

I. Introduction to the Course and to Transportation Management DL

I think, as a student, I would be interested in three questions at the beginning of this course:

1. What is transportation management?
2. How will we study the subject?
3. How will my performance be assessed (i.e., how will my grade be assigned?)

This note takes up these three questions.

First,

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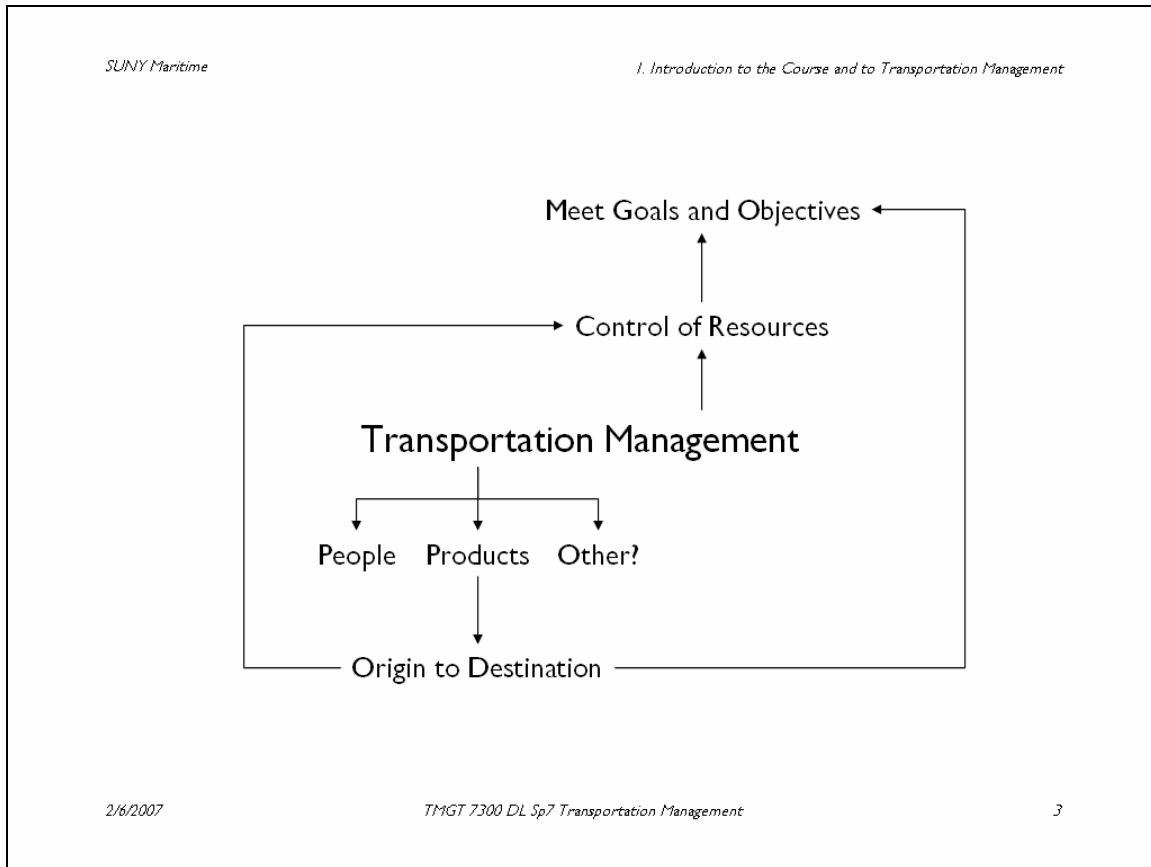
What is transportation management?

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A way to approach the answer is to parse¹ key words of the question.



We most often think of transportation as the movement of people or products from where they are to where they need to be. Those that study transportation refer to this movement as providing place and time utility. That is, transportation adds value to the customer. For example, coal in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming has a certain value. When moved to an electricity generating plant in Georgia it has higher value.

By "other", I mean that things other than people and product can be transported. Money and ideas come immediately to mind.

This transportation takes place between and origin and destination defining the start and finish of the movement. For example, several time per year I transport myself, by either automobile or a combination of automobile, commuter train, and subway (intermodal, of which we will speak more later) from my home to downtown Manhattan.

Management² is about the control of the resources used to provide transportation to achieve goals and objectives.

Whose goals and objectives are of interest?

¹ To break (a sentence) down into its component parts of speech with an explanation of the form, function, and syntactical relationship of each part. Source: The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

² n. administration, control, supervision The administration of a business concern or public undertaking. Management includes the actions of planning, organising, directing, coordinating, controlling and evaluating the use of people, money, materials and facilities to accomplish missions and tasks. Source: www.tasker.com/Definitions.htm

In my opinion, the first and most important answer to this question is the goals and objectives of the customer (viz. the shipper, the consignor). This ought to be obvious, but you would be surprised how often it seems to be ignored in the commercial world. We will get into reasons for this later in the course.

The simple fact is that if you, as a transportation provider, do not help the customer meet his goals and objectives, then he really has little use for you.

