PBU 1605 ORGANIZATION THEORY

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Class meets: WED 10 AM – 1 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to review and evaluate different theories, perspectives and developments that relate to understanding organizations, including both macro and micro theories, beginning with the classical engineering perspectives and moving to more contemporary post-modern approaches.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Knowledge
- An appreciation of different organization theories and their application to real-world business issues
- An appreciation of current trends and controversies
- An understanding of the different research approaches that can be adopted and how they link to different organization theories

Skills
- The ability to critically review different perspectives and consider strengths and weaknesses
- The ability to present and communicate complex ideas in a classroom setting
- The ability to identify research gaps and build theoretical frameworks that synthesize different organization theory perspectives
- The ability to articulate a research agenda for future research based on analysis of current trends and controversies

Perspectives
- Modernist, symbolic and postmodern perspectives
CLASS STRUCTURE

The class will meet once per week. Many of the classes will be student-led. Readings will be assigned to particular students prior to each session and will be presented, discussed and debated and applied to different organizational contexts. For each of the different organization theories covered, students will be required to develop a research question that aligns with their interests that would be appropriate for that given perspective/theory and define what research methods would be appropriate. These will be discussed in class.

CLASS TEXTS

The anchor book for the class is:


You may find that having one of the contemporary books listed below useful for some basic overviews.


Some classic books include:


ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Bentley College requires that students adhere to the College’s Academic Integrity System and its Academic Honor Code. Please see the Student Handbook for your rights and responsibilities regarding academic integrity or refer to the Bentley website: https://www.bentley.edu/files/2015/08/12/Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20Sept%20%202015%20Revision.pdf

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade will be comprised of the following components:

Class Participation: 10%

The key to a meaningful and interesting class experience is class participation. All participants are required to read the core readings and at least one of the “extension” readings before each class session. You will be expected to make a significant contribution to discussions in each of the sessions. Your grade for class participation will be based on the extent to which you have prepared for each class, including having read assigned materials prior to class, actively participated in class discussions, and answered questions posed. There will be no lectures, so it is imperative that each participant comes fully prepared to discuss the readings and other assignments for the week.

Paper Summaries: 20%

In addition to the general preparation, each participant will be assigned one or more articles from the week’s discussion and will be expected to prepare a short summary (no more than 1 page single-spaced). Please email me the summary by 10 p.m. on the Tuesday preceding the respective session, so I can post it on the course Blackboard site. The goal is to have everyone prepared to participate and for each person to be able to take over the lead on the discussion for their particular article. At the end of the semester there will be a set of article summaries that everyone has access to. These will be helpful for the final OT exam as well for the OT qualifying exam at the end of your coursework.

The summary should be guided by the following questions:

(a) What is the basic argument?
(b) What are the argument’s strengths and weaknesses? If you disagree with the argument, what would it take to convince you?
(c) What differentiates this argument from others we have read?
(d) What, if any, alternative explanation could account for the findings?
(e) What is one interesting researchable question derived from the article/book chapter?
**Final Exam: 20%**

This be a 3-hour open-note exam that will cover all course material. The structure and format will mirror the final comprehensive that you will take at the end of your coursework. The exam is scheduled for **April 20**.

**Final Paper: 50%**

The final paper will consist of an original research paper that draws upon organizational theories to explore an issue that relates to the research area that you are interested in. This will involve identifying a specific research question; developing a conceptual framework that helps you to identify gaps in the existing literature that relate to this issue that can be empirically studied in the future; and setting out how that research gap can be filled by future research. The objective is to produce a paper of the style of a published journal article. Papers will likely be approximately 5000-6000 words in length.

To make sure you have enough time to think through the paper and incorporate feedback, the final paper components must be produced by the following deadlines:

- **Introduction** – identification of the selected topic for the paper and a preliminary research question. **Due Feb 10**
- **Literature review** – outline of the papers that you will draw on in the paper and a first draft of the literature review. **Due Mar 9**
- **Theoretical framework** – development of the theoretical framework that you have developed; this might be in the form of a figure, a set of propositions or a set of hypotheses depending on the type of theoretical approaches that you have decided to use. **Due Mar 30**
- **Research agenda** – specification of the research agenda/gap that arises from the development of your theoretical framework along with a detailed outline of the appropriate methodology. **Due Apr 13**
- **Final paper** – this will use the various sections that have been submitted but amended as you see fit to produce the final version (writing a paper is a very iterative process and does not follow the logic of the linear paper that you finally read; hence considerable rework of the various sections may be needed to produce the final version). The final paper will likely include an abstract, background section, theoretical framework section, methodology section, discussion section, conclusion sections and references section – but this structure can be modified to fit the particular needs of the paper that you are writing. **Due May 10**
Journals of Importance

