Course Syllabus: Independent Study
College of Business
4553 Section 201
Spring 2026 January 20th – May 8th

Contact Information

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Course Description

Independent Study in Human Resources or Organizational Behavior

This independent study provides students with the opportunity to engage in an in-depth exploration of a contemporary issue in Human Resources (HR) or Organizational Behavior (OB). Students will work closely with the faculty supervisor to identify, refine, and investigate a research topic that reflects current organizational challenges, emerging trends, or evolving workforce dynamics.

Emphasis is placed on integrating theory and empirical research with real-world organizational contexts. Students will critically evaluate academic literature, apply appropriate research frameworks, and develop evidence-based insights that contribute to scholarly and managerial conversations in HR or OB. The course culminates in a substantive research paper that demonstrates analytical rigor, theoretical integration, and practical relevance for organizational leaders. Topics must address a **current or emerging phenomenon** and incorporate an innovative or nontraditional perspective that challenges conventional assumptions in the field.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Not required.

General Learning Goals

Problem Solving and Decision Making

This course develops problem-solving and decision-making skills by examining how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is used in Human Resources (HR), particularly in résumé screening, candidate evaluation, and talent acquisition processes. The student analyzes the organizational problem of efficiently and accurately identifying qualified candidates, evaluates AI-driven applicant tracking systems (ATS), and assesses their impact on hiring outcomes. Through research and critical analysis, the student develops evidence-based recommendations on when and how AI should be used in HR decision-making.

Communication (Written and Oral)

This course emphasizes advanced written communication by developing a formal research paper examining AI applications in HR and résumé evaluation. The student synthesizes academic literature, industry reports, and empirical findings to construct a clear, well-supported argument using APA style. Written communication skills are strengthened through drafting, revision, and structured faculty feedback.

Technology Usage

This course directly integrates technology by examining AI-driven recruitment tools, applicant tracking systems (ATS), résumé parsing software, and algorithm-based candidate screening platforms. The student utilizes academic databases, digital research tools, and, where appropriate, data analysis software to evaluate how AI technologies function in HR settings. Technology is both the subject of study and a tool for rigorous research and analysis.

Ethical Reasoning within a Business Environment

This course develops ethical reasoning by analyzing the ethical implications of AI use in hiring and résumé screening. The student evaluates issues such as algorithmic bias, transparency, accountability, data privacy, and compliance with employment law. By examining HR governance standards and business ethics frameworks, the student assesses how organizations can implement AI responsibly while maintaining fairness, legal compliance, and sound managerial judgment.

Core Business Knowledge

This course reinforces core business knowledge by connecting AI-enabled HR practices to organizational strategy, operational efficiency, and competitive advantage. The student examines how technology-driven recruitment impacts workforce planning, talent acquisition strategy, cost management, and organizational performance. The research integrates HR theory, organizational

behavior principles, and business strategy to evaluate the effectiveness of AI in supporting long-term organizational goals.

Multicultural Awareness
This course promotes multicultural awareness by examining how AI-driven résumé screening tools operate across diverse labor markets and global workforce contexts. The student analyzes how language patterns, cultural communication styles, and differences in international credentials may influence AI-driven candidate evaluation. The research encourages critical evaluation of how HR technologies function in varied organizational and cross-cultural environments.

These general learning goals are among those established by the Dillard College of Business Administration. General learning goals represent the skills that graduates will carry with them into their careers. While assessing student performance in obtaining these general learning goals, Dillard College is assessing its programs. The assessments help us improve our curriculum and its delivery.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

ASC offers a schedule of selected subjects tutoring assistance. Please contact the ASC, (940) 397-4684, or visit the ASC homepage for more information.

