MO635: Management as a Calling

Management as a Calling is designed to help you examine your purpose in business and your purpose in life. It will guide you through a deeply personal process of immersive retreat experiences to help you look deep inside yourself to consider management as a calling—moving away from the simple pursuit of a career for private personal gain and towards a vocation that is based on a higher and more internally derived set of values about leading commerce and serving society. Understanding discernment and connecting career with conscience is about living a life, and not just earning a living. You will one day possess power as a business executive, and as corporate attorney James Gamble writes, “power needs to be constrained by conscience.” But you likely know this already as it appears that today’s students increasingly want this emphasis - 97% of young business professionals want a career with “purpose.” 70% want business school content that addresses social and environmental issues, and in 2019, business ethics entered the top 5 most popular subjects for the first time. These are just a few of many such surveys. But what is also clear is that students are searching for ways to live out their values through their work and this program is designed to help you articulate those values, examine what kind of a leader you want to be, what kind of career you want to have, and what kind of legacy you want to leave.

This course is available to business students in their final year of study: master of management, second-year graduates, and third-year dual degree students. Enrollment will be capped at 40 total slots and you will be required to give up your cell phone and computer to both (a) be fully present for the entirety of the retreat, and (b) open possibilities for creativity and introspection. Numerous research articles show that creativity increases in times of boredom where distractions are limited. Phone numbers and emails will be made available to family and friends should an emergency arise, but this course is meant to be a retreat in the fullest sense of the word.

In short, Management as a Calling is not your typical Ross class!

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What You Are Signing Up For

The novel structure of this course includes multiple touchpoints to build, test, reinforce and then build again your understanding of your personal calling. The keystones are two remote retreats for guided self-examination and discernment.

1. **First Retreat:** In early September 2024, you will spend the weekend at the University of Michigan Biological Station in Pellston, MI. This site offers the ability to be fully immersed in nature while limiting technology. For the entire visit, you will be asked to give up your cell phones and computers so as to remain fully present and focused on the task at hand. The weekend will be interspersed with (1) readings, (2) guided lectures and exercises, (3) peer mentoring and feedback, and (4) periods of self-reflection. The weekend will yield a draft Personal Mission Statement and letter to your future self to be received in March 2025.

2. **Second Retreat:** In early April 2025, you will spend the weekend at the YMCA Camp Nissokone in Oscoda MI. There, you will be reconvened for further (1) readings, (2) guided lectures and exercises, (3) peer mentoring and feedback, and (4) periods of self-reflection as well as an additional element: (5) development of actionable strategies for maintaining your calling after you enter the workforce. This will be an opportunity to discuss your letter to yourself, your Personal Mission/Purpose Statement, and your progress in responding to the challenges they each present. This will be a chance to repeat and review your first immersion, adding new insights and adjustments as circumstances have changed. The weekend will yield a final Personal Mission Statement and second letter to your future self to be received in March 2026.

3. **Interim Lectures:** Between the first and second engagement, there will be 4 special seminars on the ideas, concepts and models of discerning a calling, the challenges in today’s society to which one might devote their calling and presentations from leaders who have examined and exemplified the values and actions that we are seeking to instill in this program.

Why This Course and Why Now?

Corporations play an outsized role in our modern world. Their actions, as much as the individuals that inhabit them, decide how we will live and adapt in a world that climate change, species extinction, income inequality and other social and environmental issues are altering. Corporations can, at their best, “be vehicles of social progress and the solution to basic problems such as the provision of food, healthcare, education and other human needs and wants” and, at their worst, “provide the tools to multiply the effects of the darkest of human impulses and result in terrorism, genocide, and labor camps.” To be the former, we need to cultivate leaders who are willing to challenge taken-for-granted norms and conceive of a new vision for the corporation and their career. In fact, surveys show that a majority of Americans

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want businesses to “take action to address important issues facing society.” As business steps into such arenas, we need fully mature, self-aware and wise leaders. This course is designed to help create such leaders and, in the words of Harvard Professor Rakesh Khurana, “to rejuvenate the intellectual and moral training of future business leaders.”

