

**THE HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY**

HS241f
Information System Strategies
Spring 2007 Module 1

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Monday, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Schneider G2
Office Hours to be determined

Course Description: A fundamental part of your role as a manager will be an ongoing involvement with the development and use of MIS systems and related information technology (IT). This course is meant to help clarify the issues and offer a framework within which to make informed choices.

We will read and make use of a number of readings along with our own work experiences to examine a set of questions related to MIS. Selected questions include:

- How does the organization define its own processes?
- How does the organization define what data is needed to measure each of these processes?
- How well does the organization collect this data?
- How well does it utilize the data it collects?
- How is the MIS presented and used and at which organizational levels?
- How integrated is the MIS across and within these levels?

As can be seen from this brief list, the intent of this class is to generate a clearly defined conceptual structure within which to place the concept of an MIS. The more technical nature of actually implementing an automated MIS is left for other courses.

As this is a module course, we will meet once a week for six weeks. Because of this, class time will be precious. Each session will consist of a lecture portion followed by a class discussion related to the week's readings. I hope to have at least one guest lecturer.

Course Overview and Objectives: This module has been designed to introduce students to fundamental issues related to Management Information Systems (MIS). Managers in mission-driven organizations need an understanding of all of their organizational functions along with ways to measure all aspects of their operations. For effective management, this ongoing flood of information flows needs to be ordered, monitored, evaluated, processed and utilized in a number of ways. An effective MIS can provide both a framework and a set of tools to enable managers to accomplish each of these tasks—to enable managers to make proper strategic choices and informed decisions.

A major part of our work will be to uncover what types of information we need and how best to measure and use this information effectively. Mention of an MIS often evokes an immediate link to computers and databases. However, those aspects of MIS represent only one facet of the

whole information system that needs to be understood conceptually before being implemented technically. Having said that, however, we will also discuss the current state of hardware and software implementation of MIS systems.

Many of you may already be familiar with a number of aspects of MIS—class members often bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and insight into this class. I look forward to learning from all of you—your understanding of your experiences with MIS, both positive and negative, will provide wonderful input into class discussions.

Course Requirements: There are no prerequisites for this course. Attendance is crucial and readings are expected to be done before class. In-class discussions will form the basis for 60% of the course grade. There will be a final paper (8 to 10 pages) to be submitted at the end of the class that will account for the remaining 40% of the grade. Particular topics will be discussed in class and individually.

Management Discipline Skills and Competencies: This course offers students a framework within which to evaluate and measure the workings of a particular enterprise. These measurements form the data inputs for a series of interrelated systems that form the company's Management Information System (MIS). Moreover, students learn how to use this framework to both monitor and evaluate numerous aspects of the organization.

MBA Program Distinctive Themes: This course is solidly place in Theme 1, Measuring and Managing Outcomes, as well as Theme 8, Information Technology.

Course Readings: Links to downloaded readings will be made available via the class web site. Please note that the readings listed are to be done *before* the class, as we will be discussing those readings on that date.

Provisions for Feedback: Students can best get a sense of how well they are doing by ensuring that they participate in the class discussions. Students may request to meet with me in person to discuss their progress in the class. The final paper will be graded and comments will be provided.

Final Comments: We will cover a broad range of material and I expect the course to be an exciting and interesting place to begin to develop a wide range of skills along with a solid understanding of major MIS concepts. Moreover, I hope to help you all develop a way to view and understand this changing technological environment so as to be able to anticipate possible reasons for both successes and failures of MIS. This process can only happen if everyone comes well prepared to actively participate in each class. My expectations for outside work are high but the return should make the in-class work quite beneficial.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person- be it a world-class philosophers or your lab partner – without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the sources of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. Violations of university policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of *Rights and Responsibilities*, may result in failure in

the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Notice: If you have a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and require accommodations, please bring it to the instructor's attention prior to the second meeting of the class. If you have any questions about this process, contact the disabilities coordinator for the Heller School.