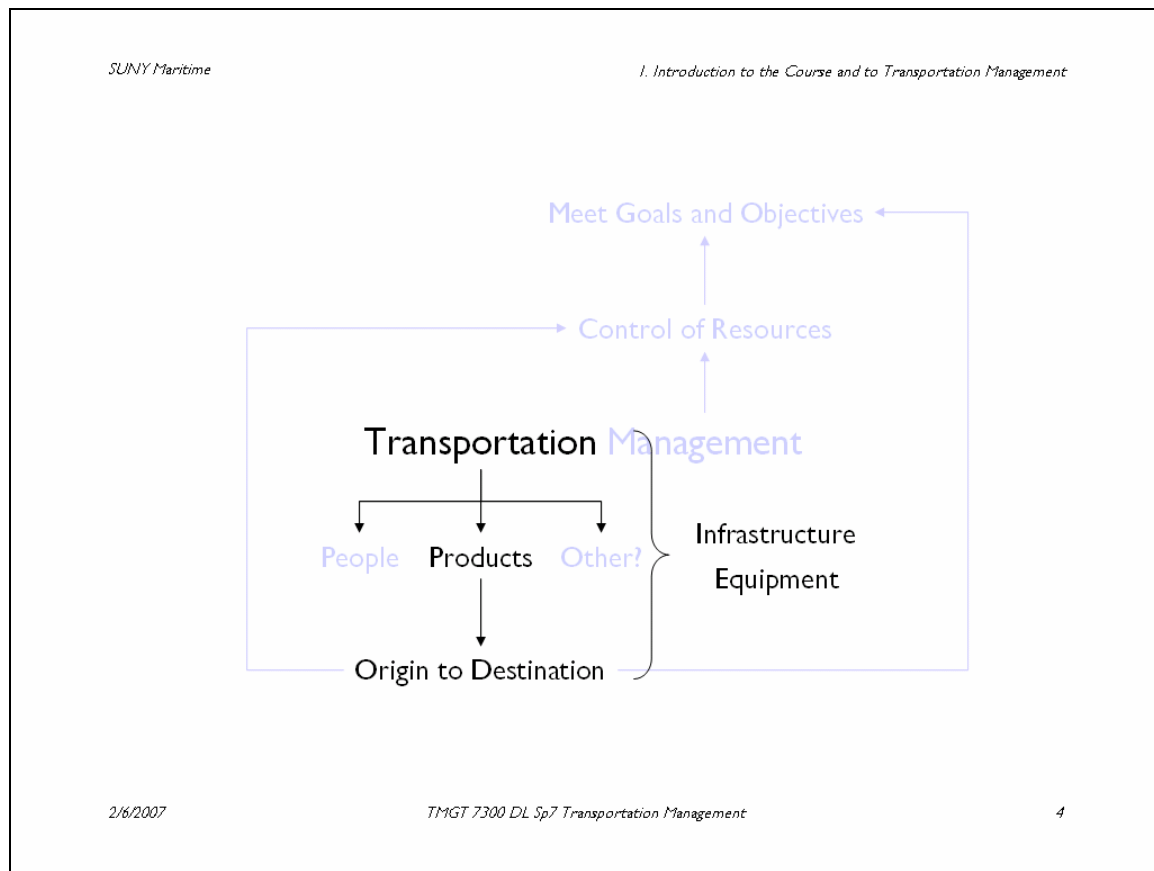
On the other hand, you have the goals and objectives of the transportation provider. In the commercial world you are in business to provide a return to your shareholders. You need to make a profit of a magnitude sufficient to attract the needed resources.

You can appreciate that there are often conflicts between the two sets of goals and objectives. How one resolves these conflicts is a subject taken up under Relationship Management later in this course.

Now, a few words about the arrows originating at Origin and Destination.

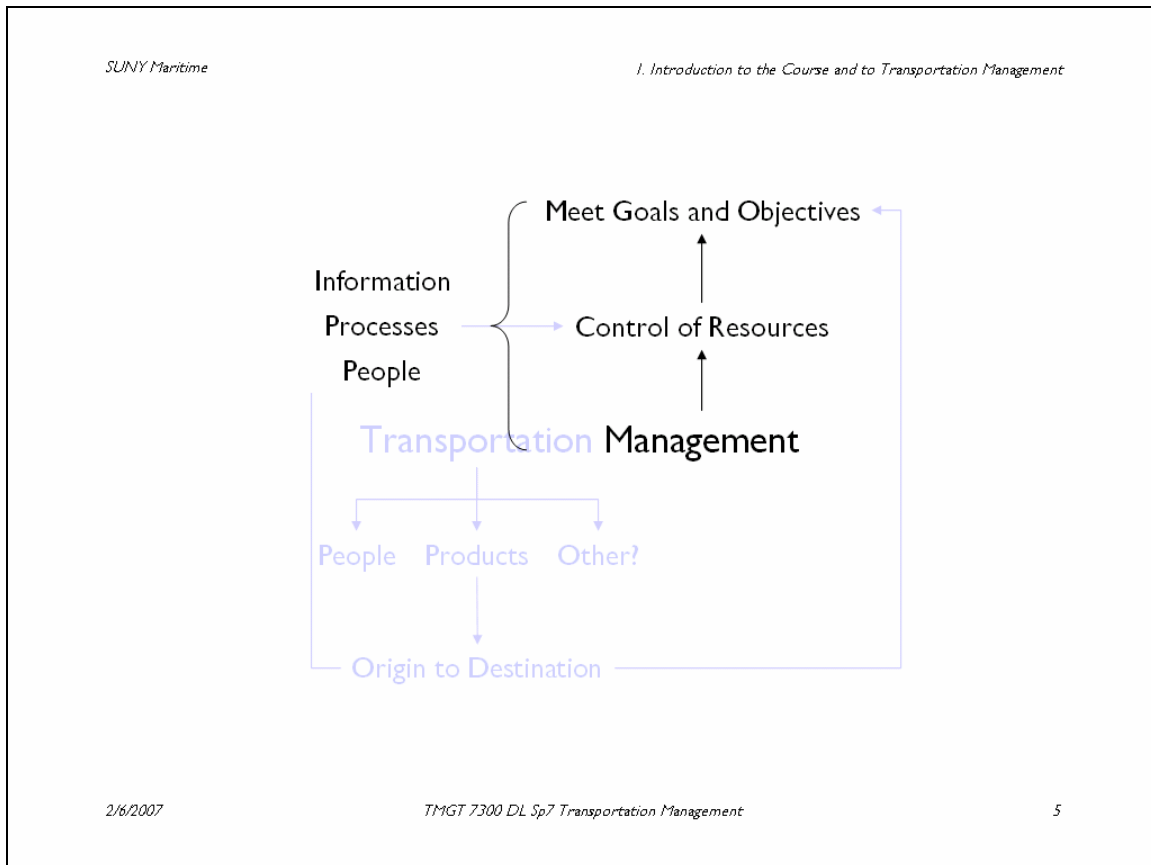
The arrow to the left implies that the origin and destination defining the movement has a profound affect on the resources deployed and the way in which they are managed. Think, for example, of the different resources and management approaches required if the origin-destination pair (a common phrase in transportation) were Boston to Chicago as compared to Beijing to Cairo.

The arrow to the right implies that the origin and destination defining the movement has a profound affect on the goals and objectives that are to be met. Think again about Boston - Chicago versus Beijing - Cairo, but use Goals and Objectives as the framework for thinking.