Your Place in This Course

The size of each cohort will be limited to no more than 40 students. In order to be admitted, you must submit an application that demonstrates your maturity and motivation to pursue a career that makes a difference in today’s world. To apply, you will submit (1) an essay explaining why you want to be a part of such a program and how you have reflected on the idea of a calling in the past, (2) 3 personal references to attest to your inclination towards self-reflection and your aptitude to discern our career in management as a calling, and (3) your UM transcripts.

The admission goals are agnostic in terms of specific career interests and will draw students from all aspects of the business school program (strategy, finance, accounting, operations, marketing, etc.) and all sectoral interests (consulting, finance, manufacturing, automobiles, health care, etc.). We seek a diversity of students to make for a richer program: gender, race, political affiliation, geography, discipline within business. But overall, we are looking for maturity and seriousness of intent. We want to draw students who will take the program seriously, have done some initial thinking on their purpose, want some help in continuing that journey and are open to the idea of being mentored and mentoring others on this path.

Course Expectations

Because this class depends heavily on both inward reflection and outward interactive dialogue, participation is essential, both for your and your classmate’s learning. We can guide you on this journey, but the hard work is up to you. You will have been selected based on a demonstrated maturity and seriousness of intent to pursue a career and embark on this journey. You will have demonstrated that you have done some initial thinking on your purpose, want some help in continuing that journey and are open to the idea of being mentored and mentoring others on this path. If you have reservations about speaking, expressing your ideas and feelings in groups, and receiving feedback from others, you may wish to carefully consider your participation in this program. This is especially important as we will be discussing your personal goals and aspirations in work and life. In this program you will be expected to read materials both before and during the sessions; and you are strongly encouraged to find additional materials on the topic of this program and bring that material to the class discussion. In this way, we will all learn together.

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Learning Objectives

1. Develop an understanding and appreciation for the concept of purpose, calling and vocation and be able to apply them to your own life.
2. Participate in deep discernment of your own purpose and calling.
3. Engage in positive peer-to-peer coaching on vocational discernment; Develop the skills and aptitude to mentor others in their pursuit of a calling.
5. Test the ideas of your calling over an extended period of time by returning to the group after 1 year to gauge progress and success in holding to your sense of a calling.
6. Consider the role that businesses and business managers can and should play in serving society through the market.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade is composed of the following components. In the first retreat in September, you will develop your first drafts of the written assignments. In the second retreat in April, you will break them down and rewrite them into final form based on experiences, revelations, learnings and challenges of the prior year. The hope is that this will be the foundation of an ongoing, lifelong quest that continues after you graduate.

1. Program Participation
   a. Retreat Course Citizenship (September 2024 and April 2025)
   b. Attendance at 4 Seminars (Fall 2024 and Winter 2025)
2. Deliverables, Retreat 1
   a. Letter to Future Self 1 (Sent/ Post on Canvas 1 week after retreat)
   b. Draft Personal Mission Statement 1 (Post on Canvas 3 weeks after retreat)
3. Deliverables, Retreat 2
   a. Letter to Future Self 2 (Sent/ Post on Canvas 1 week after retreat)
   b. Final Personal Mission Statement 2 (Post on Canvas 3 weeks after retreat)

1. Program Participation
   • Retreat Course Citizenship (Individual and Group): A portion of the grade is based on class citizenship, which includes extensive reading, active participation and careful attention to mutual respect, fairness and professionalism in the course experience and in any virtual spaces we may use. It is critical not only for your personal learning, but also for the learning of your fellow classmates. Much of the value of the course comes from prepared, thoughtful, and informed dialogue between you and your classmates. This includes preparing for each retreat and participating in the exercises.
   • Attendance at Four Intermediate Seminars (Individual and Group): Between the first and second retreat, there will be 4 special seminars on the ideas, concepts and models of discerning a calling, the challenges in today’s society to which one might devote their calling and presentations from leaders who have examined and exemplified the values and actions that we are seeking to instill in this program.
2. Deliverables, Retreat 1

- **Letter to Future Self 1 (Individual):** You will write a letter to the person you will be 1 year from now (you can also choose to write an additional letter to your future self in 5 or 10 years from now). What kind of person would you hope to be? What goals would you want to have achieved? What will be some of the challenges in living out your Personal Mission Statement in business school and business and did you overcome them? Think about your goals into the future. As you write your letter, you will start to think about the actions you should take to realize them in your expected time frame.

