Objectives

The purpose of the course is to provide graduate students with an overview of the work in Sociology on formal or complex organizations. The course is built on the premise that there is a constant dialogue between theory and empirical research and across the generations and disciplines. Our basic purpose is to explore and evaluate - and possibly even contribute to - the development of theoretical knowledge of macro organizational behavior.

The course begins with a review of rationalist theories of organizations. Here we are introduced to Weber's bureaucratic ideal type and theories of scientific management. Next we discuss naturalist theories and review the work of the human relations school. Much work today is still influenced by this school. We then turn to open systems models and examine neo-institutional theory and organization ecology. We finish with the network approach which has contributed to all three perspectives.

Format and Assignments

The format for the class is very simple. All students are expected to read all the required material on the syllabus for the class period. The instructor will begin the discussion with an overview of the readings for the day and summarize the discussion at the end. In between there will be student presentations on the readings for that day. All students are required to make three class presentations. The presentations should be descriptive and critical (i.e., highlight strengths and weaknesses). Presenters are expected to prepare a one-page, single-spaced review essay for each reading. After a brief summary of the main points, the essay will point out something ‘nice’ and ‘naughty’ about each reading. These are to be distributed at the beginning of the class on the day of the presentation. Please send a copy of your presentation via email to me within 24 hours after the class. They will be posted on D2L afterwards. 60% of the student's grade will be based on the presentations and essays (20% for each presentation/essay). Students who fail to make a presentation on the assigned date will get a C on the assignment if an essay is turned in within one week or an F if there is no essay turned in.

Finally, students are required to write either a two hour in-class exam (there will be word limits)
or a research paper. The purpose of the exam is to see how well students have been able to master the theory and research of the field. The exam will be from 3:30 to 5:30 pm on Monday, December 12th. Students can bring in papers and notes and do the exam on their own laptops. 40% of the student's grade will be based on the exam. The exam has to be taken in the classroom (Social Science 415). You cannot take the exam at home. There will be no make-up exam unless there is a serious illness/tragedy which makes taking the exam on the 12th impossible. This is great preparation for those who want to take the comp in Formal Orgs.

Alternatively, students can do a twenty-page literature review (not including references) comparable to something which might be published in the Annual Review of Sociology (see recent volumes for examples). We will discuss the details of the paper in class. Paper topics must be approved beforehand. Students will make periodic reports in class on their progress during the semester. Students who select this option will be expected to turn in their paper at 3:30 pm on Monday, December 12th. Please submit a hard copy and an e-copy. For these students the paper's grade will count for 40% of their grade.

**Readings**

These books are for sale in the bookstore and are on reserve in the library.


Required readings which are articles and book chapters can be accessed using D2L.

The reading list is quite extensive, and there is a danger that you may 'over-dose' on the literature. A common complaint is that courses like this skim over a great deal of material
without ever getting in depth. There is no sure-fire way to prevent this from happening, and this is one reason why I am suggesting an integrative exam and no paper. Hopefully, this will help you get some closure on the literature. Still, be forewarned and give yourself enough time to enjoy and appreciate the intellectual debates within the field.

This and That

I will use D2L to communicate with students this semester. That means that you should check often for messages. I believe that you can have these messages routed to your regular email account, and I would advise that you do this.

I will not tolerate any cheating or plagiarism of any kind. You will not only flunk the assignment but you will be reported to the Graduate School and disciplinary procedures will be initiated. Also I will not tolerate any aggressive remarks toward other students or myself during the seminar. My first obligation is to provide a safe environment for the exchange of ideas and there will be no harassment or intimidating behavior in my classroom. Finally, please turn off the cell phones and no emailing or text messaging during class.
Schedule of Classes

Organizations as Rational Systems

August 25th  
Bureaucracy and Scientific Management


September 1st  
No class

September 8th  
Contingency Theory


September 15th  
Decision-making and Bounded Rationality

4


### Organizations as Natural Systems

**September 22nd**

Organizational Power


**September 29th**

Organizational Culture


### Organizations as Open Systems

**October 6th**

Resource Dependency and Transaction Cost Analysis


October 13th The New Institutionalism


October 20th Collective Action Perspective on Organizational Behavior


October 27th Organizational Ecology and Niche Theory


November 3rd Organizational Identities


November 10th Structural Embeddedness


The Embeddedness Perspective


December 1st Cultural and Political Embeddedness