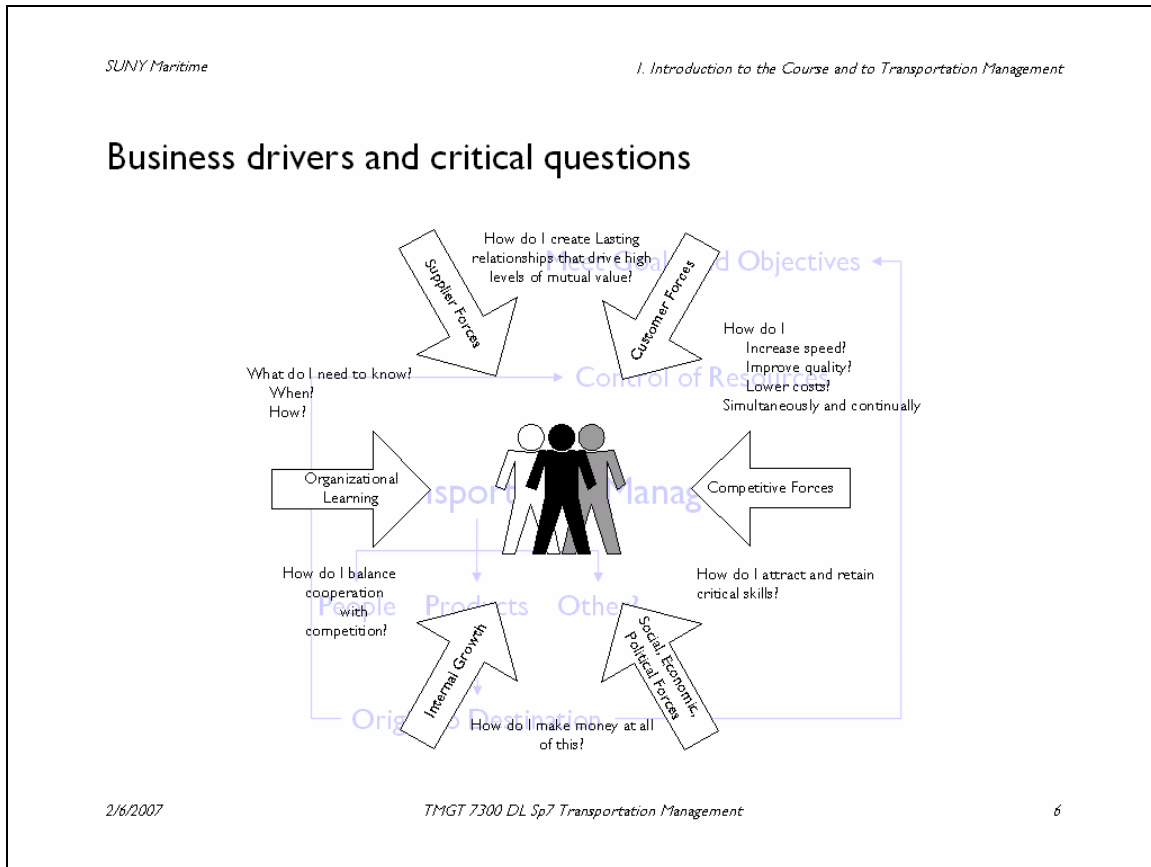
This course focuses on the movement of product. That is, we are discussing freight and not passenger transportation.

Transportation derives from demand, a topic we will take up later in the course. It is tangible. One can touch the shipment, the container in which it may ride, the truck upon which the container may be placed, the roadway on which the truck rides. That is, transportation is provided through a combination of infrastructure (e.g., roadways, rail tracks, ports and harbors) and equipment (e.g., trucks and trailers, locomotives and railway cars, container-handling equipment). We will say more about infrastructure and equipment as the course goes on.



Control of the resources takes place by using a management system comprising information, processes, and people. Management systems are a superset of information systems. This course will discuss the information, processes, and people critical to transportation management.

All I have so far described exists within a larger context.



The people in the organization, especially middle and upper management, respond to a number of business drivers.³

There are four external drivers:

1. Social, Economic, and Political Forces
2. Customer Forces
3. Supplier Forces
4. Competitive Forces

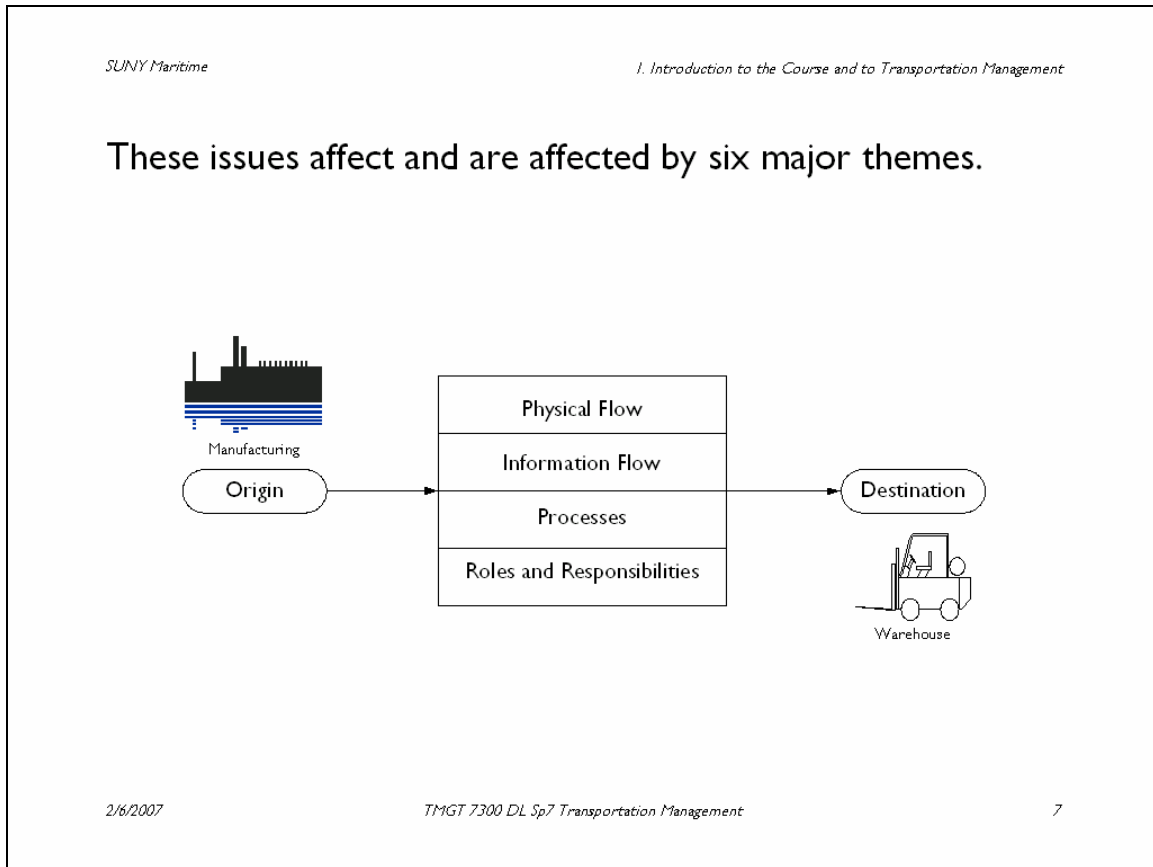
There are two internal drivers:

1. Internal Growth
2. Organizational Learning

The management of a transportation organization cannot simply draw a line around itself and worry only about those issues on its side of the line. We will be considering these forces in some detail.

