

Course Orientation

Gerald C. Kane, Ph.D.

Executive MBA course, Terry College of Business, University of Georgia
Fall 2026

© 2026 Gerald C. Kane. Licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. You may share and adapt it for noncommercial use with credit to the author; you may not present it as your own. Full terms on the last page.

Module role: Course orientation. Read before Module 1. The document frames the course's approach, explains how to use the modules, lists what is coming and how the pieces fit, names the recurring cases the course returns to, lays out the three-post writing architecture, and sets the tone the rest of the modules carry. It does not replace the syllabus; the two documents do different jobs.

Pre-Class Read

BOTTOM LINE. This course treats AI as a strategic, organizational, and leadership problem rather than a technology problem. The eight modules build cumulatively from landscape to capstone, and each module is structured the same way so you learn where to look. Three posts across the term carry your writing — Automate, Experiment, Transform — each more demanding than the last. The course rewards specificity over breadth: one named workflow, one accountable owner, one falsifiable success signal counts for more than a survey of vendors or a tour of frameworks. The materials are calibrated for the senior people you already are.

What This Course Is — and Isn't

Most AI courses sold to executives are technology courses with management examples. This one inverts the order. Our wager is that the binding constraint on enterprise AI in 2026 is not access to capability — capability is broadly available — but the strategic, organizational, and leadership work of converting capability into durable value. The data behind the gap between adoption and enterprise impact lives in Module 1's reading; the course is built around that gap. Access is widespread; differentiation is not. That asymmetry is where the course lives.

The course covers strategy, executive practice, the enterprise stack, governance, economics, competitive integration, organizational capability, and synthesis. The eight-module table further down names how each piece fits.

What the course is not: a tour of vendors, a model-comparison shootout, a prompt-engineering bootcamp, a regulatory compliance briefing, or a forecast of where AI is going next year. Each of those topics shows up where it bears on a strategic question. None of them is the spine. The spine is your judgment about what to do at your organization, sharpened against the experience and material of fifty other senior leaders in the room.

How to Read a Module: The Three-Part Architecture

Every module is a single document with three labeled parts. Same architecture across all eight modules so you learn where to look.

Part 1: Pre-Class Read. What you read in roughly the ten days before each session. Reading time is targeted at 30–45 minutes. The Pre-Class Read carries the argument — a Bottom Line callout at the top, an opening company case with a named senior executive, a contrarian thesis paragraph, the conceptual architecture of the module, evidence and elaboration drawn from named-company

cases and current research, and a closing prompt that asks you to bring something specific from your own organization to class. It is the focused argument. It is the part that does the teaching.

Part 2: Field Reference. The leave-behind. Decision tables, do/don't quick references, prompt examples, cautionary tales, and worksheet prompts you could run with your own team after the course is over. The Field Reference is longer than the Pre-Class Read in most modules, and that is on purpose. It is built to be flipped through, not read straight through. After class, when you are at work and a vendor is making a build/buy/partner pitch, the Field Reference is where you go. Each component is self-contained — flip directly to a table or a prompt list without reading surrounding prose.

Part 3: Card Specification and Sources. The in-class activity specifications are held back from this copy — that material is designed to be experienced live in session. What remains is the card specification: what a complete card contains and how it connects to the next module. Works Cited closes each module.

The implication for your reading discipline: read the Pre-Class Read in advance, flip through the Field Reference as needed, and consult the card specification when you are building the card. Each part has its moment.

The Eight Modules and How They Build

The modules are sequential. Each one presupposes what came before and prepares what comes after.

