

PROJ PMI 403 Agile for Practitioners

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Anthony C. Mersino

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Office Hours: By appointment

Response Time: I will respond to emails within 24-48 hours.

Weekly Synchronous Meetings:

Mandatory Meetings every Monday and Thursday during the 4 weeks of the course, from 6:30pm - 8:30pm.

Instructor Biography

My passion is helping teams and organizations achieve high performance. I've spent most of my career in technology either leading large IT projects or programs or teaching effective project management. In the process, I authored countless blog posts, articles and two books: "*Agile Project Management*" and "*Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers*".

Since 2010 I've been focused on helping organizations adopt Agile ways of working in organizations. This includes coaching and training Agile Teams as well as helping Leaders to understand Agile, Scrum and Lean and how to create an environment where people come first, productivity is high, and teamwork is effective and enjoyable.

I live and work in the Chicago area, within a few miles of Northwestern's Evanston campus.



Course Description

Since the software development industry first adopted the term Agile in 2001, it has quickly become a popular buzzword that has spread beyond software development. Unfortunately, the term agile has come to mean many things to many people.

This course is an in-depth, workshop-style course that will teach participants the principles and values of Agile, the most popular agile frameworks like Scrum, Kanban, Lean Software Development and Extreme Programming (XP), and help them apply Agile practices and techniques to their current projects.

This course qualifies as education contact hours for the Project Management Institute's Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP) exam. Note that in order to sit for the PMI-ACP® exam, students must meet additional requirements set forth by PMI that can be found on their website.

Course Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain various Agile frameworks and why they are used—including Scrum, XP, Lean, and Kanban
2. Apply the Scrum framework to develop a new product
3. Create a product backlog and user stories
4. Create Agile communications tools that create transparency and stakeholder trust
5. Demonstrate how teams drive business value using product backlogs
6. Contrast Agile Planning with traditional ways of planning projects
7. Understand how to establish an Agile team and help encourage high-performance
8. Apply agile approaches to manage project scope, schedule, budget and quality
9. Understand the knowledge and experience requirements necessary to apply for and pass the PMI-ACP® certification exam

Recommended Prerequisite Knowledge Statement

There are no prerequisites for this course. This course assumes some experience working in organizations.

Readings and Resources

Downloadable Student Coursebook

Students may download or print the course book available here: [CourseBook](#)

The course book includes all the content covered in the lectures.

Required Readings:

- [The Scrum Guide](#) (2020), authored by Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber
- Chapter 10 *Agile Project Management; A Nuts and Bolts Guide to Success*, Second Edition (Vitality Chicago Inc.) Chicago, IL. Available [here in PDF format](#).

Additional Readings - Optional for Those Who Want to Go Deeper:

- Mersino, Anthony C. (2021). *Agile Project Management; A Nuts and Bolts Guide to Success*, Second Edition (Vitality Chicago Inc.) Chicago, IL. Download this book here in [PDF format](#) or [Kindle format](#).
- American Society for Quality. [Creating a Value Stream](#). American Society for Quality website.
- Cagley, Thomas. [Differentiating Value Chains, Value Streams and Process Maps](#). Thomas Cagley website.
- Digital.ai/VersionOne. *Annual State of Agile Report* . Download the most recent version from <https://stateofagile.com/#>
- Kniberg, Henrik. [Making Sense of MVP](#).
- Mersino, Anthony C. [The Circus of Agile Certifications](#). Vitality Chicago website.
- Mersino, Anthony C. [Creating Reality-Based Forecasts](#), Vitality Chicago Website.
- Mersino, Anthony C. [Don't Use the Scrum Framework with Distributed Teams](#). Vitality Chicago website.
- Mersino, Anthony C. [For High Performing Teams, Stop Assigning People to Multiple Teams](#). Vitality Chicago Website.
- Mersino, Anthony. [Agile and Scrum Tipsheet](#), downloadable from the Vitality Chicago website.
- Patton, Jeff. Weblog: [Don't Know What I want, But I Know How to Get It](#), Available on Jeff Pattons website.

Additional Readings - Go Even Deeper:

For students wishing to take a deeper dive, additional reference materials on Agile and Scrum may be found here: [Additional Reference Materials](#)

The additional reference materials include the PMI-ACP list of 12 reference books and additional reading materials described below.

PMI-ACP List of 12 Reference Books

The link above provides a list of the 12 books that were used by PMI for the creation of the PMI-ACP exam. This list is provided for reference only - it is not necessary for students to purchase or use these books during the course.

