DPLS 719 – Systemic Organizational Change

Fall 2015 3 credits

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Class Logistics: Thursday evenings 6-10 Room: TBA
Dates: 9/3, 9/17, 10/1, 10/8, 10/22, 11/5, 11/19, 12/3

Course Overview

The course explores theories and ideas related to organizational change looking at both traditional modernist approaches where organizational change is seen as rational, strategic and open to explicit managerial and leadership influence and at more contemporary postmodern approaches that sees organizational change as a ubiquitous bottom up process based on conversations, power relations, and social norms. The use of the word “systemic” in the title of this course is meant to capture structure/change phenomena in organizations holistically and comprehensively. The term does not necessarily imply rational, planned, or even fully describable organizational phenomena.

The first readings in the course are more philosophical and broad and will frame ensuing readings as we converge on key ideas in both institutional and organizational studies.

This course will be conducted in a seminar format.

Please come prepared for discussion & dialogue, lots of thinking and lots of engagement.

Course Objectives

- We will develop a working knowledge of current thinking around organizational and institutional structures and processes as they relate to coherence and community in organizational settings.
- We will develop an understanding and appreciation of the role and scope language and conversation plays in organizations and in organizational change initiatives.
- We will develop a vocabulary and conceptual framework for integrating technical definitions of communication, subjectivity, motivation, and beliefs into a coherent image of collective activity.
- We will learn about & practice strategies, models, and methods for adapting to and affecting change at interpersonal and group levels.
- We will connect knowledge of organizational change to leadership behaviors and principles.

Course Structure

This course is composed of reading, writing, class discussion, lecture, and group activities. We will form small working groups during the first class that will remain intact throughout the course. These groups or cohorts will serve multiple functions. Among them are:

Content & process support - group participants will have an opportunity to discuss readings, past discussions, and class assignments.

Classes will open with individual check-ins followed by an overview of the readings. Small group discussions of course notes and readings will typically follow. We will generally take a
20-30 minute break. Following the break we will work on projects, conduct full class debriefs, continue class discussion, or review readings.

It is also my habit to prepare interpretive notes of selected readings and make them available on Blackboard prior to class. I use these notes to frame my ideas for dialogue when we meet. I also hope that my interpretations inspire students to interpret and analyze the readings from their own perspectives. I then prepare a number of slides based on my notes to stimulate discussion and/or communicate concepts and ideas. There will also be additional readings posted on Blackboard.

Assignments, & Grading – all writing should conform to APA 6th Edition

- Read all materials and attend all classes and participate with all your attention. Please let me know if you intend to miss any classes. (see grading rubric on Blackboard)
- Class assignment – due on 3rd meeting. See Blackboard > Assignments area for description
- Group Assignment –See Blackboard > Assignments
- Final paper – Please see Blackboard > Assignments area for Final Assignment.

Expectations and Assessment

Assessment of doctoral work in leadership studies is challenging. Interdisciplinary work dealing with complex and sometimes contested theories and concepts requires (from my perspective) a tolerance for uncertainty, ambiguity, and contingency. I am also struck by the need for a high degree of self-directed behavior on the part of doctoral students and candidates. I would like my teaching style, assessment policy, and rubrics to support and facilitate self-direction. The DPLS is an interdisciplinary program and students come with a variety of experiences, different types of expertise, and different professional and scholarly needs. It is my intention to honor, help cultivate, and support these differences.

However, behind my philosophical questions about assessment and uncertainty in evaluating anyone in an absolute manner there does reside (in my view) a set of skills that serve to hold and shape work with language in a complex world. I believe we need a grammar, syntax, and semantics of clarity, coherence, depth, and breadth. My assumption at the beginning of the term is that all of the students in this class possess the requisite skills, talents, and propensities needed to be clear, cogent, and complete. I admit that the standards I refer to are objectively stated and subjectively enacted. My assessment will be based on the quality and content of expressed thought as exhibited in both written assignments and classroom presentations and participation.

Grading Criteria for Written Work (adapted from the DPLS Academic papers rubric)

**Content Criteria:**

The content of papers should reflect the level and style of content in readings and discussions. There is an expectation that doctoral students will reach outside of their comfort zone in terms of appropriation of ideas, concepts, and frameworks. The substance of papers and other writings will be weighed against the general level of discourse in class meetings and the style and density of expression of the readings.

**Thought and Expression Criteria**
Student writing should raise vital questions or issues, formulating them clearly and precisely. I will be looking for evidence of breadth and depth and the insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas. Main points should be developed and supported with relevant information and references that are appropriately incorporated.

The organization and logic of your writing is critical. The expectation is for well focused, well organized, and well reasoned conclusions. The writing should flow with the reader not getting lost or having to work to determine what you are saying.

There is also an expectation that your writing/thinking has an open and inclusive character when exploring alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as appropriate, their assumptions, implications, and/or practical consequences.

**Technical Criteria**

Your writing should be clear and demonstrate a high level of vocabulary through careful word choice. Sentences should be constructed skillfully and purposefully. Transitions between paragraphs and sections are important and will evaluated for their efficacy in weaving your concepts, themes, and purposes together. Summaries and conclusions are also vital elements of good writing and will be evaluated based on their appropriateness and effectiveness.

Of course grammar, punctuation, and spelling are expected to be flawless. Careful proof reading of your paper is a basic expectation.

Papers, unless otherwise noted are to be completed in APA style. References should be cited properly within the text and a complete reference list must be provided. Appropriate use of headings will also be noted. All papers to be sent via email to francovich@gonzaga.edu

**Point/Grade correspondence:** (see grading rubric on Blackboard)

**Required Texts**


**Other Required Readings (Available on Blackboard)**


