



BUSI 5906: Special Topics
Cognitive Tools for Managers: Designing Conversations, Asking Better Questions & Leveraging AI

Winter 2026

Instructor	Luciara Nardon
Email Address	Luciara.nardon@carleton.ca
Class Times	January 16-17, 9am-5pm
Modality	In-person, Kanata campus
Office Hours	By appointment

Pre-Requisites & Preclusions:

Prerequisites: none

Preclusions: none

Course Description/Instructor’s Statement

Carleton Calendar Description

At the discretion of the School, a course dealing with selected topics of interest to students in the MBA program. Topics will vary from year to year, and will be announced in advance of the registration period.

Prerequisite(s): permission of the School.

Instructor’s Description:

Managerial and Organizational Cognition (MOC) explores how managers interpret environments to guide action. This course applies these insights to design purposeful conversations, structure collective thinking, and use questioning techniques that enhance clarity and accelerate decisions. Examines how AI and cognitive offloading shape and challenge human thinking.

Course Rationale

Leaders spend most of their working hours in meetings, emails, and informal conversations. Yet too often these interactions create confusion instead of clarity, delay decisions instead of accelerating them, and generate misalignment rather than commitment. The rise of AI tools further complicates the picture: while AI can produce quick outputs, the use of AI shifts where and how thinking happens, with implications for how organizations work.

This course addresses these challenges through the lens of Managerial and Organizational Cognition—the study of how managers interpret their environments and how these interpretations shape organizational action. By applying MOC insights to leadership practice, participants learn how mental models, framing, and sensemaking influence conversations and decision-making. They then translate this understanding into applied methods to transform everyday conversations into environments for collective insight. Alongside, they develop awareness of how cognitive offloading and AI affect organizational thinking, equipping them to guide dialogue that sustains clarity, accelerates alignment, and drives meaningful results.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Apply insights from managerial and organizational cognition to understand how thinking is shaped by mental models, environments, and group interactions.
2. Design and facilitate purposeful conversations that create clarity, alignment, and momentum for decision-making.
3. Use questioning and structured thinking routines to surface assumptions, strengthen collective insight, and guide effective action.
4. Recognize the role of AI and cognitive offloading in organizations and the implications for leaders.

<h2><u>Required Materials & Prices</u></h2>
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- **Book:** Paul, A. M. (2021) *The Extended Mind: The power of thinking outside the brain*, Harper Collins.
 - *Price:* approximately \$CAD 25 for paperback option. E-book and audiobook options are also available and perfectly acceptable. The book is also available at the library. A link is available through Brightspace.
 - Please consider purchasing the textbook(s) from the campus bookstore in Nideyinàn (formerly the University Centre) or through the bookstore website: <https://carletonshop.ca/Course/term?>
- **Note:** If you want more or need a refresher, please watch the video interview with the author <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nf2a3XAZugU>
- The supporting articles are available at no cost through Brightspace using the Library Reserves (ARES)

Grading Scheme

- Pre-class reflection: 25%
- In-class contribution and assignments: 25%
- Final portfolio: 50%

Important Dates to Note

Pre-class meeting (optional)	January 9 th , 2026 during orientation in Kanata January 8 th , 2026 <i>at noon</i> , virtually to students not at orientation
Pre-class assignment	January 15 th , 2026 <i>at noon</i>
In class assignments	January 16 th -17 th 2026
Final class portfolio	January 25 th 2026

University Academic Calendar: <https://calendar.carleton.ca/academicyear/>

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

This is an AI-forward course. Students are expected to use generative-AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot) as thought partners and assistants to enhance the quality of their work. Assignments will be graded assuming students had full access to AI support. Use these tools responsibly. That is, verify outputs, apply your own judgment, and cite AI use when relevant. The goal is not to outwit AI but to elevate your learning through it. You can access resources related to citing Generative AI on the [MacOdrum Library website](#). Additional resources are also available on Carleton's [Artificial Intelligence Hub](#).

Policies & Accommodations

<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>

<https://carleton.ca/pmc/current-students/academic-accommodations/>



Stay updated with important notifications and announcements from Carleton University, by downloading the Carleton University App!

Additional Information on Deliverables and Grading

Detailed descriptions of the various assignments for the course have been posted to Brightspace. Please take the time to read through all of the assignments before class.

Each component of your grade will be assigned a percentage score. Your final course grade will be a weighted average of each of these components.

Pre-class assignment: AI-Facilitated Reading Reflection Assignment (25%)

This reflective assignment invites students to engage in a guided conversation with a generative AI tool (e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude) to deepen their understanding of *The Extended Mind* by Annie Murphy Paul. Through a structured dialogue, students explore key ideas, consider practical applications to their work or study habits, and reflect on concepts that challenge their thinking. The exercise emphasizes thoughtful engagement and personal insight, culminating in a transcript of the AI conversation and an optional final reflection paragraph. Submissions are assessed on depth of reflection, engagement with material, and application to practice.

In class contribution and assignments (25%)

Throughout the course, we will engage in a series of structured in-class activities designed to deepen understanding and connect theory to practice. These may include facilitated discussions, small-group exercises, and short applied tasks. At the end of class, students will submit a brief record of their activities and a short reflection summarizing key insights and learning. Evaluation will be based on the level of engagement, quality of contribution to class discussions, and thoughtfulness of reflection rather than on right or wrong answers.

Final Portfolio (50%)

The final portfolio assignment is a flexible, practice-oriented assessment that allows students to demonstrate their learning by selecting from a range of activities rooted in course concepts. Students choose activities that best align with their interests, workplace context, and preferred learning style, accumulating up to 50 points. Each activity involves applying cognitive tools—such as reconfiguring workspaces, facilitating conversations, using clean questions, running group workshops, visualizing problems, leveraging AI, or designing mind extension practices—followed by a structured reflection connecting experience to course material. The portfolio emphasizes depth of engagement, critical reflection, and evidence of learning, and encourages students to tailor their submissions to their unique professional and personal contexts.