Additional Recommended Readings and Videos

The link above also provides a list of blogs and articles, books and videos that may be helpful to students who want to go beyond the scope of this course and learn more. They are not required for this course.

Assignment Overview and Grading Breakdown

Participation is the key to learning in this class. The bulk of the learning time is based on lectures and interactions via Zoom. It is required that students attend all 8 of the mandatory class evening sessions from 6:30 to 8:30pm (a student may miss up to 30 minutes in any one session for unforeseen circumstances).

Grading is based on attendance for the 8 synchronous learning sessions as well as individual assignments, individual discussion topics and group exercises. Participants will be placed in teams for assignment purposes to complete those group exercises.

The default grading in this course is pass/fail (satisfactory or unsatisfactory).

Participants will need to score at least 70% of the 215 points or 150 points in order to achieve a "satisfactory" score.

Activity Type	Number	Possible Points	Percentage of Course Grade
Individual Assignments	2	10	5%
Class Discussion Topics	15	80	37%
Group Assignments	16	125	58%
Total Points		215	100%

Letter Grades

Instructions are included in Canvas for those who need letter grades. Where required, letter grades will be awarded based on the following:

Letter Grade	%	Points
A	92% and above	> 197 points
B	80 to 91%	> 172 and <198
C	60 to 79%	> 129 and <173
F	Below 59%	< 130

Grades will be available to students within one week from the end of class.

Mandatory Synchronous Meetings

There will be 8 lecture sessions during the course. These occur on Monday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30pm for the 4 weeks of the course. These sessions will take place using [Zoom](#) (available in the left-hand navigation).

The meetings will automatically sync with your Canvas Calendar. Check your Canvas Calendar regularly.

Zoom

We will use Zoom for optional synchronous meetings. The [Zoom support page](#) provides additional guidance for using Zoom.

The [Zoom Privacy Policy](#) and the [Accessibility Features on Zoom](#) are also available.

[Zoom for Students in Canvas](#)

Miro

We will use the Miro collaboration tool for some of the in class exercises. Instructions on using Miro will be included as part of the course pre-work.

Late Work Policy

Late work will be accepted only in the event of an instructor-approved absence. Contact your instructor as soon as possible when you know you will be absent, preferably with at least 24 hours notice.

Discussion Forum Expectations

The purpose of the discussion boards is to allow students to freely exchange ideas. It is imperative to remain respectful of all viewpoints and positions and, when necessary, agree to respectfully disagree. While active and frequent participation is encouraged, cluttering a discussion board with inappropriate, irrelevant, or insignificant material will not earn additional points and may result in receiving less than full credit. For more information, please review these [netiquette guidelines](#) for participating in discussion.

Working in Teams

Just as teams are the basic building block of agility, this course relies heavily on teamwork and cooperation throughout the quarter. You will be assigned to teams of three to four students and will be asked to accomplish various tasks in a group effort. To collaborate with your group members, take advantage of the [Collaborations](#) tool in Canvas. Since your final grade includes grades on various team projects, teamwork skills are essential for this class. If you are having difficulties with working in groups, please feel free to discuss this with me.

Course Outline and Learning Objectives by Module

1. Course Introduction & Agile Principles and Mindset

- Explain various Agile frameworks and why they are used—including Scrum, XP, Lean, and Kanban
- Summarize the agile values and principles
- Explain the benefits of Agile
- Contrast Agile with Traditional and Waterfall ways of working

2. Value Driven Development

- Demonstrate how teams drive business value using product backlogs and prioritization approaches.

3. Stakeholder Engagement

- Develop chartering artifacts for a new project using agile techniques.
- Create an initial product backlog for a new project.
- Develop initial cost and schedule estimates for an agile project.

4. Exploring Scrum

- Apply the Scrum framework to develop a new product.
- Create Agile communications tools that create transparency and stakeholder trust.

5. Team Performance

- Understand how to establish an Agile team and help encourage high-performance.
- Compare various communications methods and identify those that will be most effective for an agile team.
- Recognize challenges and approaches to use with distributed teams.
- Evaluate the level of conflict and apply appropriate measures to resolve the conflict.
- Evaluate whether an organization has implemented the Scrum roles per the Scrum Guide.

6. Adaptive Planning

- Contrast Agile Planning with traditional ways of planning projects.
- Apply agile approaches to manage project scope, schedule, budget and quality.
- Use release planning techniques to plan an agile project.
- Reforecast a project based on actual team progress.

