

BRIERCREST

LE 641 Creative Problem Solving and Polarity Management Winter 2023

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Course Dates: March 13-17, 2023

Online modular course

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to help students understand the perspectives, procedures, and processes needed for problem solving, polarity management and vision-setting. Emphasis is given to strategic and creative processes applied to a problem or polarity issue, but these processes are also readily adaptable to numerous leadership/management settings. Problem solving will be presented as one of three strategic planning approaches using a problem reengineering design.

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course is designed to teach the leadership process of problem-based planning as an opportunity and skill set that compliments clean or white page strategic planning. The course is designed to set students up well for the action research course expected of all leadership/management degree students. The course is enriched with Biblical and theological integration as we exegete biblical problems and how they were solved and as we delve into some controversies in history as well.

COURSE TEXTS

McGoff, Chris. *The Primes: How Any Group Can Solve Any Problem*. New Jersey: Wiley & Sons, 2012. ISBN 978-1-118-17327-5. **OR** Roam, Dan. *The Back of the Napkin (Expanded Edition): Solving Problems and Selling Ideas with Pictures*. New York, NY: Portfolio, 2013. ISBN 978-1-59184-269-9.

Catmull, Ed. *Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces that Stand in the Way of True Inspiration*. Toronto: Random House, 2014. ISBN 978-0-307-36117-2. **OR** Vangundy, Arthur. *Getting to Innovation*. Amacom, 2007. ISBN 13; 978-0814408988.

Sara Taylor, *Filter Shift: How Effective People See the World*. Morgan James Publishing, 2017. ISBN 978-1630479787. **OR** Cheryl Strauss Einhorn, *Problem Solved: A Powerful System for Making Complex Decisions with Confidence and Conviction*, Career Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1632650863. **OR** Prather, Charles. *Manager's Guide To Fostering Innovation and Creativity in Teams*. Toronto: McGraw Hill, 2010. ISBN 978-0-07-162797-9.

Roy Oswald & Barry Johnson. *Managing Polarities In Congregations: Eight Keys for Thriving Faith Communities*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2010. ISBN 978-1-56699-390-6. **OR** Johnson, Barry. *Polarity Management, 2nd Edition: Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0-87425-176-0. **OR** Emerson, Brian, and Kelly Lewis. *Navigating Polarities: Using Both/And Thinking to Lead Transformation*. Washington, DC: Paradoxical Press, 2019. ISBN 978-1-73338-283-0

Stanley, Andy. *Visioneering*. Colorado Spring: Multnomah Press, 1999. ISBN 978-1-59052-456-5. **OR** Barton, Ruth. *Pursuing God's Will Together*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8308-3566-9

OPTIONAL READING:

Ascough, Richard S., and Sandy Colton. *Passionate Visionary: Leadership Lessons from the Apostle Paul*. Ottawa: Novalis, 2005. ISBN 2-89507-566-2

Heath, Chip & Dan. *Decisive: How to Make Better Choices in Life and Work*. Toronto: Random House, 2013. ISBN 978-0-307-36113-4.

Martin, Roger. *The Opposable Mind: How Successful Leaders Win Through Integrative Thinking*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007. ISBN 13-978-1-4221-892-4.

Schwartz, Barry. *The Paradox of Choice: How The Culture of Abundance Robs us of Satisfaction*. New York: Haper, 2004. ISBN 10-0-06-000569-6.

Brussee, Warren. *All About Six Sigma*. Toronto: McGraw Hill, 2006. ISBN: 0-07-145372-5.

Collins, Dave. *Vision That Works: Turning Your Churches Vision into Action*. Pickering, ON.: Castle Quay Books, 2008. ISBN 978-1-894860-38-3.

Engel, Herbert. *Handbook of Creative Learning Exercises*. 2nd Edition. Amhurst, Mass.: HRD Press, 1994. ISBN 0-87425-239-3.

Harvard Business Essentials. *Strategy: Create and Implement the Best Strategy for your Business*. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2005. ISBN 978-1-59139-632-8.

Hawkins, Greg, and Cally Parkinson. *Reveal: Where Are You?* Barrington, IL: Willow Creek 2007. ISBN 13-978-074419234-6.

Howes, Brue. *Six Sigma: The Essentials of the most Powerful Improvement Methodology in the Business World*. Toronto: McGraw Hill, 2006. [ISBN 0-07-143008-3]

Groeschel, Craig. *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. ISBN 978-0-310-28682-0

Leonard, Dorothy, and Walter Swap. *When Sparks Fly: Igniting Creativity in Groups*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999. [ISBN 0-87584-865-6]

Michalko, Michael. *Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Creative-thinking Techniques (2nd Edition)*. Toronto: The Speed Press, 2006. ISBN 13: 978-1-58008-773-5.

Silberman, Mel, and Karen Lawson. *101 Ways to Make Training Active*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1995. ISBN 0-88390-475-6.

Van Gundy, Arthur, ed. *101 Great Games and Activities*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998. ISBN 0 7879-4138-7.

Van Gundy, Arthur. *101 activities for teaching creative Problem Solving*. San Francisco: John Wiley, 2005. ISBN 0-7879-7402-1.

Whitney, Diana, and Amanda Trosten-Bloom. *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003. ISBN 1-57675-226-7.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Cognitive

1. The student shall understand the problem solving, visioneering and polarity management processes to the extent where it will be natural to follow the steps instinctively.
2. The student shall become aware of the historical development of problem solving, visioneering and polarity management perspectives.
3. The student shall master the principles behind the techniques, tools and instruments used in problem solving, visioneering, and polarity management.
4. The student shall integrate the biblical concepts, examples and principles relevant to the visioneering, problem solving and polarity management processes.
5. The student shall understand the distinctions, principles and strategies important to the improvement of visioneering, problem solving, and polarity management memory, understanding, analysis, creativity and synthesis.
6. The student shall be able to distinguish between problem thinking (backward focus), opportunity finding (forward thinking) and group facilitation skills.