Late Assignments:

To ensure fairness for all students, penalties will be applied to late assignments: Failure to submit an assignment on time will result in an initial penalty of five (5) percentage points, followed by an additional (2) percentage points per day thereafter. For example, an assignment that would normally merit a grade of 50% would receive a grade of 45% if submitted after the deadline on the due date, 43% if submitted the following day, and so on. Requests for extension will be considered in cases of illness, family emergency, or other exceptional circumstances.

Contribution to Program Learning Goals ([MBA](#)):

MBA Learning Goal	Not Covered	Introduced	Taught but Not Assessed	Taught <u>and</u> Assessed
MB1 Leadership and Collaboration <i>Graduates will be equipped for leadership and collaboration.</i>		✓		
MB2 Communication <i>Graduates will be effective communicators</i>				✓
MB3 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving <i>Graduates will be skilled in critical thinking and problem solving.</i>			✓	
MB4 Functional Knowledge <i>Graduates will have functional knowledge of all areas of business.</i>	✓			
MB5 Global Business <i>Graduates will have an appreciation of the global environment of business.</i>	✓			
MB6 Ethical Reasoning <i>Graduates will be skilled in ethical reasoning and decision-making.</i>	✓			

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Supporting Readings
Jan 15 th noon	Pre-class assignment	Paul, A. M. (2021). <i>The extended mind: The power of thinking outside the brain</i> . HarperCollins.
Jan 16 th AM	Focused Conversations	Stanfield, B. (n.d.). <i>The art of focused conversation</i> . https://www.johninmandialogue.com/mywebcd/documents/ArtofFocusedConversation.pdf
Jan 16 th PM	The Power of Questions	Brooks, A. W., & John, L. K. (2018). The surprising power of questions. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> . Chevallier, A., Dalsace, F., & Barsoux, J.-L. (2024, May–June). The art of asking smarter questions. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> . Cairns-Lee, H., Lawley, J., & Tosey, P. (2023, February 8). How do you get a quality answer? Now, that’s a good question. <i>IMD</i> .
Jan 17 th AM	Collective sensemaking	Csaszar, F. A., Hinrichs, N., & Heshmati, M. (2024). External representations in strategic decision-making: Understanding strategy's reliance on visuals. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i> , 45(11), 2191–2226. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3613
Jan 17 th PM	Thinking with AI	Niederhoffer, K., Kellerman, G. R., Lee, A., Liebscher, A., Rapuano, K., & Hancock, J. T. (2025, September 22). AI-generated “workslop” is destroying productivity. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> . Hougaard, R., & Carter, J. (2024). How can AI make us better leaders. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> . Chritiatti, et al. (2025). System 0: Transforming Artificial Intelligence into a Cognitive Extension. <i>Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking</i> . https://arxiv.org/abs/2506.14376
Jan 25 th midnight	Final portfolio	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Course Sharing Websites:

Materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Recommended Calculator for Examinations:

If you are purchasing a calculator, we recommend any one of the following options: Texas Instruments BA II Plus (including Pro Model), Hewlett Packard HP 12C (including Platinum model), Staples Financial Calculator, Sharp EL-738C & Hewlett Packard HP 10bII

Group Work:

The Sprott School of Business encourages group assignments. They provide you with opportunities to develop and enhance interpersonal, communication, leadership, followership and other group skills. Group assignments are also an effective way to learn integrative skills for putting together a complex task. Your professor may assign one or more group tasks, assignments, or projects in this course. Before embarking on a specific problem as a group, it is your responsibility to ensure that the problem is meant to be a group assignment and not an individual one.

Letter Grades:

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar (p 34), the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 B+ = 77-79 C+ = 67-69 D+ = 57-59 F = Below 50

A = 85-89 B = 73-76 C = 63-66 D = 53-56

A - = 80-84 B - = 70-72 C - = 60-62 D - = 50-52

Grades entered by Registrar:

WDN = Withdrawn from the course

DEF = Deferred

Academic Regulations:

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/>

Requests for Academic Accommodation:

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the

Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

- **Pregnancy**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: [Pregnancy Academic Accommodation Information - Equity and Inclusive Communities](#)

- **Religious Obligations**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: [Academic Regulations for Students with Religious Obligations < Carleton University](#)

- **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

- **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [Sexual Violence Prevention & Survivor Support - Equity and Inclusive Communities](#)

- **Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, to both the individual student and the university, that result from participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: <https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>

Academic Integrity:

Violations of academic integrity—presenting another’s ideas, arguments, words or images as your own, using unauthorized material, misrepresentation, fabricating or misrepresenting research data, unauthorized co-operation or collaboration or completing work for another student—are a serious academic offence, weaken the quality of the degree, and will not be tolerated. Penalties may include; a grade of Failure on the submitted work and/or course; academic probation; a refusal of permission to continue or to register in a specific degree program; suspension from full-time studies; suspension from all studies at Carleton; expulsion from Carleton, amongst others. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy which is available, along with resources for compliance at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Centre for Student Academic Support:

The Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS) is a centralized collection of learning support services designed to help students achieve their goals and improve their learning both inside and outside the classroom. CSAS offers academic assistance with course content, academic writing and skills development. Visit CSAS on the 4th floor of MacOdrum Library or online at: <https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Other Important Information:

- Students must always retain a copy of all work that is submitted.
- All final grades are subject to the Dean’s approval.
- For us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid CARLETON address. Therefore, in order to respond to your inquiries, please send all email from your Carleton cmail account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you can do so by visiting <https://carleton.ca/its/get-started/new-students-2/>