

GENERAL BUSINESS 7397, section 18842: BOOKS AN MBA SHOULD READ

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This is an online course that will require you to read three books, two before and one during the second summer session. The first two books are assigned for everyone: *Slingshot*, by Gabor George Burt, and *Made to Stick*, by Chip and Dan Heath. **Please plan to buy or borrow them and read them carefully before the session begins.** I'll randomly assign to each person in the class a third book that is unique to you, but those books will be lent to you at our first class session. You may choose to switch your unique/assigned book with any "alternate" if you wish, as long as you do so on the first night of class.

The class is offline, requiring that you show up in person, only twice: once for the first night, 6-8:50 p.m. Monday, July 8, and second for a final exam 6-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 7.

The first night of class and also the final exam will be held in Room 114 in Melcher Hall. **Failing to show up the first night means you will be dropped from the course. I decided NOT to deal with what turns out to be a complex process for you to take the final exam on a computer, so it will be right here in 114, 6 p.m.; please bring a pen.**

Course objectives

- You'll learn something useful from the three books you will read, including how to apply ideas to increase creativity and how to make your ideas memorable. The two books assigned to all of you will cover those topics.
- You'll improve your ability to use what you read by considering with others in your group how the ideas in the Burt book could apply to actual actions you might take now or in the future.
- You'll become a more careful writer. Everything you submit must be written professionally, a likelier outcome with a great deal of rereading and editing.
- You'll sound more sophisticated than you otherwise might, based on your familiarity with three books you will have read and 29 others that you may not ever read, but will know about from the summaries prepared by others in the class.
- Prompted by your experience in this class, you'll read more other books in the future than might otherwise have been the case.

Assignment #1: Summarizing the unique-to-you book

Some of the book titles came from a survey of our most successful alums; they were asked to supply 2-3 choices each that they would characterize as (1) useful for an MBA, and (2) not miserable to read. My note to the alumni asked them to name books in any non-textbook category: advice, analysis, biography, history, or fiction. Others came from four Websites reviewing business books – the Heath book came to my attention that way -- or from people whose judgment I respect, the source of the Burt book. The result is a list of books that I or the library will supply for a unique-to-you, read-and-summarize assignment. Once you have your unique-to-you book, via random draw or a swap with the “alternate” pile, please read it and write up a one-page summary that everyone in the class will read and take an exam over. They will need to know:

What the book said. Nobody wants your opinion of the book here; what was the thesis of the book? If it had no clear thesis, do some thinking. Even “Mary had a little lamb” has a thesis: Sometimes pets follow their owners around, and when they do, people react in predictable ways.

How the book backed up that thesis. If it used examples, offer at least one. If it made an argument, present the gist of that argument. This section should be about one-third of your one-page write-up.

What the book would help someone to do better. Invest successfully? Make better strategic decisions? Keep good employees with the organization? Allocate time better? Please offer more than a sentence here. Please make the case that this book would help someone be better at [whatever], and specifics are key here. Example: using the idea from Chapter 5 that a lamb following Mary to school will evoke laughter from her friends, any student could raise school morale by letting a lamb follow him or her often.

Who wrote the book, briefly, and what qualified him/her/them to do so

When the book was written, and what else that author has written before or since

Anything else that you would want to know if your immediate supervisor at work mentioned that book and you had only read a **one-page** write-up like the one you will write here.

I have posted a sample write-up on Blackboard Learn. It applies ideas from *Made to Stick* (MTS), and you are also required to do so – the expectation is that each of you will know something about 33 books not just the night of the final exam but also after that, because the summaries helped the ideas to stick in your mind.

Please post your write-up by opening the “Turn it in” icon on Blackboard no later than noon Monday, July 22, and earlier is fine. I may ask you to make changes to improve it, but hope that won’t be necessary. I will assign your grade, which is one-third of your course grade, based on that **first** submission, to motivate you not to just mail in a first draft. An “A” grade on the assignment goes to all who are clear, accurate, make no errors in the use of the English language, and follow my directions. Please notice that those directions include thinking and include employing at least one idea from *MTS* to help you write a **memorable** summary. Yes, you need to read the entire book, and I need to be able to tell that you did, unless I list a specific set of fewer pages, as is the case with several of these books. I assigned *MTS* to raise the odds that the messages in at least some of these books stick with all of you after the course ends. Coincidentally, a Bauer Finance professor mentioned to me over coffee that he thinks it’s the best book a graduate student can read.

I’ll publish the write-ups from all class members on Blackboard on Friday, July 26, and post grades that same day.

Assignment #2: a one-page group paper

Absolutely, you want to read both *MTS* and the Burt book before July 8. We will have six randomly assigned teams of 5 students each, able to carry on online discussions with each other that are not available to other class members, but are available to me. Each team’s task is to prepare a **one-page team paper** on the Burt book, *Slingshot*, after considerable discussion within your group. The paper will describe two potential applications of what you learned from reading the book, each pertinent to at least one of you. You don’t need to be Steve Jobs to find the book applicable; it can be used within the scope of any professional’s current job responsibilities or the responsibilities of a position you aspire to. Please offer, sequentially, **two** (different) realistic scenarios that would prompt some action. For each, recommend a specific group-endorsed action, noting the material in the book that prompts or justifies each.