³ A business driver is a significant force that shapes the market in which a firm operates or shapes how the firm operates in the market. It is a force that demands the attention of management.

We will also be discussing a framework for the description of transportation.



This framework has six themes.

1. Origin; where does the transportation start?
2. Destination; where does the transportation end?
3. Physical Flow; how does the product get from origin to destination?
4. Information Flow; how does the information flow to support the physical flow?
5. Processes; what processes are used to assure the flow takes place as required?
6. Roles and Responsibilities; who are the principal parties in this transportation and what are their responsibilities?

So, the above describes, at an abstract level, the matters we will be discussing in this course.

Next,

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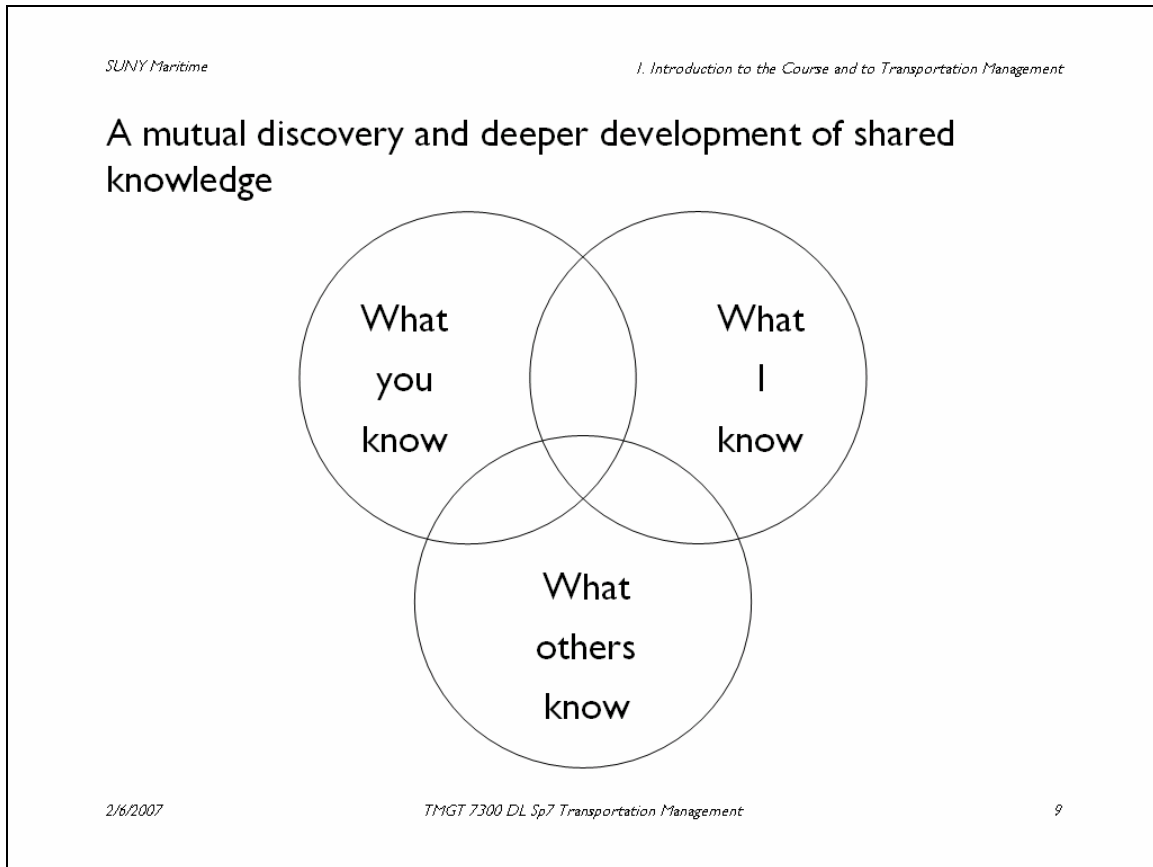
How can we learn about transportation management?

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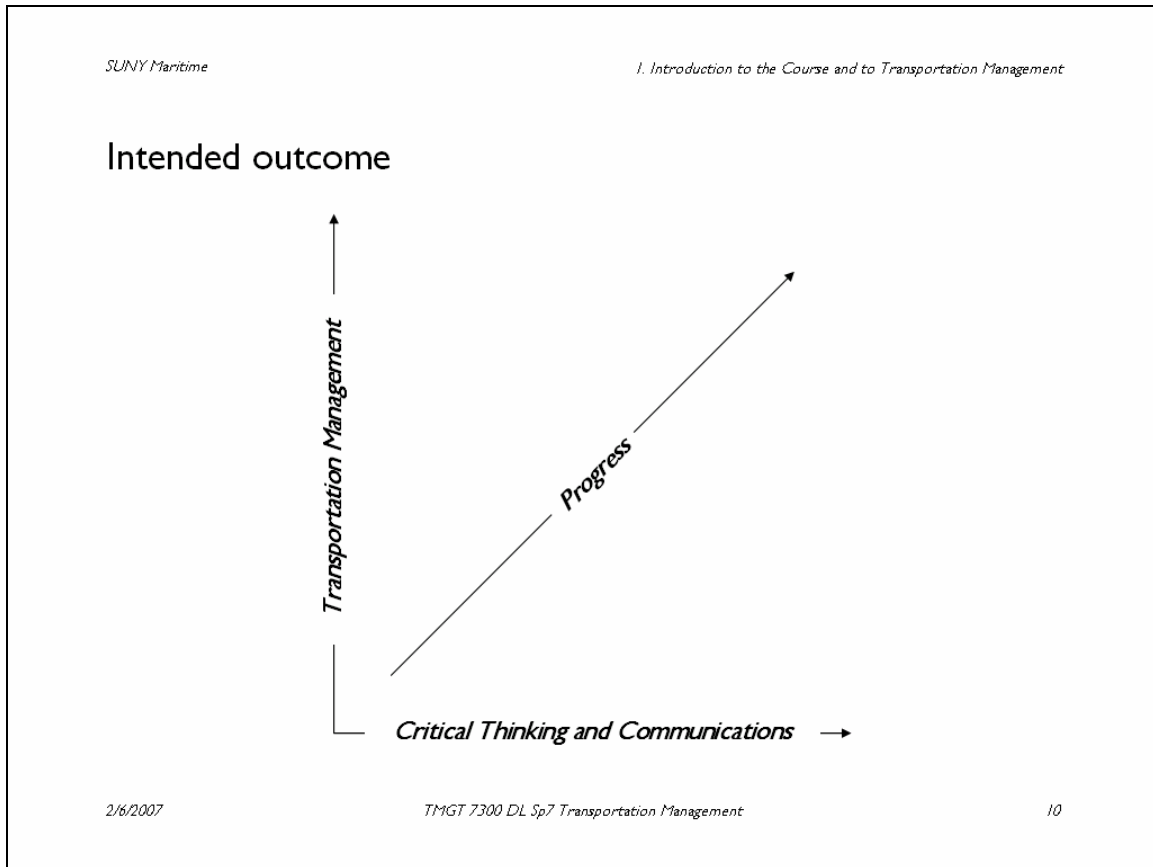
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I visualize the learning process as the understanding and intersection of three sets of information.



