Macro Topics in Organizational Behavior (HBS 4880)/
Organizational Analysis (Soc 224)

Spring 2013
Syllabus
(as of 1-22-13: Subject to Change)

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Tuesdays from 2:00 to 5:00pm
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Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Information

This course covers classical and key contemporary works in organization theory and surveys the main paradigms that are now active in the field. Organization theory draws on disciplinary roots in (alphabetically) economics, political science, psychology, and sociology to explain the origins, persistence, and disappearance of the institutional structures that order economic life (organizations, firms, networks, markets, and others). We will read some of the classic statements of the major approaches and trace the history of ideas as the field has developed up to the present. As the field is broad and deep in many spots, and I include a list of recommended further readings for each topic area.

Class sessions will typically begin with the instructor providing a general overview of the session, highlighting relevant background and context of the assigned readings. Next will be a more focused discussion and critique of the individual papers that are assigned for that week led by students. The final segment of the class will be a general discussion led by the instructor, which will focus on the questions that the students send in advance. The instructor will then wrap-up the discussion with some concluding comments. For many sessions, an author of one of the papers we have read that week will be joining us for the last part of class to reflect on the session topic and the particular paper.

Requirements

This course has three requirements: class participation, discussion of assigned readings, and a final paper, which will take the form of a research proposal.

Class Participation. Because this course is a seminar, most of the action takes place during class discussion. Thus, all participants should show up prepared to discuss the readings. Please also email me 1 question you would like to see addressed during the discussion by 8:00 AM the day of the class (Tuesday).
Discussion of Assigned Readings. Each assigned paper will be reviewed and critiqued by an individual student during the class session. One way to think about this 5-10 minute presentation is to first present the 2-3 main contributions of the work and/or why you think the paper is interesting, and then highlight the 2-3 areas of improvement for the paper. Students will have the opportunity to sign up for their readings on the first day of class and via the Sharesite: https://inside.hbs.edu/sites/adhocshare/HBS/maob/SitePages/Home.aspx

Final Paper. The final paper is intended to get you thinking concretely about designing research that advances the discourse in a particular area (and, not incidentally, to give you practice in writing a dissertation proposal). Proposals are to resemble the front end of an empirical research paper, with theoretical development, hypotheses, and a sketch of a methods section. So that our seminar and discussions can be most helpful in developing your ideas, I have set the following deadlines for the paper:

- March 5: Statement of paper topic
- March 26: Paragraph on topic
- April 16: 2 page outline and bibliography
- May 7: Final paper due

1: January 29: INTRODUCTION

I will provide an introduction to the class; and we will review the syllabus and assign the readings for the term.

Please come to class ready to discuss:
- Your favorite published piece of research in the field of organizational studies. Why is it your favorite? By what standards would it be judged to be exemplary?
- One question about the assigned readings

Background Reading:

W. Richard Scott and Gerald F. Davis. 2006. "The subject is organizations, the verb is organizing" Chapter 1 in Organizations and organizing: rational, natural, and open systems perspectives (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. (email instructor)

2: February 5: CONTINGENCY THEORY (Guest, Ranjay Gulati)


3: February 12: RESOURCE DEPENDENCE (Guest, Mikolaj Jan Piskorski)


4: February 19: NETWORK APPROACHES


5: February 26: NETWORK APPROACHES 2 (Guest, Magnus Thor Torfason)


6: March 5: INSTITUTIONAL THEORY 1


7: March 12: INSTITUTIONAL THEORY 2


<SPRING BREAK>
8: March 26: INSTITUTIONAL THEORY 3 (Guest, Julie Battilana)


9: April 2: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS 1 (Guest, Shon Hiatt)


10: April 9: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS 2


11: April 16: ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGY


12: April 23: CATEGORIES AND IDENTITY


13: April 30: LAST CLASS (WRAP-UP AND PAPER PRESENTATIONS)
FURTHER READING:

RESOURCE DEPENDENCE:

NETWORK APPROACHES:

**INSTITUTIONAL THEORY:**


**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS:**


**ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGY:**


**CATEGORIES AND IDENTITY:**