Affective

1. The student shall appreciate the visioneering, problem solving, and polarity management sequences to the extent where they will become an instinctive practice in her/his personal, group and institutional practices.
2. The student shall value the techniques, instruments and tools of visioneering, problem solving and polarity management to the extent where he/she practices them in personal, group and institutional experiences.

3. The student shall commit her/himself to eliminate the “gap” between the current condition and the desired condition in every possible way.
4. The student shall prize the skills of visioneering, problem solving, and polarity management sufficiently to commit her/himself to lifelong development of the same.
5. The student shall acknowledge the central place of godly wisdom, sought in humility, in the group facilitation, visioneering, problem solving, and polarity management processes for a Christian.

Skills

1. The student shall become competent at using several group-facilitation, visioneering, problem solving and polarity management processes instinctively.
2. The student shall become equipped to use the tools, techniques and strategies of problem solving, visioneering, and polarity management.
3. The student shall extend her/his basic skills in thinking necessary for understanding the problem or polarity generating creative solution or management alternatives, actually deciding on the best solutions, designing a vision and an action plan for the necessary change to bring resolve or polarity management.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

Day 1	Welcome and Introductions MALM Overview Problem Introductions Introduction to Problem-Solving Engaging with Biblical Examples of Problem-Solving Genius	Key Texts: Scripture
Day 2	Identification: Ways of Seeing Problems Problem/Challenge Statements Linear Problem-Solving Models: Vision, Breakout, Sigmoid Curve, Six Sigma Vision Statements	Van Gundy Taylor Stanley
Day 3	Cyclical/Systemic Problem-Solving Models: Action Research, Provisional Awareness, Strategic Learning, Ecocycle Creative Problem-Solving Models: Appreciative Inquiry, AREA, Visual Problem-Solving	Einhorn Roam Goff
Day 4	Polarity Mapping Group Processes: Team-Based, Shape-based, Organizational, Communal Discernment	Oswald and Johnson Anderson Emerson & Lewis Prather Catmull Barton
Day 5	Class Presentations What Else? Blessing and Commissioning	

ASSIGNMENTS

Refer to MALM Assignment Rubric uploaded to Canvas for more clarity around marking criteria.

Pre-Course Assignments:

1) Integrative Reading Report

Each student will be responsible to read their choices from each group of either/or assigned textbooks in advance of the course and provide an integrative 10-12 page paper on the readings to include the following:

- a) Introduction that introduces the books covered and themes uncovered;
- b) Response to each book that includes a summary of key concepts, integration with other texts, evidence of personal reflection and application of at least one concept;
- c) Conclusion that sums up, integrates, and lays out a path towards application.

Students will also be required to be a "class expert" on one or two texts throughout the week. Choose 2 texts to master and be prepared to share the essence of the text with those who have not read it. Powerpoint is a helpful tool, but not necessary. The quality of facilitation will be reflected in the class participation mark.

Due: March 13, 2023 (submitted to Canvas)

Length: 10-12 pages (2500-3000 words)

Value: 30%

Basis of Grade: Written work and oral presentation when the books are discussed

2) Mini-Case

Each student will prepare a report on three problems or polarities they are facing in their leadership context. If unable to draw from their immediate context, students will refer to real-life problems they see around them in the church or business. They will choose the most pressing/likely problem to apply the group facilitation, visioning and problem-solving process to during the class. The problems should be presented as a mini-case and so presented that they could be used as a case study and potentially as a program final research project as well.

In clarifying each of the problems the student should attempt to articulate the following for each:

- a) A problem statement
- b) Apparent rationale for this being a problem and for why the writer sees a resolution as highly important
- c) Contextualization of the problem
- d) Possible approaches and alternatives to resolution of the problem
- e) Estimated success levels in resolution path proposed
- f) Best Case potential outcomes

Due: March 13, 2023 (submitted to Canvas)

Length: 3-5 pages (750-1250 words)

Value: 15%

Basis of Grade: Clarity and completeness of the case.

Mid-Course Assignments:

3) In class group process work

This is a course on “community” problem solving and thus will entail a good deal of work to the presentation/demonstration referred to in item 2 (Mini-Case) above:

Each student will be an active participant in discussion, presenting their problem/polarity, leading their group and/or the class so that they gain help toward a clear vision and direction on how best to resolve their chosen problem.

Due: Daily in-class teamwork and as distributed throughout the week

Value: 25%

Basis of Grade: Quality of conversations and leadership of chosen/assigned solution processes evidenced in group process and conclusions

Please expect evening group work. Ideally, course assignments will be 90% completed by the last day of class!!! Students should expect to work on their projects at least three evenings of the class week so as to complete the work and all but the summarizing paper below before the week ends.

Post-Course Assignments:

4) Final Paper

Students will have experienced the entire problem solving and polarity management processes and will have worked through a real community problem applying each of the steps in the process with excellent insights and feedback from their peers. The post course task will be to write up the entire report of what was processed and to give focused attention to shaping and including the implementation of initiatives and steps and will design a map to show what, how and when the steps will be started and when they will be completed. This paper will provide a full report on a strategic plan, path and implementation for cycle one of a problem or polarity journey. The report should be ready to be presented and lived in a chosen context.

Due: May 12, 2023 (submitted to Canvas)

Length: 10-12 pages (2500-3000 words)

Value: 30%

Basis of Grade: Integration of chosen models, evidence of incorporating peer feedback & class discussion, application of Biblical insights

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

MALM students are expected to use APA formatting.

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Course Schedules

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Academic Resource Centre Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library) or by email (ntooke@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).