PBU 1605 ORGANIZATION THEORY

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Class meets: WED 9:30 AM – 12:30 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, 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 to study the research question of interest. These will be discussed in class.

CLASS TEXTS

The anchor book for the class is:


Having one of the contemporary books listed below may be also 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%2020%2015%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 18.

**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 and 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.

It is critical that the paper you develop for the OT course is original, i.e. it does not “piggyback” on papers you have developed for other doctoral courses. If you would like to explore a set of related phenomena/research questions in your doctoral work, please consult me and the other professor(s) at the outset of the semester. Your OT research paper should be distinct and original.

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 7**
- **Literature review** – outline of the papers that you will draw on in the paper and a first draft of the literature review. **Due Mar 14**
- **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 you are using. **Due Mar 28**
- **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 11**
- **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 9**

**Journals of Importance**

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<th>Academy of Management Perspectives</th>
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<td>Academy of Management Review</td>
<td>Administrative Sciences Quarterly</td>
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<td>Academy of Management Annals</td>
<td>California Management Review</td>
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<td>Harvard Business Review</td>
<td>Organization Studies</td>
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<td>British Journal of Management</td>
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<td>Journal of International Business Studies</td>
<td>Management Science</td>
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<td>Journal of Management</td>
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<td>Journal of Management Inquiry</td>
<td>Organizational Science</td>
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<td>Sloan Management Review</td>
<td>Strategic Management Journal</td>
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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 mid Nov; conference end of June)*
- Babson Entrepreneurship Research Conference (abstract due mid Oct; conference in early June)*
- International Association for Business and Society (summary due end Dec, conference in early June)

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

Week 1: Jan 17
A Map of the Territory

Core readings:
- Scott and Davis, Chapters 1-5

Week 2: Jan 24
Rational and Natural Models

Core readings:

Extensions:
- Gouldner, A.W. 1954. Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy, Chapters 1-3
- Perrow, C. 1986. Complex Organizations, Chapters 1-3
Week 3: Jan 31
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 7
Strategic Contingency, Power and Politics

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 8

Extensions:
Week 5: Feb 14
Resource Dependency and Social Networks

Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 9 (pp. 233-243) and Chapter 11

Extensions:

Week 6: Feb 21
Organizational Ecology

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

Extensions:
Week 7: Feb 28
Institutional Theory. Institutional Change

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

Extensions:

SPRING BREAK: ENJOY 😊

Week 8: Mar 14
Neo-Institutional Theory

Core readings:
Extensions:

Week 9: Mar 21
Organizational Economics (Part 1)
Guest Speaker: Professor Brian Fox, Bentley University (note, we will need to shift the day/time of this session)

Core Readings:

Week 10: Mar 28
Organizational Economics (Part 2)
Transaction Cost Economics and Agency Theory

Special Assignment ahead of the Paper Development Workshop on April 18:

Please submit a 100-word abstract on a paper idea that is of interest to you. There is no need for empirics; focus on the theory you would like to use and/or extend and on the assumptions you are challenging, why and how. I will collate your abstracts and will share them with Professor Banalieva, who will be leading the Paper Development Workshop on April 18, as well as with everyone in the class. You can submit an abstract of the research paper you are developing for the OT seminar, or the abstract of another paper idea of interest to you.
Core readings:
Scott and Davis, Chapter 9 (pp. 220-232)

Extensions:

Week 11: Apr 4
Social Construction and Enactment. Modernist, Post-Modernist, Symbolic Perspectives

Core readings:
Extensions:

Week 12: Apr 11
Recent Research in Organization Theory
Note: There will be no summaries due for this session. Read all articles carefully and be prepared to discuss them in class.

Core readings:

Week 13: Apr 18
Paper Development Workshop. Exam Review.
Guest Speaker: Prof. Elitsa (Ellie) Banalieva, Northeastern University

Assignment ahead of the Paper Development Workshop on April 11:

Review the 100-word abstracts of your colleagues. Prepare developmental feedback.

Saturday, Apr 21
Take-Home Exam (questions emailed at 12 noon, responses due by 3 p.m.)
Week 14: Apr 25
Paradox, Theory Boundaries and Theorizing
Guest Speaker: Prof. Sunny Li Sun, University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Core readings:

Extensions:

Week 15: May 2
No class. Work on your final papers.

Week 16: May 9
Paper Presentations
Note: To allow 30 min for each presentation, the class will start at 9 a.m.
Please budget 20 min for the presentation + 10 min for Q&A