Academy of Management Perspectives  Academy of Management Journal
Academy of Management Review  Administrative Sciences Quarterly
Academy of Management Annals  California Management Review
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice  Harvard Business Review
Journal of Business Venturing  British Journal of Management
Journal of International Business Studies  Organization Studies
Journal of Management  Journal of Management Studies
Long Range Planning  Management Science
Journal of Management Inquiry  Organizational Science
Sloan Management Review  Strategic Management Journal
Strategic Organization  Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal

Conferences to Consider (for paper submission or doctoral consortia*)

Academy of Management (paper due early Jan.; conference in August)*
Eastern Academy of Management (paper due in Nov.; conference in May)*
European Group for Organizational Studies (short paper due early Jan, conference in July)
Strategic Management Society (abstract due in February/March, conference in Sep/October)
Academy of International Business (paper due early Jan; conference end of June)*
Babson Entrepreneurship Research Conference (abstract due in Oct., conference in June)*
International Association for Business and Society (summary due in Fall, conference in March)

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS
(subject to change to accommodate guest speakers’ schedules and other contingencies)

Week 1: Jan 20
A Map of the Territory

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapters 1-5

Week 2: Jan 27
Rational and Natural Models

Core readings:

Extensions:
Perrow, C. 1986. Complex Organizations, Chapters 1-3
Gouldner, A.W. 1954. Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy, Chapters 1-3

Week 3: Feb 3
Technology, Contingency, Configurations

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapters 6-7
Thompson, J.D. 1967. Organizations in Action, Chapters 1-2 and 4-5.

Extensions:

Week 4: Feb 10
Strategic Contingency, Power and Politics

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 8

Extensions:
Week 5: Feb 17
Resource Dependency and Social Networks

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 9 (pp. 233-243) and Chapter 11
Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G.R. 1978. The External Control of Organizations: A Resource
Dependence Perspective, Chapter 3.
1380.

Extensions:
Granovetter, Mark S. 1985. Economic action and social structure: The problem of
Uzzi, B. 1997. Social structure and competition in interfirm networks: The paradox of
Hayagreeva, R., & Drazin, R. 2002. Overcoming resource constraints on product innovation by
recruiting talent from rivals: A study of the mutual fund industry. Academy of
Tiziana, C., & Milkolaj, P. 2005. Power imbalance, mutual dependence and constraint absorption:
A closer look at resource dependence theory. Administrative Science Quarterly, 50: 167-
199.
Aven, B. L. 2015. The paradox of corrupt networks: An analysis of organizational crime at

Week 6: Feb 24
Organizational Ecology

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 10 (pp. 246-257)
Sociology, 82: 929-964.

Extensions:
Stinchcombe, A. 1965. Social structure and organizations. In James G. March (Ed.), Handbook of
Organizations: pp. 142-169.
Hannan, M. T. & Carroll, G.R. 1995. Theory building and cheap talk about legitimation: Reply to
Week 7: Mar 2
Institutional Theory. Institutional Change

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 10 (pp. 258-277)

Extensions:

Week 8: Mar 9
Neo-Institutional Theory

Core readings:

Extensions:

SPRING BREAK: ENJOY 😊

Week 9: Mar 23
Transaction Cost Economics

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 9 (pp. 220-232)

Extensions:

Week 10: Mar 30
Agency Theory
Guest Speaker: Prof. Jill Brown, Bentley University

Core readings:

Extensions:

**Week 11: Apr 6**  
**Social Construction and Enactment**

Core readings:

Extensions:

**Week 12: Apr 13**  
**Career Development in a Weak Paradigm Field**
**Guest Speaker: Prof. Samina Karim, NEU**

Core readings:
Week 1: Apr 20
Take-Home Exam

Week 14: Apr 27
Culture and Change. Where Are the New Theories of Organization?
Guest Speaker: Prof. Jeff Furman, BU

Core readings:

Extensions:

Week 15: May 3
Week 16: May 10
Paper Presentations
Please budget 20 min for the presentation + 10 min for Q&A

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THE END! HAVE A GREAT SUMMER ☺
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This syllabus is based on Professor Susan Newell’s 2009/2012/2014 syllabi, with additional input from the reading lists for the doctoral seminars in OT at Boston University and Boston College. Comments and suggestions for further development of the syllabus are welcome and highly appreciated.