Student Handbook

Refer to: Student Handbook

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. Office of Student Conduct

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this Moffett Library webpage to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

This course is evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis. To earn a Pass, the student must demonstrate sustained engagement, academic rigor, and satisfactory completion of all required components of the independent study as outlined below. A Pass will be awarded when the student meets the following criteria:

- Approved Research Topic and Proposal:
    - The student submits a clearly defined and faculty-approved research topic that addresses a current issue in Human Resources or Organizational Behavior and includes a compelling, well-articulated research angle.
- Scholarly Engagement:
    - The student demonstrates meaningful engagement with relevant academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles and foundational theories appropriate to the chosen topic.
- Research Progress and Professional Communication:
    - The student meets agreed-upon milestones, communicates professionally with the faculty supervisor, and responds constructively to feedback throughout the semester.
- Final Research Paper:
    - The student submits a completed research paper that reflects analytical depth, theoretical integration, and clarity of thought. The paper must meet established academic standards for organization, argumentation, and citation.
- Academic Integrity:
    - All work must adhere to institutional standards of academic honesty and proper citation practices. A Fail will be assigned if the student does not complete required components, fails to demonstrate adequate engagement with the research process, or submits work that does not meet minimum academic expectations.
- Because this is a Pass/Fail course, numerical or letter grades will not be assigned. Feedback will be provided throughout the semester to support the students' progress and scholarly development.

Homework

Students will work closely with faculty supervisor to identify, refine, and investigate a research topic that reflects current organizational challenges, emerging trends, or evolving workforce dynamics.

Emphasis is placed on integrating theory and empirical research with real-world organizational contexts. Students will critically evaluate academic literature, apply appropriate research frameworks, and develop evidence-based insights

that contribute to scholarly and managerial conversations in HR or OB. The course culminates in a substantive research paper that demonstrates analytical rigor, theoretical integration, and practical relevance for organizational leaders. Topics must address a **current or emerging phenomenon** and incorporate an innovative or nontraditional perspective that challenges conventional assumptions in the field.

Recommended Research Paper Themes

AI as a "Quasi-Manager": Reframing Human Judgment in HR Decision-Making

Rather than asking whether AI *should* be used in HR, the paper examines how AI is already functioning as a de facto manager in hiring, performance evaluation, and workforce analytics—and what this means for accountability, bias, and trust. *Key angles:*
- Algorithmic authority vs. human discretion
- Psychological responses to machine-made decisions
- Ethical blind spots in automated HR systems

Quiet Quitting as a Rational Strategy, Not a Moral Failure

Challenges the dominant narrative that quiet quitting reflects disengagement or laziness, reframing it as a rational response to psychological contract violations and chronic role overload.
Key angles:
- Psychological contracts and unmet expectations
- Burnout normalization and boundary-setting
- Implications for performance management systems

The Dark Side of "High-Trust" Cultures

Explores how organizations that emphasize trust, autonomy, and empowerment may unintentionally increase stress, ambiguity, and self-exploitation among high performers.
Key angles:
- Trust as a control mechanism
- Self-surveillance and internalized pressure
- When empowerment becomes coercive

Remote Work and the Illusion of Flexibility

Investigates whether remote and hybrid work arrangements truly increase autonomy—or simply relocate managerial control into digital surveillance and availability expectations.

Key angles:
- Technostress and digital presenteeism
- Power and control in virtual environments
- Work–life boundary erosion

Psychological Safety Is Not Always Safe

Critically evaluates the assumption that psychological safety universally improves outcomes, examining situations where excessive safety suppresses accountability, candor, or performance.
Key angles:
- Groupthink and conflict avoidance
- Leader responsibility vs. emotional comfort
- Balancing safety with performance pressure

The Rise of the "Invisible Leader" in Flat Organizations

Explores leadership influence without formal authority, focusing on social capital, narrative control, and informal power structures.
Key angles:
- Shadow leadership and influence networks
- Power dynamics in decentralized teams
- Implications for succession planning

Employee Well-Being Programs as Impression Management

Examines whether organizational well-being initiatives function more as symbolic gestures than substantive support mechanisms.
Key angles:
- Well-being washing
- HR signaling theory
- Trust erosion when support is performative

Directions

All written assignments are to be single-spaced, have one-inch margins, and use an 11 or 12-point font (the specific font must present a business appearance and be similar in "size" to Times New Roman or Arial), and be uploaded to D2L in an MS Word or PDF file format. The assignments that you hand in should reflect your professionalism. Written assignments will be graded based on the following five criteria:

- **Depth of Analysis**: The paper should demonstrate thorough research, reflection, and compelling insights.