Module	Title	What it does
1	AI Strategy Landscape — From Adoption to Advantage	Establishes the 2026 landscape — adoption versus advantage, the model is rarely the moat, where durable value can accrue.
2	Executive AI Literacy — Prompting, Context, and Judgment	Turns from landscape to executive practice — work orders, context boundaries, authority levels, and the discipline of delegating well to AI.
3	AI Stack, Data, and Sourcing — From Demo to Dependable Capability	Architects the enterprise AI layer — context engineering, data strategy, harness design, sourcing, observability, and portability.
4	Responsible AI, Security, and Governance	Governs the stack — risk tiering, controls, assurance evidence, oversight, auditability, and incident readiness.
5	AI Economics and Scaling Discipline — From Pilot to P&L	Prices it — KPI value chains, FinOps, harness economics, cost per successful task, and stop/pivot/scale criteria.
6	Future of Competition — From Frontier Shock to Board-Ready Response	Integrates against future competition — agentic AI as a strategic shift, board-level pressure tests, and synthesis under competitive stress.
7	AI Capability Acceleration — From Adoption to Organizational Capability	Builds the organizational capability — managers, champions, cascade learning, governance feedback, and first-90-days evidence.
8	AI Strategy Capstone Artifact Kit	Optional. Assembles the seven prior module artifacts into a 5-7 page executive AI strategy memo.

The cumulative logic is that each module produces a working artifact — a Strategic Thesis, a Delegation Card, a Stack Appendix, a Governance Card, a Business Case, a Board Strategic Response, a Capability Acceleration Plan — that you can use immediately at work and can later

assemble into the optional capstone memo. The artifacts are not busywork. They are the spine of the course's translation from concept to action.

The Recurring Cases

A small number of organizations recur across modules. Each one anchors a different argument, and each is real, dated, and sourced. You do not need to know them in advance; the modules introduce them. We name them here so you can track the spine as the course unfolds.

Case	Why it recurs	Modules where it anchors
Aflac	Design discipline in regulated insurance — automating the bounded layer while preserving human judgment for the high-stakes claims	1, 4, 5
Lockheed Martin / Astris AI	Incumbent reinvention through high-assurance AI; the spinout that turned an internal capability into an external product	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
Georgia-Pacific	Industrial AI at Koch's manufacturing scale — context, workflow, and the operator-engineer relationship	1, 3, 6, 7
Truist	Banking AI under regulated conditions — receivables platform, internal copilot, and the governance posture	2, 3, 5
Optomed	FDA-cleared diagnostic AI — what assurance evidence looks like when the stakes are clinical	3, 4
CDC	Public-sector AI — the institutional realities of AI inside a federal health agency	2
JPMorgan	Disclosure-grade specificity at the senior level — LLM Suite reach, fraud savings, the eight-week platform cadence	8 (capstone)

A second tier of cases — Klarna, McDonald's, Air Canada, Cursor, Samsung — appears as cautionary tales rather than strategy anchors. The argument structure of the course pairs an affirmative case (what discipline looks like) with a cautionary case (what happens when the discipline is missing). Both pay their way.

Three Posts, Three Verbs: Automate, Experiment, Transform

The course assigns three blog posts across the term. Each post carries a different verb. The verbs are progressive, not parallel: each one asks more of you than the one before it.

Automate. The first post asks you to take one repeatable workflow you already do — your own work, not your organization's strategy — and show, in concrete detail, how AI changes it. The discipline is specificity. A worked example of one document review, one customer-conversation summary, one analysis you ran with AI assistance, one decision you sharpened against an AI-generated counterargument. The point is to ground the rest of the course in the actual experience of doing the work with AI in the loop.

Experiment. The second post asks you to attempt something that does not yet exist in your work or your organization, and to try to make it exist using AI. The lab approach in this course lives principally inside this post — coding a small video game, building a planning tool for a problem you actually have, simulating a board meeting, generating a scenario plan, drafting a regulatory filing, prototyping a customer-service agent. You will not finish the experiment perfectly. The post

documents what you tried, where it broke, what it taught you, and what the executive-level lesson is for AI deployment in your organization. The experimentation conversation extends into Slack across the term, where the cohort shares what is working, what is not, and what the modules are illuminating in real time.

Transform. The third post is strategic synthesis, and it offers three paths. The first is a cards portfolio: the in-class cards you produce across Modules 1–7 (Strategic Thesis, Delegation Card, Stack and Sourcing Appendix, Governance Card, Business Case, Board Strategic Response, Capability Acceleration Plan), assembled with a short integrating narrative. The second is a capstone memo: a 5–7 page executive AI strategy memo for your own organization, built from the Module 8 Capstone Artifact Kit and calibrated to be the document you would actually take to your CEO or board. The third is reflection: a wrap-up on your experience in the course, what you learned, and how the format pushed your thinking on AI strategy. No path is the lesser choice, and no advance declaration is required — the first sentence of the post states which path you are taking. Pick the one that does the most work for you.