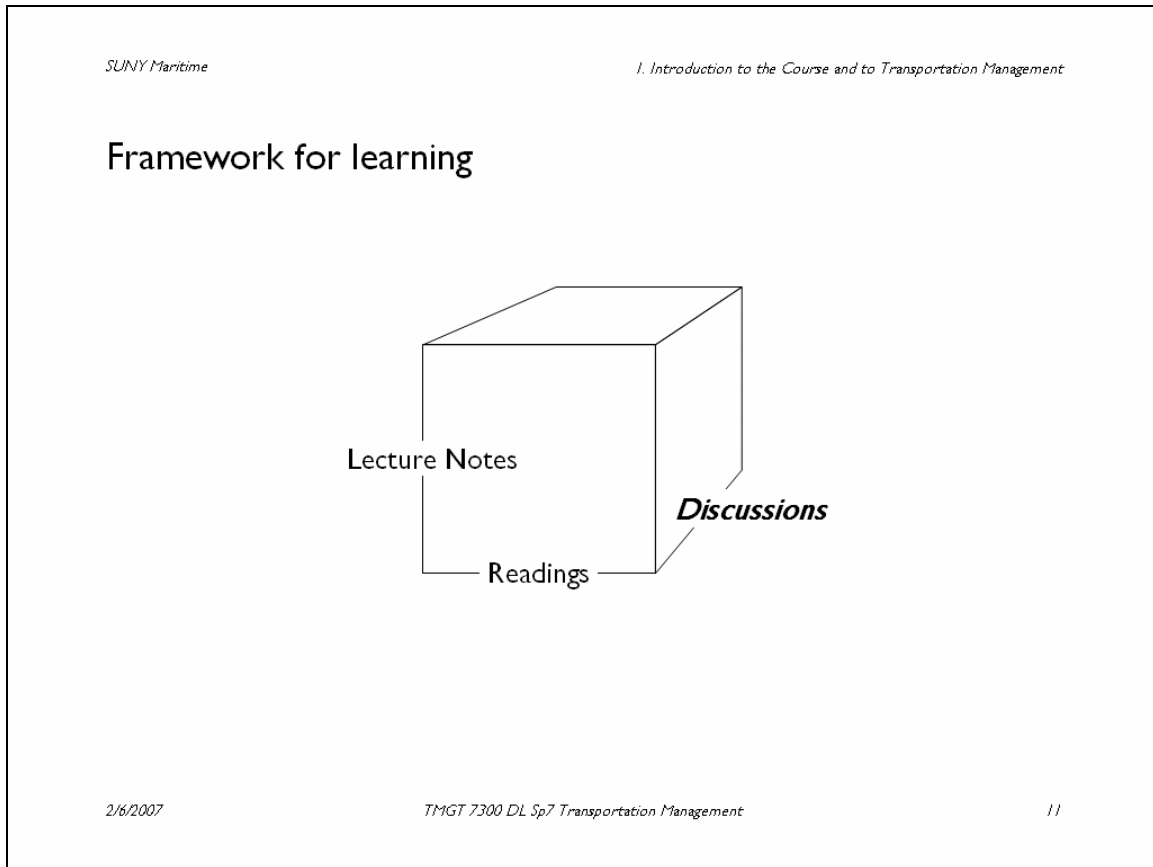
Knowledge, skills, and experience related to transportation management exists in you, me, and others. Our purpose is to work together to expand your knowledge, skills, and experience to include what I and others know of the subject. In this sense, the others include those outside the course (e.g., the authors of the textbook) and your fellow students.

The intended outcome of our mutual efforts in this course is:



You enter this course with a certain level of knowledge, skills, and experience in transportation management, critical thinking, and communications. You could position yourself on this diagram. What we endeavor to do is to move as far as we can towards the upper right in this chart. Your assessment, then, is a measurement of where I think you are on this chart at the end of the course.

The framework for learning looks like this.



The learning space has three dimensions.

1. Lectures Notes: On occasion, I will post a more-or-less formal lecture on a topic (this note is an example). This could occur because the assigned text does not adequately cover a topic. An example of this would be the areas of security and culture.
2. Readings: There is a considerable amount of reading in this course. Much of this is assigned from J. J. Coyle, E. J. Bardi and R. A. Novack, Transportation, 6e, Thomson Southwestern (2006), 0-324-20214-8. It will be difficult to pass this course if you are not staying current with the reading assignments.

I will also call your attention to other reading as appropriate.

3. Discussions: This is the most significant aspect of learning. It is the principal means whereby I assess your performance. It is impossible to pass this course if you do not participate in the discussions.