- **Integration with Course Content**: The paper must effectively use, apply, and extend the concepts covered in class.

- **Creativity and Insight**: The content should be original, engaging, and thought-provoking.
- **Organization and Structure**: The paper should follow a logical framework.
- **Style**: The writing should be professional, with correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Academic Dishonesty Policy & Procedures Academic Dishonesty:

These activities are considered academic dishonesty.

Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individuals to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. a. The term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; or (3) the acquisition without permissions, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university, faculty, or staff. b. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. c.

The term "collusion" refers to collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit, if that collaboration is not authorized by the faculty member in charge.

Extra Credit

Extra Credit is not provided in this course.

Late Work

No late submission will be accepted and graded. Students who experience an emergency need to contact the instructor for late submission permission. Valid documentation is required.

Make Up Work/Tests

All course activities must be submitted before or on set due dates and times. If the student is unable to abide by the due dates and times; it is her/his responsibility to contact the instructor immediately. Valid documentation is

needed for the acceptance of late assignments. The student will receive a score of zero for all late assignments, exams, and projects.

Note: The due dates and times for the activities will adhere to the Central Time Zone.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: January 23, 2026
- Deadline to file for graduation: February 16, 2026
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" April 29, 2026
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings for which they are enrolled. Although students are generally graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower a student's grade if the faculty member deems class attendance and participation essential. In those classes where attendance is considered part of the grade, the instructor should inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement. An instructor with an attendance policy must maintain daily records. The instructor must provide the student with a verbal or written warning before dropping them from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.***

Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ***Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#)**.**

Instructor Class Policies

All the course activities will generally be graded one week after the set due date on an absolute scale. You can check your grades by going to Gradebook. If there If you notice any discrepancy in the grade, please contact me immediately. I will provide
individual feedback or general feedback on the performance of the course activity.

Additional Grading Information:

Academic honesty is mandatory in this course. All assignments must be completed independently. Your submissions to D2L serve as your affirmation that they are exclusively your work and property. If AI tools were utilized, they were strictly compliant with the syllabus policy. You further confirm that no external individuals, aside from a graduate writing tutor gradwritinghelp@msutexas.edu), contributed to the writing of your submission.

Written assignments will be graded based on the following five criteria:

- Depth of Analysis: The paper should demonstrate thorough research, reflection, and compelling insights.

- Integration with Course Content: The paper must effectively use, apply, and extend the concepts covered in class.

- Creativity and Insight: The content should be original, engaging, and thought-provoking.

- Organization and Structure: The paper should follow a logical framework.

- Style: The writing should be professional, with correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, students should give credit to AI tools whenever used, even if only to generate ideas rather than usable text or illustrations.

When using AI tools on assignments, add an appendix showing:

A. The entire exchange, highlighting the most relevant sections

B. A description of precisely which AI tools were used (e.g., ChatGPT private subscription version or DALL-E free version)

C. An explanation of how the AI tools were used (e.g., to generate ideas, turns of phrase, elements of text, long stretches of text, lines of argument, pieces of evidence, maps of the conceptual territory, and illustrations of key concepts, etc.)

D. An account of why AI tools were used (e.g., to save time, to surmount writer's block, to stimulate thinking, to handle mounting stress, to clarify prose, to translate text, to experiment for fun, etc.).

Students are not permitted to use AI tools during examinations. Overall, AI tools should be used wisely and reflectively with an aim to deepen understanding of the subject matter.

You are responsible for the content of any work submitted for this course. Use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate a first draft of text is permitted, *but you must review and revise any AI-generated text before submission.
AI text generators can be useful tools, but they are often prone to factual errors, incorrect or fabricated citations, and misinterpretations of abstract concepts. Utilize them with caution.

Attribution:

All ideas that are not originally one's own have a source, and that source must be attributed. Please be aware that generative AI tends to invent sources. You have a two-fold obligation:
(1) You need to document the process
(2) You need to find and attribute the original source of the idea, identify the location within the source, and provide a working link to the location.
If you quote the AI itself, label it as "synthesized communication" and reference it like the conventions for "personal communication". Note that such "synthesized communication" is not a valid source for facts, only for the conversation itself.

