach
  - Selection 22 a through d (in textpak): Introduction and chapters 1, 10 and 12 from Green To Gold by Daniel C. Esty and Andrew S. Winston

#7 Saturday, May 9 9 a.m. – noon
- Topic: “The Changing Role of Marketing”
- Guest Speakers: Spencer Hapoinenu, President and Co-Founder, Nicole Jonas, Vice President and Co-Founder of Insight Out of Chaos Database Marketing
- Reading Assignment [aprx. 137 pages]:
  - Selection 23 a through c (in textpak): chapters 2, 7 and 8 from Ogilvy On Advertising by David Ogilvy
  - Selection 24 a and b (in textpak): chapters 1 and 2 from The Eyes Have It by Kevin Lee and Steve Baldwin
  - Selection 25 (in textpak): “The Mismanagement of Customer Loyalty” by Werner Reinartz and V. Kumar, article in Harvard Business Review

#8 Thursday, May 21 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. [NOTE UNUSUAL DAY AND STARTING TIME]
- Guest Speaker: Peter Roy, author of The Book of Hard Choices
- In-class Exercises: Zidane’s Last Red Card; The Layoff Game
- Reading Assignment [aprx. 249 pages]:
  - Selection 28 (in textpak): “Zidane’s Last Red Card,” HBS Case by Cheryl Kirschner

#9 Saturday, May 30 9 a.m. – noon
- Topic: “The Mom & Pop Mentality in Big Companies”
- Guest Speaker: Tom Burke, Executive VP of BarnesandNoble.com
- Reading Assignment [aprx. 22 pages]:
  - Selection 29 (on SmartSite): “The Ties That Bind” by Deborah Klenotic, article on UMass Mag Online
  - Selection 31 (on SmartSite): “Riggio’s Game” by Nikhil Hutheesing, article on Forbes.com
#10 Saturday, May 30 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- Topic: group presentations of competitive war games exercise
- Guest Speaker: none
- Reading Assignment: none

Requirements and Evaluation
There is one paper, one group project, some weekly background research, some cases, and no exams. A sizeable portion of your grade will come from class participation. Just like a series of “real world” business meetings, you will only get out of each class session what you put into it. Those who prefer to sit back, listen and absorb should not enroll.

Your grade will be based on four components:

1. **Weekly Background Research & Questions for Speakers (15%)**

   At least seven of the 10 class sessions will feature guest speakers. In advance of those classes, each student should spend time researching the guest(s), their companies and industries; and on the day of the class, before it starts, submit a printed copy of three insightful questions you would like to pose to the speaker. Several of these questions will be chosen at random for you to ask during the speaker’s presentation. Additionally, one or two students will be selected at random to make a brief (2-3 minute) introductory presentation of the speaker/topic based on their research. This introduction will be useful for the speaker to hear, as a means for gauging the “public perception” of them and their company/industry/topic; and it will serve as a means for students to put their public presentation skills to the test.

2. **Analytical Paper (35%)**

   Each student must submit a paper prior to class session #8 on May 21, focusing in greater depth on one of these managerial issues from the first seven sessions: the group process, starting up a company, corporate culture, disruptive thinking, sustainability/non-profit mindset, or modern marketing. You should define the issue as you see it, making a convincing case for why it is so important and so challenging to managers, especially in today’s marketplace. You should critically review what the literature and the experts have to say about this issue. You should offer your original analysis of how the issue plays out in the real world by applying it to two organizations not otherwise covered in our coursework [see next paragraph]. And you should zero-in on a set of what you believe to be best practices or recommendations for how a company should deal with the challenges posed by this issue.

   Of the organizations you focus on in this paper, one should be quite familiar to you – perhaps a company you previously worked for, or one that you interact with frequently (an online service like Google, a retailer like The Container Store, or even the GSM itself); the other should be a well-known and documented company like GE, HP or Honda. For example, you could write about “The Challenge of Building a Flexible Corporate Culture,” contrasting the GSM and Honda. Or you could write about “The Changing Role of Marketing” at the non-profit you used to work for and at Wells Fargo. Toward the beginning of the paper, be sure to provide a broad overview of the companies you have chosen.
Although this paper should contain no small amount of your original thinking, it is ultimately a research paper, not an opinion piece. The best way to research it is to dig into business, management and sociology books/articles. You are also encouraged to conduct interviews with executives or field level employees of these organizations, to whatever extent possible. Apply facts and concepts you have read or heard about in this course. Adapt principles you have learned about in other courses. Concentrate on the tensions that are involved in the executive decision-making process in these organizations, such as whether your chosen company (say, Home Depot) should continue to cast a broad net with its TV advertising, or find a way to begin data-driven target marketing. Don’t shy away from addressing the implications of the changed economic climate in which your organizations are now playing.

The guideline is 4-8 pages, 1½ spaced, with 10-11 point font and 1” margins. Your paper should be well-documented with footnotes, and, in light of our first class session, should contain flawless grammar and punctuation.

You are strongly encouraged to speak with the instructor before May 11, outside of class or via e-mail, to ensure that your focus for the paper is appropriate.

3. Group Presentation (30%)

During class session #2 you will be assigned to a group. This group will participate in an exercise during that class, but will also become a functional team for future activities, including a competitive war games exercise in which your team will be given a role-playing assignment to take on the identity of one of the companies studied in this class or its competitors. For example, your team might be assigned the role of Whole Foods Market, or a competitor like Trader Joe’s or Fresh Direct. Or, within the book retailing and e-publishing businesses, of Barnes & Noble, Amazon or Sony. Your team will need to get together outside of class and develop a plan to drive your competitors out of business. You will need to research industry trends and economics; dig deep into “your” company’s culture, geographic footprint, product offerings and financials; and then develop a strategic plan, based in part on what you have learned during our class sessions, to grow, re-position, de-position, and out-maneuver your chief competitor. Your plan, rich in strategy and tactics, will be delivered live (along with a 1-2 page group-written summary) during the final class session, #10, with each member of the team playing a role in the presentation. You will be evaluated based on the soundness of your research and plan relative to the other presenting groups; the quality and creativity of your presentation; and how well you have persuaded the jury of your peers in the class.

4. Participation (20%)

Active engagement in class is not just a requirement on which you will be graded; it is the engine that will make this course hum. It’s not about “air time.” It’s about curiosity, observation, insight, and bringing your own experiences to bear on the topics at hand. Come prepared, having finished the readings and researched the speakers, and each class will feel more like a brainstorming session than a lecture.

Protocols
Please, as a courtesy to your classmates and especially to the guest speakers, do not use phones or computers to e-mail, text or surf the Internet during class. There is one class session (May 2) when having a laptop with Internet access may be helpful.

Attendance at all class sessions is expected; contact me in advance if you have an unavoidable conflict.
“All students who take this course are governed by the University of California's standards of ethical conduct for students, in particular, the sections on academic conduct and integrity. These sections set forth the responsibilities of students and faculty to maintain a spirit of academic honesty and integrity at UC Davis. It is essential that you are aware of this code of conduct and the disciplinary actions that may be taken in the event of a violation. A copy of the Code of Academic Conduct may be found in your student handbook or at: http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/CAC.pdf. Further details may be obtained from the GSM Associate Dean or the Office of Judicial Affairs.”

Summary of Books To Be Purchased


Optional Books


NOTE: Although the books should all be available through the UC Davis bookstore, I strongly encourage you to purchase at least one of them through bn.com (Barnes & Noble online), so that you will gain some first-hand experience about that company before we host its Executive VP as a guest speaker on May 30. In so doing, however, leave ample time to receive and read the book, and be sure that you are purchasing exactly the volume specified above.