7. Problem Detection and Resolution

- Analyze team performance reports to determine corrective actions.
- Engage team members in resolving problems.

8. Continuous Improvement

- Apply techniques to continuously improve team performance and productivity.
- Apply value stream mapping to analyze a process.
- Understand the knowledge and experience requirements necessary to apply for and pass the PMI-ACP® certification exam.

Reference: Glossary of Agile and Scrum Terms

A list of common Agile and Scrum Terms is included on the following page for your convenience: [Glossary of Agile and Scrum Terms](#)

Course Topics for the Agile Certificate Courses

The following table shows the topics covered in the 4 Agile Certificate Training Courses.

	Agile for Practitioners (PROJ_PMI_403)	Leading and Coaching Agile Teams (PROJ_PMI_350)	Agile Estimating and Planning (PROJ_PMI_360)	Supporting an Agile Transformation (PROJ_PMI_365)
Agile Introduction, Values & Principles	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lean Principles	✓	✓	✓	
Overview of Scrum, Lean, Kanban, & XP	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benefits of Agile	✓			✓
Kanban	✓			
Value Driven Development	✓		✓	
Planning Agile Projects	✓		✓	
Scrum Framework & Simulation	✓			
PMI_ACP® Certification	✓			
Leading Beyond the Agile Team	✓	✓		
Leading Agile Teams	✓	✓		
Agile vs Traditional Approaches	✓	✓		

	Agile for Practitioners (PROJ_PMI_403)	Leading and Coaching Agile Teams (PROJ_PMI_350)	Agile Estimating and Planning (PROJ_PMI_360)	Supporting an Agile Transformation (PROJ_PMI_365)
Misconceptions about Agile	✓	✓		
Scaling Agile	✓			
Agile Estimating Techniques	✓		✓	
Building Your Agile Schedule	✓		✓	
Coaching Agile Teams		✓		
Advanced Agile Approaches		✓		
Agile Metrics and Reporting	✓	✓		
Address Organizational Impediments		✓		✓
An Agile Leaders Toolkit		✓		✓
Agile Adoption Patterns		✓		✓
Iteration (Sprint) Planning	✓		✓	
A Change Agent's Toolkit				✓
Assessing your Organizational Culture for Agile				✓
Creating your Agile Transformation Roadmap				✓

Academic Integrity at Northwestern

Students are required to comply with University regulations regarding academic integrity. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak with your instructor or graduate coordinator before the assignment is due and/or examine the University Web site. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an exam, obtaining an unfair advantage, and plagiarism (e.g., using material from readings without citing or copying another student's paper). Failure to maintain academic integrity will result in a grade sanction, possibly as severe as failing and being required to retake the course, and could lead to a suspension or expulsion from the program. Further penalties may apply. For more information, visit [The Office of the Provost's Academic Integrity page](#). Some assignments in SPS courses may be required to be submitted through Turnitin, a plagiarism detection and education tool. You can find [an explanation of the tool here](#).

Resources

[Student Services](#) are available for academic and career advising.

Distance learning students also have full access to the [Northwestern University Library](#).

[The Writing Place](#) is a free tutorial service provided to students currently enrolled in a Northwestern University School of Professional Studies class who feel that they need extra help with their writing assignments. Many students are at the earliest stages of researching a paper and seek help focusing a topic or developing a thesis. Others come in with a final draft and wish to have a perfectly clean paper. No matter the class or stage of the writing process, The Writing Place offers one-on-one advice and assistance from an experienced writer who can analyze the student's text and suggest improvements.

Accessibility Policy and Instructions on Obtaining Accommodations

Northwestern University and the School of Professional Studies strive to ensure that all online courses are accessible to all students. In collaboration with [AccessibleNU](#), we work to provide accommodations to students with disabilities and other conditions so they may fully participate and engage in the learning environment. The majority of accommodations and services available to eligible students are coordinated by AccessibleNU. If you have an accommodation request, please contact your professor or AccessibleNU as soon as possible.

Course Technology

Minimum Technical Skills

Use and navigation of Canvas (forums, assignment submission, calendar, inbox, etc); basic understanding of computers, operating systems, online correspondence/netiquette.

Minimum System Requirements

Students and faculty enrolled in SPS online master's degree programs should have access to a computer with the [Minimum System Requirements](#).

SPS Help Desk

[SPS IT Help Desk](#) is available for Faculty, Students and Staff to support their daily IT needs.