Facticity:

Besides inventing sources, generative AI may also invent facts. Verification is your responsibility: submitting factually wrong material is an academic offence, and whether the source of the error is you or the AI makes no difference. You need to check the facts, the quotes, the arguments, the logic, and document what you did to validate your material.

This course assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any substantive portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and using artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT.

If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of academic dishonesty may be referred to the Dean of Students Office, for possible review. Academic dishonesty is inclusive of the full range of academic penalties imposable by the university, but not limited to penalties including a grade penalty and or dismissal from the course upon the first finding.

Inappropriate Uses of ChatGPT Plagiarism and Cheating:

Do not submit work generated by ChatGPT as your own. Always cite any substantial assistance received. Here is something to keep in mind. *If you are using three or more words in a row from a source, it needs to be identified as a direct quote and cited.

Do not use ChatGPT during exams or assessments unless explicitly permitted by the instructor.

Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat

Do not present AI-generated content as original ideas without proper attribution.

Avoid using ChatGPT to impersonate others or generate deceptive content.

Do not become overly dependent on ChatGPT for assignments or learning. Use it as a supplement, not a replacement, for your effort and understanding.

Please note that I have the capability to use various technologies to detect AI usage.

Attribution and Citation

When using ChatGPT, always provide appropriate attribution:
For Ideas and Concepts: Mention ChatGPT as a source in your

acknowledgments or bibliography.

For Direct Text: Use quotation marks and cite ChatGPT as you would any other source.

Example: "According to ChatGPT, an AI language model by OpenAI, the concept can be explained as follows..."

Please adhere to APA 7 formatting and style for all written assignments.

Additionally, these resources will assist you with proper citation:

MSU TEXAS GRADUATE WRITING: gradwritinghelp@msutexas.edu
APA Style: How to Cite ChatGPT
Purdue Owl: APA Formatting and Style Guide

Instructor Support

If you have any questions about how to use ChatGPT appropriately, please reach out to the instructor. We encourage open dialogue to ensure you can effectively and ethically integrate AI tools into your learning process.

Professionalism:

As an MBA student, you are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism. The following guidelines outline key expectations:

Integrity and Ethics:

Demonstrate honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all academic and professional activities. Adhere to the principles of academic integrity and the code of conduct of the institution.

Respect and Inclusivity:

Treat all individuals with respect and consideration. Foster an inclusive environment by valuing diverse perspectives and backgrounds.

Accountability:

Take responsibility for your actions and decisions. Meet deadlines, attend classes regularly, and be punctual for all commitments.

Professional Communication:

Communicate effectively and professionally in all forms of interaction, whether written, verbal, or digital. Use appropriate language and tone.

Collaboration and Teamwork:

Engage constructively with peers, faculty, and colleagues. Contribute positively to team efforts and respect the contributions of others.

Attendance and Class Participation:

An instructor may drop a student at any time during the semester for excessive absences, consistently failing to meet class assignments, an indifferent attitude, or disruptive conduct. The instructor must provide the student with a verbal or written warning before dropping them from the class. An instructor's drop of a student takes precedence over a student-initiated course drop made at a later date.

Students who miss more than one-third of the class periods without a valid excuse will be dropped from this course with a failing semester grade. In the case of an excused absence, the instructor must be notified of the excuse, and

the document justifying the absence must be turned in to the instructor within one week of the absence.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) are used to determine the refund amount. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request.)

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University strives to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified individuals with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more information, please visit Disability Support Services.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: Campus Carry Rules and Policies

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place that prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by the MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "*Run. Hide. Fight."* which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: [*"Run. Hide. Fight."*](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Course Schedule:

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Week or Module	Topics	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Due Dates
Week 1	Course Orientation	Course Orientation	Course Orientation Submit Research Topic 01/28
Week 2	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 02/04
Week 3	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 02/18
Week 4	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 03/04

Week or Module	Topics	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Due Dates
Week 5	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 03/18
Week 6	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 04/01
Week 7	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 04/15
Week 8	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 04/29 (Draft Due)
Week 9	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper	Follow Up on Progress of Research Paper 05/13 (Final Paper Due)