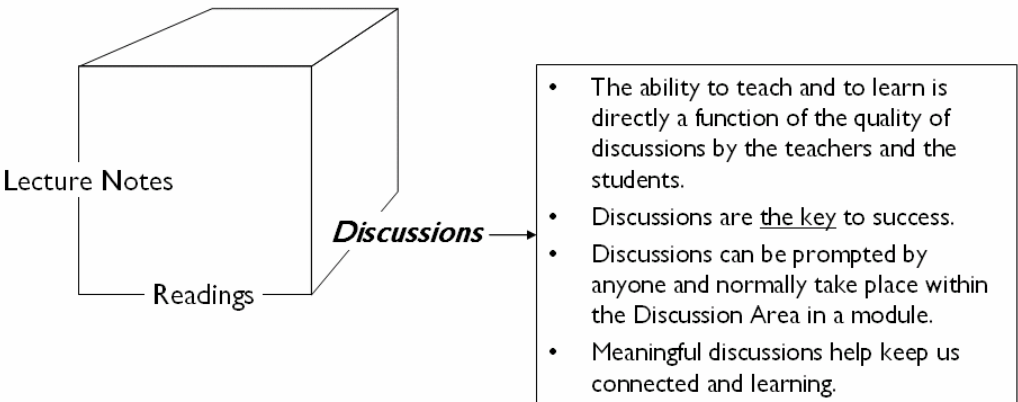
Make sure you read the document titled Grading in Course Information > Orientation and Syllabus in the on-line system. This describes clearly how will assess your performance. You should use it to guide your behavior.

I want to underscore the importance of the discussions with one additional graphic.

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More on discussions



- The ability to teach and to learn is directly a function of the quality of discussions by the teachers and the students.
- Discussions are the key to success.
- Discussions can be prompted by anyone and normally take place within the Discussion Area in a module.
- Meaningful discussions help keep us connected and learning.

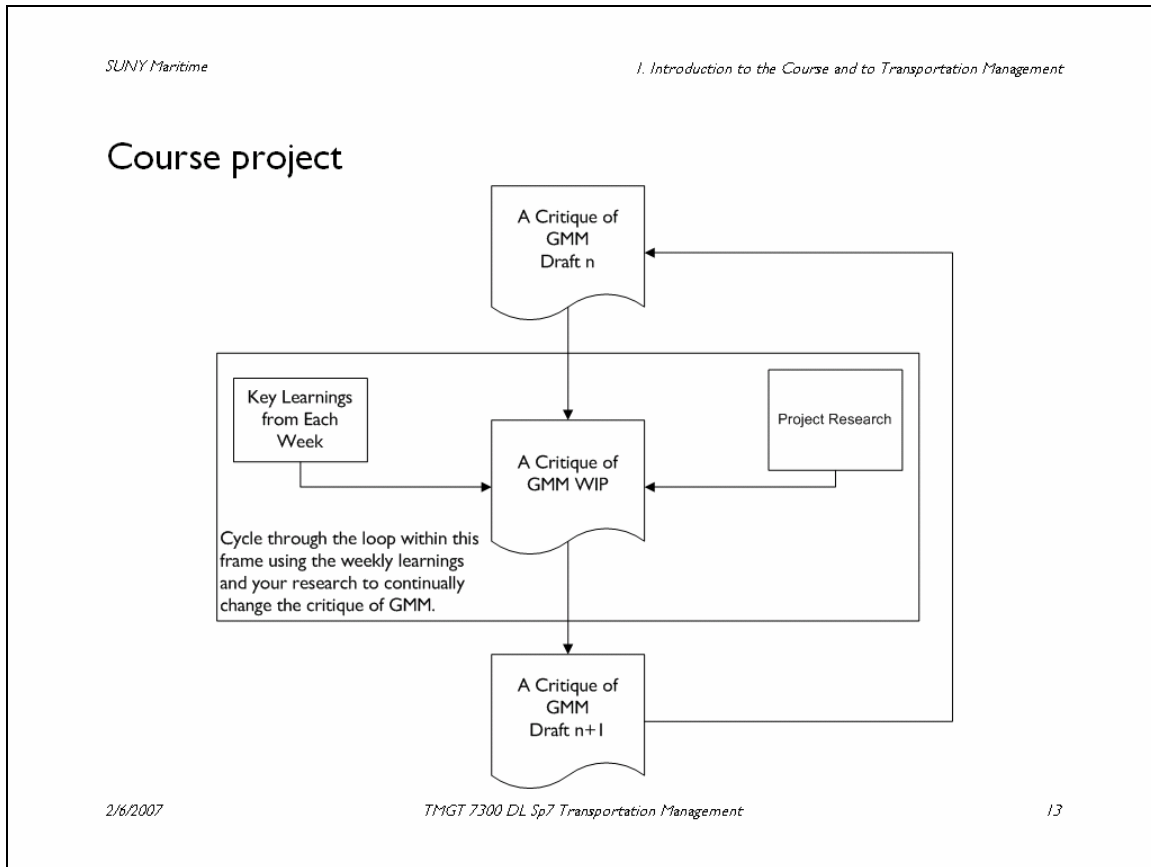
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In short, failure to participate in the discussions will result in failure in the course.

The course project involves a critique of a concept known as Global Movement Management.



The course project is a significant learning tool. This team project produces a critique of a concept for management a global Intermodal freight transportation company.

Let's now consider the third question.

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How will performance be assessed?

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Three items provide the basis for performance assessment.

- The basis for grading is your knowledge of and ability to discuss the material covered during the course.
- This is demonstrated and judged on the basis of the quality of your work on the course project and the quality (and to a lesser extent, quantity) of your participation in the discussions.
- You should strive to demonstrate an ability to single out key issues, think critically about them, and express cogent and complete fact-based arguments emphasizing analysis, conclusion and recommendation.

My experience in the business world is that one rarely encounters multiple choice and true-false questions. This experience guides my approach to assessment of student performance.

Mastery of the content is not sufficient if you are unable to demonstrate this mastery in your written and oral communications.

Assessment is a two-step process.