- **Draft Personal Mission Statement 1 (Individual):** This is the first draft of your personal mission statement. It will be clarified in the second retreat. In writing your Personal Mission Statement, shorter is best. A personal mission statement should be no more than one page that defines who you are as a person and identifies your purpose and your passion. It explains how you aim to pursue that purpose, and why it matters to you. Think about your life principles and goals. Why did you set these goals? How do your goals make you a better person? The mission statement should answer these questions in as much brevity as possible, so try to get to the heart of who you are and exclude unnecessary details. Don’t worry if your statement doesn’t mirror someone else’s—every statement is different because no two people are the same. Your Mission Statement will have two parts. The first is few paragraphs that describe your calling or vocation. The second is one sentence that summarizes it.

3. Deliverables, Retreat 2

- **Letter to Future Self 2 (Individual):** This will be a second letter to the person you will be 1 year from now after you graduate (you can also choose to write an additional letter to your future self in 5 or 10 years from now). What kind of person would you hope to be? What goals would you want to have achieved? What will be some of the challenges in living out your Personal Mission Statement in business school and business and did you overcome them? Think about your goals into the future. As you write your letter, you will start to think about the actions you should take to realize them in your expected time frame.

- **Final Personal Mission Statement 2 (Individual):** This final Personal Mission Statement will be a revision and revisit to the statement drafted in retreat 1. A personal mission statement should be no more than one page that defines who you are as a person and identifies your purpose and your passion. It explains how you aim to pursue that purpose, and why it matters to you. Think about your life principles and goals. Why did you set these goals? How do your goals make you a better person? The mission statement should answer these questions in as much brevity as possible, so try to get to the heart of who you are and exclude unnecessary details. Don’t worry if your statement doesn’t mirror someone else’s—every statement is different because no two people are the same. Your Mission Statement will have two parts. The first is few paragraphs that describe your calling or vocation. The second is one sentence that summarizes it.

**Final Grade**
Your final grade will be based on your Program Participation (30%), Deliverables from Retreat 1 (30%) and Deliverables from Retreat 2 (40%). This course will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis.
**Academic Integrity and Community Values**

Personal integrity and professionalism are fundamental values of the Ross School community. You have a duty to be familiar with and understand the Ross School’s Statement of Community Values, the Ross School Academic Honor Code, and the Ross School Code of Student Conduct including all campus public health policies. In light of COVID our community has enhanced the Code of Student Conduct to include our commitment to each other and adherence to campus and School public health policies. Each of these, including a Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities, may be found in the Ross School Impact on [Ross Community Values](https://www.ross.umich.edu/). In addition every student at the University of Michigan accepts the rights and responsibilities of membership in the University’s academic and social community. These rights and responsibilities are clearly laid out in [The Statement](https://www.ross.umich.edu/). By enrolling in this course you confirm that you have read and understood these statements and policies, and further that you agree to abide by them. The Ross Community Values site contains valuable information and links on writing and how to check to make sure you have not plagiarized the work of others. Claimed ignorance of these codes and policies will be viewed as invalid should a violation take place. In all cases if you have questions please address them with the professor as far in advance as possible.

Any violation of the Ross School Academic Honor Code such as plagiarism, otherwise passing off anyone else’s work as your own, unauthorized collaboration, use of materials generated for use during past offerings of this course, or any form of cheating will be referred to the Community Values Committee. Possible penalties include course failure with a permanent notation of an honor policy violation on your transcript and even expulsion. As a community we are all still adapting and learning how this applies to hybrid and remote learning environments, but the same principles of academic integrity apply.

**Virtual Office Hours**

I will be available for office hours at a time that is mutually agreeable to our calendars. There are 5 students assistants who are also available for one-on-one sessions. All of us are to be used a sounding board to test ideas, work through blockages or solicit guidance. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these resources.

**Class Materials and Policy Related to Their Use**

All materials generated for the course including slides, handouts, review materials and assignments, or any other materials prepared by you or the professor for this course are intended for use by current students in this class only, unless you have the permission of your instructor. You are not permitted to use materials related to the class that were generated by the professor or students in previous versions of this course. A violation of this policy may be a violation of the Ross Community Values Code and may result in disciplinary action.