Welcome to IT7850! This class will be held entirely online via Blackboard. Please read the syllabus thoroughly so you will understand how the course will work, the content that will be covered, and the learning activities that will help you build your understanding of needs assessment and analysis.

About the course
Needs assessment is a central process in improving learning and performance. The only way to improve something (e.g. performance) is to know what aspects are failing to meet the mark, and what factors are influencing the performance gaps of interest.

It is not uncommon to confuse needs assessment with what is simply a list of wants and desires. To say we need ‘training’ or “better instruction” or “better incentives” with no evidence is not actually an identification of needs. These statements are about solutions to problems that are assumed to exist rather than documented by evidence.

In this course, and beyond, needs will be defined as gaps in results based on documented evidence – not the lack of wants, which are usually about preferred means or solutions that have not been substantiated by performance data.

During this course, we will learn to distinguish means from ends, to understand and align performance at various levels of results, to identify gaps at these various levels, to consider potential causal factors, and to develop solutions and recommendations in the context of the causal factors we have to address.
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Define needs and needs assessment
2. Define needs/causal analysis and its relationship to recommended solutions
3. Discuss key concepts in needs assessment and analysis
4. Compare and contrast needs assessment and analysis
5. Compare and contrast needs assessment and evaluation
6. Compare and contrast needs assessment approaches and models
7. Apply your needs assessment knowledge to an organizational scenario

**Course organization**

The course is divided into 8 units, most of which will cover a two-week period on the semester calendar. Most will start on a Monday (at 12:00 AM) and end on the second Sunday following the start date (at 11:59 PM). Please see the schedule on page 7 below, which specifies the dates for each unit as well as an overview of topics, readings, and assignments.

For each unit, there will be a folder in the Content area of Blackboard (linked in the left sidebar). Each unit folder will be available to students on the day that the unit starts. In this folder, you will find:

- An agenda including goals and tasks for that unit
- Narrated presentations of the unit’s content
- Any additional readings outside of the required texts
- Any activities or assignments (including due dates)

**Required readings**


This text is available from the bookstore and is also available as an e-book through Wayne State's library. The e-book’s online formatting is a bit difficult to read in my opinion, but I wanted to mention it as an option. You can go to library.wayne.edu and do a search on the title to get the link to it if you want to try it out.


You can download this open source book for free at: [http://ryanrwatkins.com/guidebook.html](http://ryanrwatkins.com/guidebook.html)

Additional readings will be posted to the course site. The schedule on page 7 provides a tentative overview of the readings, but please remember that this may be subject to change so always go by the Unit Agenda on the course site for the most up-to-date information.
## Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual: Reading Reflection (6 reflections, 5 points each)</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individual or Team Assignment: Selling a Needs Assessment</td>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Individual or Team Assignment: Needs Assessment/Analysis Model Research</td>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Team Assignment: Needs Assessment Application</td>
<td>11/20 (10)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First draft: Include a description of the organization and presenting symptoms, along with the aims and deliverables of the needs assessment</td>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final draft: Expand your first draft to incorporate diagnosis and recommendations</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total points available: **100**

### Assignment Notes

1. **Grammar & Spelling:** All work should be original and free of spelling & grammatical errors. If more than 2 errors of this type are found, this will result in a **1-point deduction**. If more than 4 errors, there will be a **2-point deduction**. I am attaching a consequence to this type of error because we want to get into the habit to building trust with our clients, and this is very difficult to do if client spots simple errors in written communication. Think of other errors of which they might begin to imagine you’re capable…

Remember, we ultimately want to influence decision makers into making good decisions to improve performance. Everything we do should feed into that ultimate purpose, not take away from it.

2. **Submission and Resubmissions:** All work should be submitted via the assignment link on Blackboard or emailed to me directly (alisa.hutchinson@wayne.edu). If you are not satisfied with the first grade you obtain, you may resubmit one time for additional points, within 1 week of the date you received my original feedback.

3. **The assignment information provided below is intended to provide an overview of the graded assignments.** Detailed instructions on how to complete and submit each assignment will be provided in the course website.
Overview of Assignments

Reflectations (Individual Assignment)
For the reading reflections, you will be assigned by me to a reflection group starting in Unit 2 in order to make discussions more manageable and meaningful. For Units 2-7, you will be expected to respond to a trigger question provided on the group’s discussion board.

To receive full credit for the task you must demonstrate reflective consideration of the question and an understanding of its implications for practice. Additionally, you are expected to respond at least once to at least one classmate’s comments. You are also encouraged to actively participate in beyond this initial comment as discussions with your peers are an important avenue for learning. Your reflection and comments should be substantive, but doesn’t have to be needlessly long.

Your initial reflection could range from 3-5 paragraphs in length and your other comments could vary from 1-3 paragraphs. Again, the key is not length but substance. Substance is reflected by clearly responding to the issue at hand, bring in another dimension to the discussion, providing an example, synthesizing various remarks, bringing in external references that illustrate a different perspective, etc. Please refrain from one-liners, if they are not followed up by further articulation.

You will find the trigger questions for each unit’s discussions within the Discussion Board. Simply respond directly, there is no need to attach the response as a Word document.

Selling Needs Assessment (Your choice: Individual/Team)
While “selling” may carry a negative connotation, what we are talking about here is influencing others to seriously consider a needs assessment as an important preliminary component of any ethical and serious performance improvement effort. In this sense, we are selling an idea. To complete this assignment, you will be required to reflect on class presentations and discussions to piece together what your “sales pitch” would be. That is, what are the critical components of your argument for starting with a needs assessment, and the potential risks of skipping this important step.

