



## IS4210: Knowledge Superiority Course Syllabus – Version 2.2

### Contact Information

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### Course Goal

The purpose of this course is to help working professionals learn to manage knowledge and lead knowers better to achieve competitive advantage in organizations.

### Course Description

This course on knowledge superiority (KS) integrates theory with practice to help prepare current and future leaders to manage knowledge and lead knowers better to achieve competitive advantage in organizations. *Knowledge superiority* refers to knowledge that is put into action to outperform competitors and is concerned with activities (e.g., decisions, behaviors, work) in the organization that can enable sustainable competitive advantage. Using Knowledge Flow Theory as its intellectual base, the theoretical part of the course helps professionals understand how knowledge is both critical and unique. It also equips them to design effective work processes, organizations and technologies around knowledge flows. Using real-time cases for individual or group critique, the problem-based learning part of the course examines a diverse set of knowledge-based processes and organizations in operation today and offers both principles for and experience in identifying strengths and weaknesses. Students also select new or operational knowledge-based processes for evaluation and work as consultants to assess and redesign them around knowledge flows. This hybrid course involves considerable web-based interaction (esp. via Discussion Board), affords great student flexibility in terms of scheduling coursework, and offers opportunities for cutting-edge, graduate education beyond the classroom. It is essential for both afloat and ashore knowledge managers, C4I officers, information warriors and information professionals.

Specific topics include knowledge power (e.g., how to leverage knowledge into comparative advantage), knowledge uniqueness (e.g., how knowledge is distinct from, yet related to, information and data), knowledge flow (e.g., how knowledge



moves or propagates through an organization), knowledge technology (e.g., types, roles and limitations of various technologies for supporting knowledge flows), knowledge and learning (e.g., how knowledge is translated into organizational action), and knowledge-flow evaluation (e.g., evaluation criteria and measurement methods). Other topics include practical evaluation of operational knowledge organizations (e.g., through real-time case study, student projects).

## Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand how knowing relates knowledge to action, in the organizational environment, with the ability to conceptualize KS in terms of purposeful activities such as decisions, behaviors and work.
- Comprehend the critical elements of KS, in the context of knowledge-flow theory, at the level of a knowledgeable professional.
- Analyze knowledge-work activities, in terms of knowledge-flow effectiveness, to identify the major strengths and weaknesses of an organization's KS program.
- Assess the effectiveness of an organization's KS program, in a critical yet constructive manner, with the competency of a KS professional.
- Formulate a KS program enhancement plan, guided by theory and experience, with the competency of a KS professional.

## Course Format

The course is offered as an "H" (i.e., hybrid web-based and classroom), with limited synchronous or classroom sessions. Interactive learning modules and online discussions provide for tremendous student flexibility without sacrificing quality in this graduate-education course, and resident students meet weekly for seminar discussion. Each week students work independently on assigned readings, exercises and problems. They also participate in multiple online discussion fora. Some group work and team problem solving is possible for case discussions, but such group work is not required. Indeed, the majority of the coursework can be accomplished individually and via independent interaction. Successful students will be highly motivated and independent learners, seeking out useful knowledge on their own, and developing personal, multilevel understanding and skills. The instructor is committed to working with each student individually to ensure he or she has ample opportunity to succeed in the course. Excelling in the course may require 6 – 8 hours weekly over the term; merely succeeding requires less time.



## Learning Approach and Expectations

This course takes the view that the instructor and students collaborate to help each person learn according to his or her unique style and set of preferences. This requires the student to assume primary responsibility for learning and for assessing how well such learning is being accomplished. Here the Instructor's role is not one of all-knowing expert imparting knowledge to students. Rather, the Instructor's role is to establish a learning environment (e.g., through organization of course topics, suggested readings, discussion questions, assignments), to share relevant knowledge and experiences with students, and to provide guidance to help students learn—about knowledge superiority and about how to learn in a lifelong manner outside the physical classroom. Symmetrically the Student's role is not to sit passively and attempt to absorb wisdom from an all-knowing expert through humorous stories. Rather, the Student's role is to seek out and discover new knowledge actively, to share relevant knowledge and experiences with classmates (and the Instructor), and to ensure course concepts are understood, integrated together, and reflected upon through each student's personal frame of reference.

