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. We also review work on the limits of rationality. Next we discuss naturalist theories and review the work of the human relations school. Much work today is still influenced by this perspective. We focus on inter-group relations, culture, power, and networks. We finish with open systems models and examine organizational ecology, neo-institutional theory, and political economy theory. The course is necessarily an overview of what has been done and does not go into great deal on any one topic. Hopefully your appetite will be whetted, and you will be inspired to explore the various theories more in your other coursework and possibly your dissertation.

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 analytic. Presenters are expected to prepare a one-page (single-spaced, one inch margins, 11-pt font) review essay for each reading that they present. After a brief summary of the main points (about 1/3 of the text), the essay will point out something ‘nice’ and ‘naughty’ (about 2/3 of the text) about each reading. The ‘nice’ highlights how this reading contributes to our understanding of the topic for the week; the ‘naughty’ highlights what is wrong with the article or what it has ignored. These are to be distributed at the beginning of the class on the day of the presentation. I will make copies for you if you email them to me 24 hours before class, otherwise it’s your responsibility to
make copies. They will be posted on D2L afterwards after I read and make corrections. Points will be deducted for anything outside these parameters. 45% of the student's grade will be based on the presentations and essays (15% 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 late but within one week of the presentation, or an F, if there is no essay turned in.

Students are also required to complete a take-home exam (there is a 500 word limit per answer). The purpose of the exam is to see how well students have been able to master the theory and research in the field. You will get the exam on December 3rd and it is due December 10th at 5:00 PM (paper copy in my mailbox). 20% of the student's grade will be based on the exam. You can get an extension and an incomplete, but only for a serious illness/tragedy which makes turning it in on the 10th impossible. However, exams turned in late will be graded in January after the spring semester begins.

In addition, students can do a ten-page literature review or research proposal on a topic approved by the instructor beforehand. We will discuss the details of the paper in class. Students need to prepare a one page abstract (250 words) by September 24th and will have five minutes to describe their project in class that day. If your topic is a little 'off-topic,' please consult with the instructor beforehand. Students will turn in their paper the last day of class (December 3rd).

Before you submit to me upload to the DropBox in D2L for a plagiarism check. Then submit a hard copy and an e-copy to me. The paper’s grade will count for 30% of their grade. You can get an extension and an incomplete, but only for a serious illness/tragedy which makes turning it in on the 3rd impossible. However, papers turned in late will be graded in January after the spring semester begins.

For everyone, 5% of your grade is based on attendance. This is an easy ‘A’. If you are sick, have a personal emergency, or a professional commitment and cannot attend, please notify me ahead of time for an excused absence. However, everyone gets one ‘party day’ (last minute TA assignments, a visit by mom, hangovers). Thus one unexcused absence results in no penalty, two lowers your grade to a ‘B’, three lowers your grade to a ‘C’, four lowers it to a ‘D’, and five or more lowers it to an ‘F’ for attendance.

In sum,

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<td>Review essays (3)</td>
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<td>Research paper/proposal</td>
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**Readings**

These books are for sale in the bookstore or online.


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

The reading list is not as dense as your other seminars, but the class is premised on the assumption that you do all the readings. If you don’t intend on doing the readings, you should take another class or audit. 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 requiring fewer readings each session and an integrative exam. 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 (announcements, postings, etc.), but I will email you through D2L. So check that email regularly for messages. You never know when I will unexpectedly call off class!

I will not tolerate any cheating or plagiarism of any kind. If there are issues, e.g., you fail the plagiarism check on the paper, we will discuss the matter first. If you cheated, you will not only flunk the assignment but you may be reported to the Graduate School and disciplinary procedures may be initiated. Also I will not tolerate any aggressive remarks toward other students 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. We will have a break halfway through the class, and you can call mommy then.
Schedule of Classes

Organizations as Rational Systems

August 27th  Bureaucracy


September 3rd  Contingency Theory


September 10th  Bounded Rationality and the Behavioral School


Organizations as Natural Systems

September 17th  Organizational Power


September 24th  Organizational Cultures

Submit 250 Word Abstract of Literature Review or Research Proposal


**October 1st Social Networks - Micro**


**October 8th Transaction Cost Analysis**


October 15th  Social Networks - Macro


October 22nd  Organizational Ecology and Niche Theory


October 29th  Organizational Identities


**November 5th The New Institutionalism**


November 12th    Social Movement Perspective on Organizational Behavior


December 3rd    Marxian Perspective


December 10th    Exams Due