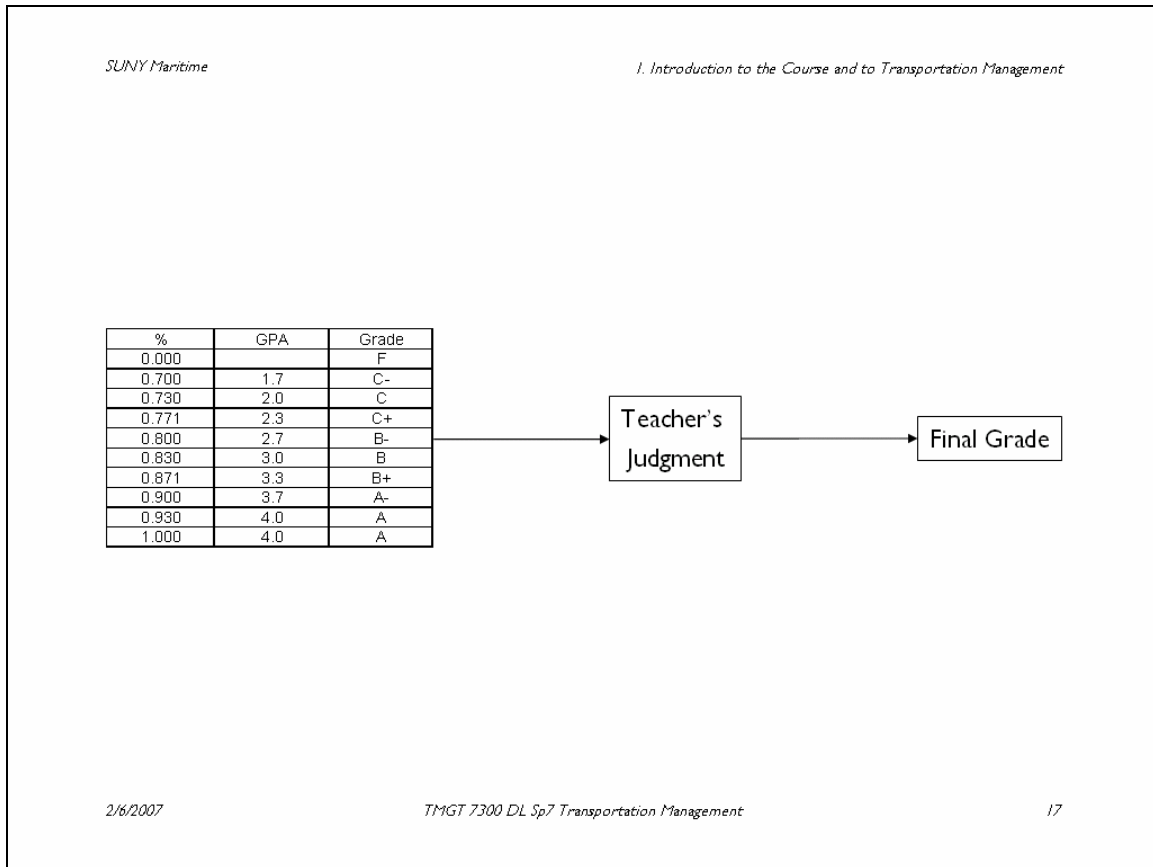
- On-line Discussions: 70 maximum points (10 topics x 7 points per topic)
- Written Assignments: 28 maximum points (two at 7 and 21 points)
- Final Written Report on Class Project: 56 maximum points
- Team Participation on Class Project: 12 maximum points
- Maximum points that one can attain in the course is 166. The actual points attained will be divided by 166 and the resulting percentage translated into a letter grade according to the following table.

| % | GPA | Grade |
|-------|-----|-------|
| 0.000 | | F |
| 0.700 | 1.7 | C- |
| 0.730 | 2.0 | C |
| 0.771 | 2.3 | C+ |
| 0.800 | 2.7 | B- |
| 0.830 | 3.0 | B |
| 0.871 | 3.3 | B+ |
| 0.900 | 3.7 | A- |
| 0.930 | 4.0 | A |
| 1.000 | 4.0 | A |

Assessment is mainly a qualitative and subjective task. These assessment are gathered up and represented as a set of numbers which, when summed, are converted into a letter grade.

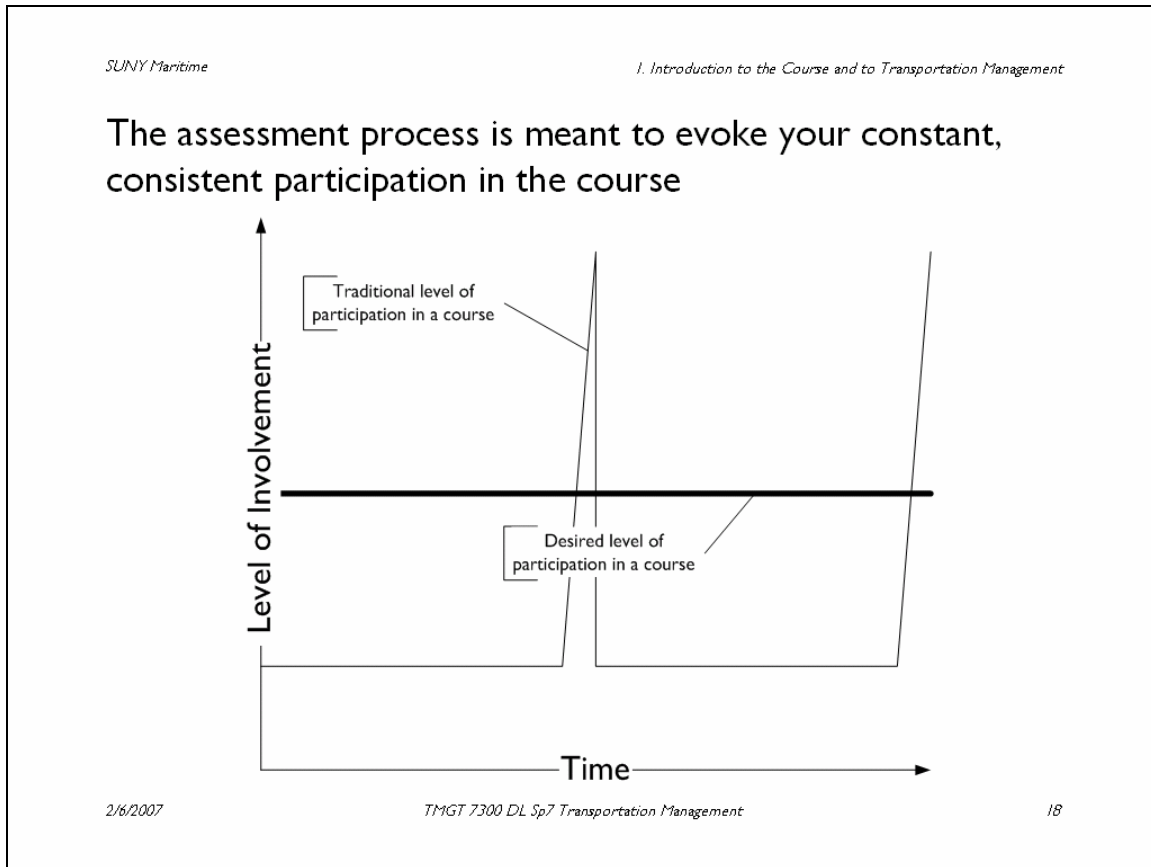
For more on how this is done please see the document on Grading in the Course Information > Orientation and Syllabus section of the on-line system.