## Prerequisites and Technical Requirements

Prerequisites include: Defense Knowledge & Information Management (IS3210), Knowing Management (GB4210) or equivalent. Students with equivalent coursework and/or experience have an opportunity to waive the prerequisites with instructor permission. Technical requirements are limited to Web and e-mail use.

## Textbook

The course textbook is entitled *Harnessing Knowledge Dynamics: Principled Organizational Knowing & Learning* (IRM Press 2006). Students are also directed as a class to specific articles, readings and examples to pursue both common and individual interests.

## Assessment

Student assessment is based on four criteria (and approximate weights).

- Helpful participation – joint evaluation by instructor and student vote (25%)
- Individual or group case assignments – evaluation by instructor (25%)
- Individual learning exercises – evaluation by self assessment (25%)
- Individual or group consulting project – evaluation by instructor (25%)

## Grades

Excellence – greater than 85% of the total possible points  
Success – greater than 70% of the total possible points  
Inadequacy – less than 70% of the total possible points



## Late Policy

Late work is not accepted unless by advance arrangement.

## Instructor Bio

The Instructor for this course is Dr. Mark E. Nissen, Professor of Information Science & Management, Director of the Center for Edge Power (<http://www.nps.navy.mil/GSOIS/cep/index.htm>), and OASD-NII Research Chair Professor of Command and Control at the Naval Postgraduate School. Dr. Nissen is a leading researcher in the KM field, who is extending the state of the art in terms of dynamic knowledge theory and application. His publications span information systems, knowledge management, organization studies, project management and related fields. In 2000 he won the Menneken Award for Excellence in Scientific Research, the top research award available to faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School. In 2001 he was awarded a prestigious Young Investigator Grant from the Office of Naval Research for work on knowledge-flow theory. In 2002 – 2003 he spent his sabbatical year in the Stanford Engineering School. In 2004 he founded the Center for Edge Power in the Naval Postgraduate School. Dr. Nissen has worked closely with Third Fleet and the Office of Naval Research for several years to study warfare knowledge flows, and he collaborates extensively with faculty and students at Stanford and other leading research universities. Professor Nissen acquired a dozen years' technical and managerial experience in the aerospace & electronics industry before pursuing his academic career, and he gained considerable experience as a professional consultant. He serves currently on the editorial boards of several leading journals, and he is Regional Editor (the Americas) of *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*.



## Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
0	Introduction	Learning module 0	Module 0 exercises
	<b>Part I – Theory</b>		
1	Knowledge Power	Week 1 Readings Learning module 1	Group discussion Module 1 exercises
2	Knowledge Uniqueness	Week 2 Readings Learning module 2	Group discussion Module 2 exercises
3	Knowledge Flow	Week 3 Readings Learning module 3	Group discussion Module 3 exercises
4	Knowledge Technology	Week 4 Readings Learning module 4	Group discussion Module 4 exercises
5	Knowing & learning	Week 5 Readings Learning module 5	Group discussion Module 5 exercises
	<b>Part II – Application</b>		
6	KS program evaluation	Week 6 Readings Learning module 6	Group discussion Module 6 exercises
7	Evaluation Case 1	Week 7 case study	Case 1 evaluation
8	Evaluation Case 2	Week 8 case study	Case 2 evaluation
9	Evaluation Case 3	Week 9 case study	Case 3 evaluation
10	Consulting Project	Week 10 Readings	Final report

Course Readings are linked within the Course Materials section of Blackboard.  
Assignments are contained within the learning module for each week on Blackboard.

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