Needs Assessment/Analysis Model Research (Your choice: Individual/Team)
This course will give you a chance to study and apply needs assessment using the most systemic framework in our field, Roger Kaufman’s Organizational Elements Model (OEM). However, we will weave into our discussions other needs assessment and analysis, or front-end, models as coined by Joe Harless. One of the ways in which we will do that is by researching one of several well respected front-end models and presenting it to your classmates via one of our unit discussion in Blackboard’s Discussion Board.
**Needs Assessment Application (Team)**
You will apply one of the needs assessment approaches to a situation of your choice. To help you manage your activities, you will submit an initial description of the organizational performance situation first. To help formulate an organizational situation that warrants the application of a front-end model, use the readings, past experiences, the experiences of colleagues, or the organizational issues that we discuss in class. The better you focus on real issues you have faced, or known about in some fashion, the easier it will be to formulate a full scenario.

With a full scenario established, you will then apply, you will apply one of the needs assessment approaches discussed in class, highlighting the critical steps and elements you applied, the data you sought, the the data collection tools you used, how you analyzed the data, and what your findings and recommendations were.

**NOTE:** For the Needs Assessment Application assignment and for any assignments you choose to complete with a team, the team size should be no larger than five people. You are free to form your own groups for these assignments; they do not need to be the same teams as your reading reflection group.

**Attention Students with Disabilities**
If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

Students who are registered with Student Disability Services and who are eligible for alternate testing accommodations such as extended test time and/or a distraction-reduced environment should present the required test permit to the professor at least one week in advance of the exam. Federal law requires that a student registered with SDS is entitled to the reasonable accommodations specified in the student’s accommodation letter, which might include allowing the student to take the final exam on a day different than the rest of the class.

**Withdrawal Policy**
The last day to drop any class with a tuition refund is the end of the second week of classes. The last day to withdraw from the class, without a notation of “W” on the transcript, is the end of the fourth week of classes. All drop/add activity during the first four weeks should be done through Pipeline. Between the end of the fourth and fifth weeks, withdrawals require the permission of the instructor and must be submitted on a Drop/Add form to the Registrar’s Office.

**Religious Observance Policy**
Because of the extraordinary variety of religious affiliations represented in the University student body and staff, the Wayne State University calendar makes no provision for religious holidays. It is University policy, however, to respect the faith and religious obligations of the individual. Students who find that their classes or examinations involve conflicts with their religious observances are expected to notify their instructors well in advance so that alternative arrangements as suitable as possible may be worked out.

**Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism and Cheating**
NOTE: The information contained in this section has been edited from the Student Code of Conduct and written in a condensed format. Anyone with specific questions regarding academic misbehavior should consult the source document at www.doso.wayne.edu/codeofconduct.pdf. If the provisions described on this page differ in any way from the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, then the provisions of the Code shall prevail.

Academic misbehavior means any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution or subvert the education process. All forms of academic misbehavior are prohibited at Wayne State University, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct (http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct-services.html).

Students who commit or assist in committing dishonest acts are subject to downgrading (to a failing grade for the test, paper, or other course-related activity in question, or for the entire course) and/or additional sanctions as described in the Student Code of Conduct.

Cheating: Intentionally using or attempting to use, or intentionally providing or attempting to provide, unauthorized materials, information or assistance in any academic exercise. Examples include: (a) copying from another student’s test paper; (b) allowing another student to copy from a test paper; (c) using unauthorized material such as a "cheat sheet" during an exam.

Fabrication: Intentional and unauthorized falsification of any information or citation. Examples include: (a) citation of information not taken from the source indicated; (b) listing sources in a bibliography not used in a research paper.

Plagiarism: To take and use another’s words or ideas as one’s own. Examples include: (a) failure to use appropriate referencing when using the words or ideas of other persons; (b) altering the language, paraphrasing, omitting, rearranging, or forming new combinations of words in an attempt to make the thoughts of another appear as your own.
Other forms of academic misbehavior include, but are not limited to: (a) unauthorized use of resources, or any attempt to limit another student’s access to educational resources, or any attempt to alter equipment so as to lead to an incorrect answer for subsequent users; (b) enlisting the assistance of a substitute in the taking of examinations; (c) violating course rules as defined in the course syllabus or other written information provided to the student; (d) selling, buying or stealing all or part of an un-administered test or answers to the test; (e) changing or altering a grade on a test or other academic grade records.

**Tentative Schedule**

Refer to the **UNIT AGENDAS** on the course site for unit content, assignments, and due dates.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/12-9/25</td>
<td>Defining needs assessment and exploring the Organizational Elements Model (OEM)</td>
<td>Kaufman &amp; Guerra-López, Chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>9/18: Reflection post 9/25: Discussion comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/26-10/9</td>
<td>Conducting needs assessments at the Mega and Macro levels</td>
<td>Kaufman &amp; Guerra-López, Chapters 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>10/2: Reflection post 10/9: Selling a needs assessment paper &amp; discussion comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10/10-10/23</td>
<td>Conducting needs assessments at the Micro and Quasi levels</td>
<td>Kaufman &amp; Guerra-López, Chapters 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>10/16: Reading reflection 10/23: Discussion comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/24-11/6</td>
<td>Causal analysis as a path for identifying and recommending solutions</td>
<td>Kaufman &amp; Guerra-López, Chapters 7</td>
<td>10/30: Reflection post 11/6: Needs Assessment analysis model research &amp; discussion comments</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>11/21-12/4</td>
<td>Gap assessment tools</td>
<td>Kaufman &amp; Guerra-López, Chapter 10</td>
<td>11/27: Reading reflection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Watkins Section 3: Tools and Techniques</td>
<td>12/4: Discussion comments</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflecting on the course and your understanding of needs assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>12/12: Final draft of Needs Assessment Application</td>
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*Note: Additional required readings may be posted on Blackboard*