DPLS 779 – Emergent Organizational Change

Fall 2017 3 credits

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Class Logistics: Thursday evenings 6-10 Room: TBA

Dates: 9/7, 9/21, 10/5, 10/19, 11/2, 11/16, 11/30, 12/7

Course Overview

The course explores theories and ideas related to leadership in the context of organizational change through contemporary approaches that interpret organizational change as a bottom up process based on conversations, power relations, and social norms. This view problematizes traditional interpretations of organizational structure and positional leadership within that structure.

The use of the word “emergent” in the title of this course is meant to describe structure/change dynamics from a methodological framework that begins with processual phenomena and proceeds to describe and analyze organizations and the leadership phenomenon from an interpretive and dialogical perspective. The first readings in the course are more philosophical and broad and will frame ensuing readings as we converge on key ideas in organizational and leadership studies. The three core texts for the course are extended conversations regarding organizations as communities of learning, meaning, and identity (Wenger), as contexts for leadership as practice (Raelin), and as sites for emergent meaning and structure through conversations (Shaw). Issues of emergence, complexity, social order, and the interplay of agency and structure form the heart of this course.

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 explore the development of an organizational perspective that includes intentional behavior and thought with feelings and non-symbolic meanings operating at the local and situated level of human interactions.
- We will develop an understanding and appreciation of the role and scope language and natural conversations plays in organizations and in organizational change.
- 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 methods for adapting to and affecting change at interpersonal and group levels.
- We will connect knowledge of organizational change principles to an explicit leadership-as-practice perspective.
• We will investigate the creative emergence of organizational norms and practices through the lens of communities of practice.

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 several slides based on my notes to stimulate discussion and/or communicate concepts and ideas. There will also be additional readings posted on Blackboard.

Assignments – 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)

• Group and/or Presentation 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.
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. Central to my interpretation of scholarly writing is the explicit presence of a thesis or purpose to the writing that is clearly stated and supported. My general expectation of a scholarly structure for course papers will ideally include:

- Problématique or introductory section that describes what the paper is about, why it is important, and who else cares about the general topic. This section locates the paper in the universe of possible topics to write about.
- An explicit thesis or purpose statement. This statement should outline in brief the conceptual content of the paper and prepare the reader for an in-depth treatment of the argument.
- Explicit recognition of the methodological implications of both the writing of the paper and the paper’s contents. How do you support your claims toward truth, coherence, or meaning?
- Analysis and interpretation of the literature, case, vignette, or data that you present in your paper.
- A summarization and evaluation of your thesis or purpose with conclusions (note conclusions are not a summarization but an answer to the question your paper suggests or implies).

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 citations 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 be evaluated for their efficacy in

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1 I also recognize that there are many ways to write a paper and make an argument. If the general criteria that my outline suggests are met then I will certainly interpret your work favorably – I am not looking for a cookie cutter approach but for a coherent articulation of a scholarly effort at making sense of a problem, question, or wondering.
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. Please do not use running heads. 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)**

**Reading Notes:**

- Strauss, Stacey, & Scott (see recommended texts below – I am using my reading notes as a kind of summary of these texts that essentially pulled main ideas and integrated them with other thinking around the general topics language, behavior, & organizations)

**Articles:**


**Recommended Reading**


