OB518: Leading Through Culture
Instructors: Glenn Carroll and Nitsa Lallas

This compressed MBA class will meet for 12 sessions (total of 18 hours) in weeks 4 and 6 of the Winter term 2015-16. Students are expected to have taken the required Perspective course Organizational Behavior or its equivalent.

Description: This course examines organization culture ---how and why managers can use culture to maximize results within an organization, and how culture can undermine results. The course begins by situating cultural leadership and management within a culture-shaping framework and the opportunities, obligations and methods for leaders to impact culture. It also focuses on what is different in cultural management and why so many contemporary firms attempt to use it. We analyze the relationship between culture and strategy, seeking alignment between the two. The course also explores different kinds of cultures seen in high performing and low performing organizations, and seeks to understand how cultural content affects behavior and business results. Students will be asked to describe and define the culture of an organization needed for a given business and strategy, and to define the role of executives in shaping culture. The class identifies and analyzes the tools or levers that leaders can use to build an effective culture. We will spend a session on each of the following: culture and strategy alignment, architecture for shaping culture, selecting people for cultural alignment, aligning organizational practices, culture and society, cultural inflection points from start-up to scale, cultural aspects of high performance and cultural diagnostics. The course will end with a session on culture issues in merger and acquisition.

Format: The course will depend heavily on student participation and involvement. Numerous cases will be used.

Tentative outline:

Session 1: Challenge of cultural leadership and management
Session 2: Strategy alignment with culture
Session 3: Contrasting companies - cultures and strategies
Session 4: Cultural diagnostics
Session 5: Culture on the inside
Session 6: Architecture for leading and shaping culture
Session 7: Selecting people for cultural alignment
Session 8: Aligning organizational practices
Session 9: Business culture and societal issues
Session 10: Cultural inflection points from start-up to scale
Session 11: M&A: cultural integration
Session 12: Recap