The second step of assessment is a confirmation of the letter grade from the first step.



The letter grade from the first step guides me in the assignment of the final grade. What this means is that the final grade I assign may be different from the mathematical grade. In assigning the final grade I take into account your consideration, respect, and encouragement of others; your desire for learning and discipline in completing the assignments; your ability to bring relevant issues to the attention of the class.

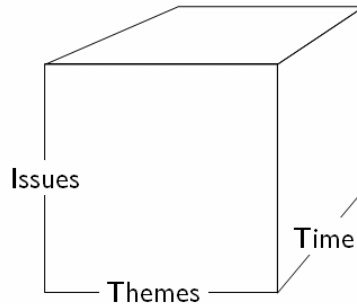
Let me now conclude this note with a few more points.



My observation is that student involvement in a course often focuses on that required to pass midterm and final examinations (the line with the peaks in the above diagram). I think this is neither the best way to learn nor useful stress to undergo. The aim should be a constant, consistent level of involvement in the course (the flat horizontal line). I do not, as a rule, assign "make-up" work. You should strive every week to get the points available every week. You should strive to work on the project every week.

Trying to play "catch-up" results in "fall-back" more often than not.

Overall, the intent is to develop our understanding of transportation management within this space.



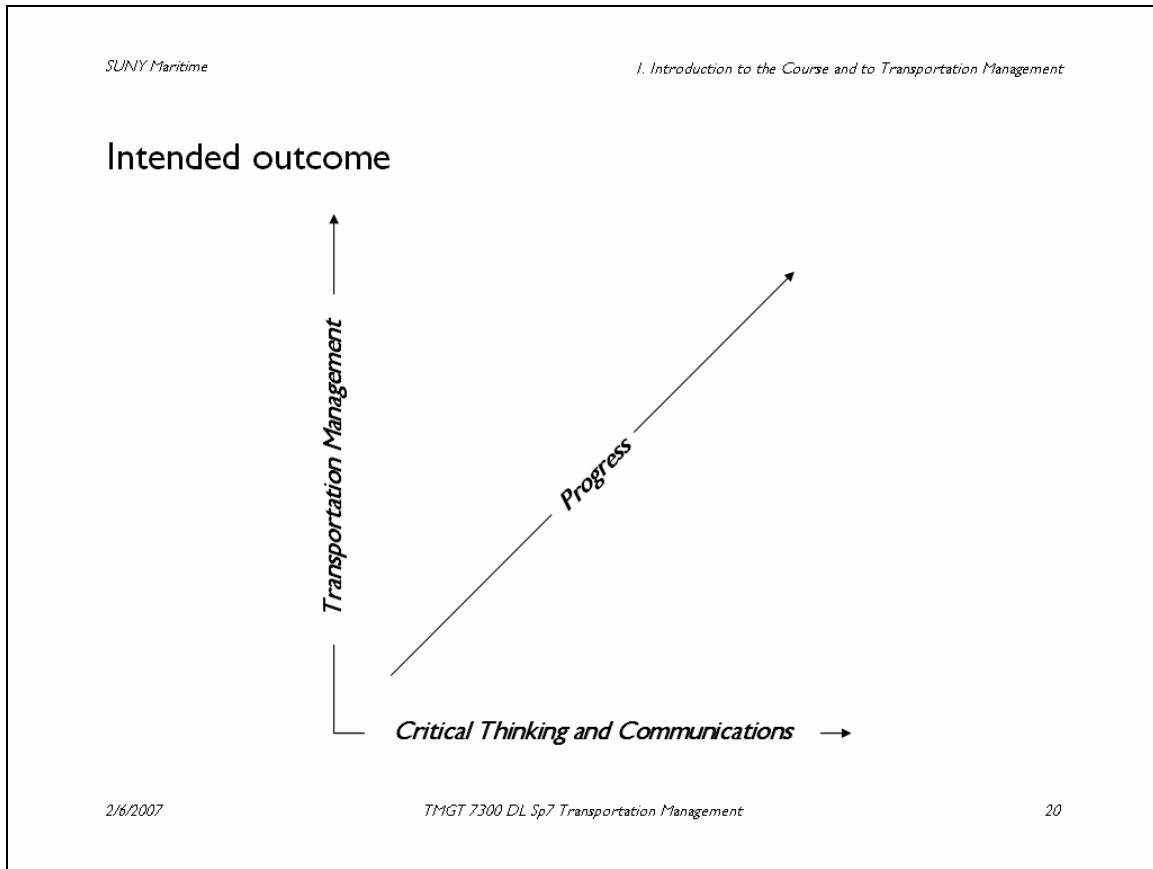
The overall idea is to develop knowledge and skills within a space bounded by issues and themes, which have previously been discussed, and time, which I now say more about.

Transportation is termed a derived demand. By that we mean that the demand for transportation is caused by something external to transportation. For example, the reasonable recent movement of substantial manufacturing capacity to China and the demand for these manufactured goods in the US has produced a significant demand for transportation across the Pacific.

In a constantly changing world, time matters. While we may discuss some aspects of the history of transportation, it is far more important that we have a grasp of what is going on today and what is likely to happen in the future.

In short, the conduct and content of the course will represent the world of today.

It's worthwhile in the closing stage of this presentation to repeat this graphic.



Success in this course is the result of a collaborative effort by the student and the teacher that results in movement of the student towards the upper right in this graphic.

Success in this course is based on doing a small number of things well.

Keys to success in this course

1. Check into the dynamic areas of the on-line course on a daily basis and stay actively involved in what's going on.
 - a. Bulletin Board on the Course Map
 - b. Module Discussion Areas
2. Keep up with the reading assignments. Come on-line prepared to participate in the discussions.
3. Work on the Course Project throughout the term. Do not let it wait until the last few weeks. Experience suggests that odds of recovery and receipt of a hoped-for grade will be very slim if you are not involved early and often.
4. Ask questions.

"He who asks a question is a fool for a minute; he who does not remains a fool forever." - Chinese Proverb
5. Ask me for help outside of class if you need it. I cannot read minds.

Most importantly, you must stay involved every week in the course. Taking a few days off is an option, but a bad one. The intent of this approach to learning is for you to apply consistent effort throughout the course. There is no midterm and final examination that typically causes spasms of "cramming."

There are no makeup examinations nor opportunities for extra credit provided in this course.

If you don't know or understand something about the course, ask. If you need help, ask. I cannot read minds.

Good luck and do well.

Jim

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