Your grade here, like your grade on your write-up of your unique book, is based on my assessment that you are clear, accurate, and followed directions (you were specific, demonstrated that you were thinking, and used the English language professionally). I suggest that you start that paper no later than the day your individual papers are due, Monday, July 22. The group paper is due at noon Monday, July 29, posted in the Blackboard assignment drop box. I’ll grade all group papers by Friday, August 2, and post grades that same day.

A blank form to e-mail to me, evaluating the contribution of other group members, will be posted on Blackboard. Please e-mail a completed form to me by noon Monday, August 5, to gelb@uh.edu, **not via Blackboard e-mail** (that way I can respond and let you know I received

it). Within your group, everyone evaluates the contribution of all other group members on a scale where 3 is “fine,” and anyone with an average of 2.8 or above gets the group grade on the paper. Below 2.8 but above 2.2 you lose one letter grade; below 2.2 you lose two.

Assignment #3 is the final exam

Once the one-page write-ups from the class are published on Blackboard Learn, July 26, you’ll need to read and study them all. The final exam, **on campus**, will be from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 7. Expect two questions (your choice, from three) **covering all of the one-page write-ups and the two books assigned to all**. Each answer is limited to one page; please think more and write less. You’ll be given scratch paper on which to draft answers and improve them before writing a final version. Sample question: Please compare the books that offered investment advice: How was their advice alike, and how different? Which one seemed to you probably most useful, and why do you say that? Be sure that any book you mention is correctly identified by title and author. Your grade on this exam is the final third of your course grade. Your semester grade simply averages your three grades: the paper unique to you, the group paper, and the exam. **Please bring your unique-to-you book that you borrowed on the first night with you to the exam to turn in with your paper; that’s the only way to receive a grade in the course.**

Schedule summary

Monday, July 8, 6 p.m., on-campus class in 114 Melcher Hall. You walk in having obtained a copy of *MTS* and a copy of *Slingshot* and having read both. You leave with one additional book to read.

Monday, July 22, by noon, you post on Blackboard via the “Turn it in” icon your write-up of that additional book. Then (or earlier) you start discussing Burt’s *Slingshot* with your group, to prepare a group paper due in one week.

Friday, July 26, you can go to Blackboard at noon and see posted write-ups from all class members. I’ll post grades for these papers on Blackboard. **You need to begin studying them for the final exam.**

Monday, July 29, by noon, your group paper is due; please email it to me.

Friday, August 2, by noon, I’ll post grades for the group papers.

Monday, August 5, by noon, is the deadline to send me your form evaluating the contribution of each member of your team to the group paper. Please assume that the group paper grade

you saw Friday is your individual grade as well – that your contribution was considered OK by your team -- unless I let you know otherwise by noon Tuesday, August 6.

Wednesday, August 7, 6-7:30 p.m. is the final exam, in Room 114 Melcher Hall.

The usual caution: The UH Academic Honesty Policy is strictly enforced by the Bauer College of Business. A discussion of the policy is included in the University of Houston Student Handbook, <http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html>. Students are expected to be familiar with this policy.

The following pages list the books. The assumption that I'll assign 30 is based on the class quota of 30 students.

Title of the book	Author
<i>(Note: books coded as "A" will be those for which students draw.</i>	
<i>Those coded "B" are available to swap for a book you draw.)</i>	
The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference	Malcolm Gladwell A
The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century	Thomas Friedman A (pp. 1-277 and 489-639).
Boomerang	Michael Lewis A
The Power of Habit	Charles Duhigg A
The Trusted Advisor	David H. Maister, Charles H. Green, and Robert M. Galford A
You Can Negotiate Anything	Herb Cohen A
What Matters Now	Gary Hamel A
The Wisdom of Crowds	James Surowiecki A
How The Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In	Jim Collins A
Blue Ocean Strategy	W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne A
Steve Jobs	Walter Isaacson A (Start on p. 333)
The Wal-Mart Effect	Charles Fishman A
The Quest	Daniel Yergen A (Start on p. 453)
Guide to the 50 Economic Indicators that Really Matter	Simon Constable & Robert E. Wright A
Why I Left Goldman Sachs	Greg Smith A
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable	Patrick Lencioni A
Switch	Chip Heath and Dan Heath A
Leading Change	John P. Kotter A
The Four Pillars of Investing	William J. Bernstein A
Outliers	Malcolm Gladwell A
The Innovator's Dilemma	Clayton M. Christensen A
The Essential Drucker	Peter Drucker A
How to Win Friends & Influence People...	Dale Carnegie & Associates A
Thinking Fast and Slow	Daniel Kahneman A
Oil: Money, Politics, and Power in the 21st Century	Tom Bower A (Start on p. 153)
That Used to be Us	Thos. Friedman & Michael Mandelbaum A (Pages 65-211)

