

MBA – Focusing on Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology Management

COURSE SYLLABUS

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP

- Instructor: John Antonakis, Professor of Organizational Behavior, University of Lausanne
- E-mail: john.antonakis@unil.ch
- Schedule: September 8 & 10, 2025, between 14:00–20:30.

OVERVIEW

In this module, we will look at the importance of charismatic leadership and communication for a variety of settings, including business, politics, NGOs, as well as science settings among others. We will explore charisma in terms of how it resides in the perceptions of observers and how they use slivers of information to make large inferences about your competence. To the extent that you are able to communicate in effective ways, whether in writing, in presence, or from a distance, will determine whether the message will stick and whether the individual/s you are attempting to influence will be engaged in your vision. We will examine what determines a charismatic vision and will break it down into tangible indicators that can be measured and taught; I will show very strong scientific evidence for the situations in which charisma matters. We will do exercises and role plays to practice the concepts learned in class. Although based on serious science, the module will be very practical and fun, and will provide you the tools to become more effective communicators and leaders.

ASSIGNMENTS

No pre-readings are required. One writing assignment will be completed prior to class; the second is to be completed after class. Credit for the class will be given for attendance, for the completion of the assignments and participation.

READINGS

No prereadings are required; slides and readings will be distributed electronically during first class.

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SCHEME OF WORK AND CLASSROOM LEARNING

Deadline for Assignment 1: Monday 1 September at 12h00:

Assignment to be sent to dds.mba@technion.ac.il by e-mail by Monday 1 September at 12h00: Write a short speech of about 300-500 words in English and send in **Word for Windows** format. The prework requires approximately 1 hour of time. The speech should be about 300 words (min 270 and max 330 words). You can choose any scenario from a current work situation, past situation, or hypothetical future situation. If you can't think of a situation, you can use one of following four scenarios: Imagine that you are a manager of a division of a multinational company...

- (1) You have developed a new technology and need to pitch it to investors. Convince them.
- (2) The new product launch has been a disaster. You are addressing your team with the goal of turning around the situation. Explain your thinking.
- (3) Your division has been badly hit by falling demand. You need to fire 10% of the workforce. Make the announcement regarding the layoffs.
- (4) Your division has to be relocated to another city. You have to explain this decision to your senior management team and convince them to move to the new location with you. Convince them.
- (5) One of your managers is underperforming. You are pulling him/her in to give them a “pep” talk and put him/her back on track.

Note: It is important that the speech reflects how you usually speak in the given situation; so carefully think about your choice of words. Just speak like you normally would and write it down. If you find it hard to write down your speech, then just record it while speaking, and then transcribe it; please use proper punctuation (and only use periods to indicate ends of sentences). This speech must neither be a proposal of what you would say nor an interactive conversation with someone. It is not a “questions and answer” session. It is not a bullet list either. The speech is a monologue, using full sentences, of a couple of minutes on your part, reflecting how you would have delivered the speech in the given situation.

Once completed, e-mail it naming the file with your full name (e.g., jane_doe.docx); include the word count on the top of the page.

Class 1: Mon. 8 September

Topics to be covered: Why do leaders emerge? Stereotyping and quick decisions. What is charisma? Does it matter? How is it measured?

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Exercises:

1. Presenting your speech in class to a classmate
2. We will build a model of the ideal leader
3. On recounting and on listening
4. Understanding the features of charismatic communication
5. More on identifying the features of charismatic communication

Homework:

1. Read the HBR article provided (will be made available the day of lesson)

Class 2 Wed 10 September:

Topics: More on charisma and why it matters in a variety of contexts.

Exercises:

1. More on identifying the features of charismatic communication
2. Explaining scientific phenomena in common parlance: Exercises on using the core features to frame and provide substance
3. Practices and role plays
4. Plenary and final Q&A

Deadline for Assignment 2: Tuesday 23 September at 12h00:

Assignment to be sent to dds.mba@technion.ac.il by e-mail: Update your initial speech (after having read the readings provided). Ensuring to use all the features I taught you. I will brief you fully on what I expect for Assignment 2 in class.