The alternative option. Any of the three posts may set aside its assigned verb. If an AI experiment of your own design, or an AI-related topic you want to research, would do more for your personal or professional life than the prompt would, write that post instead. No advance declaration is required — the first sentence of the post states that you are taking the alternative option and names what you are doing. Every other requirement, including the length, the sourcing, and the AI-use reflection at the end, applies unchanged. The verbs are the default because they build on one another; the alternative exists so that the assignment never stands between you and a use of AI you actually need.

The three posts share a discipline. Each one is anchored in something specific you did or are proposing to do, not in a survey of what AI could do in principle. Peer comments on the first two posts are part of the assignment; in our experience teaching the course, the reading you do across the cohort's posts is often the most useful part. You should expect to use AI tools to help write these posts; how you used them, where they helped, and where they failed is itself part of what the post is documenting.

A Note on Voice and Tone

The modules are written in a particular register, and the register is deliberate. A few notes on what to expect.

Executive register. The modules treat you as the senior practitioner you already are. Concepts are defined inline rather than glossed; statistics are dated and sourced; named senior executives are quoted in full title and organization on first reference. The implied reader is someone who has already heard the buzzwords and wants substance — the modules avoid the activation-verb thesaurus and the consultant-deck idiom, and when those words appear, they sit inside a quoted speaker. There are no exclamation points in the author voice.

Evidence with dates. Every quantitative claim, executive quote, and named-program reference carries its date and source. We do this because the AI landscape moves quickly; a 2024 figure has a different status than a 2026 one, and you are entitled to know which is which. When a claim is not

supported by an external source, it is calibrated as judgment — "tends to," "appears to," "in our experience" — rather than dressed up as data.

The "you" handoff. The modules use "we" when describing findings or arguments and shift to "you" when moving to advice for your organization. The shift is deliberate and recurring. When the modules turn to "you," that is the signal that the implication is yours to act on.

Across all of this is a repeating evaluation criterion: whether a piece of analysis names something specific — a workflow, a metric, an owner, a decision gate, a date — or whether it generalizes. Generalization is the easier move and the one most often graded as weaker.

This Document and the Syllabus

The syllabus is the contract document. It governs grading weights, deadlines, attendance expectations, academic integrity standards, and the procedures of the course. When you have a question about what is graded and when, the syllabus is where the answer lives.

This Module 0 / Course Orientation is the pedagogical document. It explains how the course is built, how the modules read, what the case spine is, and what the writing architecture is. When you have a question about how the course works as a learning experience, this is where the answer lives.

The two documents are consistent with each other. They are not redundant.

Bring This to Module 1

Module 1's Pre-Class Read is the next document you read. Read it in advance and flip through the Field Reference where it is useful. Module 1 will ask you to come prepared with three things — initiatives from your own organization, a draft strategic thesis, and a board-question answer. The specifics are in Module 1's *Bring This to Class* prompt at the end of its Pre-Class Read. The card specification at the end of the module is what you return to when you start writing.

The first move of an AI strategy course is the same as the first move of an AI strategy: pick a specific thing in your own organization and look at it hard. The course is a frame for that work. The work is yours.

Copyright, reuse, and citation

© 2026 Gerald C. Kane. This module is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0), <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

You may share and adapt it for noncommercial purposes, provided you credit Gerald C. Kane as the author, link to the license, and indicate any changes you made. You may not present this material, or adaptations of it, as your own work, and you may not sell it or use it in paid training or consulting without written permission.

Cite as: Kane, G. C. (2026). *Module 0: Course Orientation*. EMBA-7450, Information Technology and Strategy, Executive MBA, Terry College of Business, University of Georgia. <https://www.profkane.com/course>

Permissions and commercial use: jerry@profkane.com