DPLS 701 Organizational Theory

Summer 2009 3 Credits
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Office hours: Please call for an appointment
Meeting Logistics - Monday 6 pm - 10 pm Room TBD
We meet on June 22, 29; July 3, 6, 13, 20, 27

Course Overview
The course explores the foundations of organizational theorizing and practice. One of the key texts for the course is an anthology of ‘classic’ organizational writings by Shafritz et al., that will help frame and contextualize our more or less postmodern approach to understanding organizational theory. The text by Hatch explores organizational theory from modernist, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives. The symbolic and postmodern perspectives are theoretical perspectives acting on and responding to modernist practices that have become increasingly institutionalized over the past 200 years. These relationships and the theories and practices that arise from this confluence of perspectives will be the core focus of the course.

Other voices will explore various aspects of this basic framework. Shirky's book is a current analysis of how social tools are changing the very basis for organizing. How organizations adapt to these changes remains to be seen.

The work by Etienne Wenger on Communities of Practice is an attempt to develop a model of the organization or community that reflects the symbolic interactionist perspective as it tries to map behavior and practice with meaning and identity. Building off modernist perspectives this work explores, through an ethnography of a claims processing unit in a large insurance company, the intersection of the structures and rules of existing institutions with the always alive and changing nature of people working, thinking, and making meaning.

We will also read a text grounded in the perspective of ecological psychology. This reading will be a group project with selected groups each reading and reporting on a chapter of the text throughout the semester. These materials will be provided to participants at the first meeting.

Other readings will be provided that touch on and extend the discussion of the postmodern perspective. Underlying all of these perspectives is an orientation toward holism, the biological basis of mental processes, and a social constructionist perspective toward knowledge and identity. Be prepared for discussion, dialogue, and engagement.

The purpose of this core DPLS course is to help chart both a practical and theoretical mapping of organizational thinking as it relates to the personal and global dimensions of leadership. This relationship is continuous and philosophically rigorous in that the interdisciplinary approaches binding our three levels of inquiry are based on physical, social/linguistic, and transcendent foundations.
Course Structure
This course is composed of reading, writing, discussion, lecture, group activities, and video. We will form small working groups during the first meeting 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 meeting assignments.
- **Paper review and editing** - Prior to turning in completed papers each person’s paper will be read and edited by their peers in a structured editing activity. The DPLS course paper rubric (see Blackboard under Assignments) will be introduced and used as the context for this joint editing process. It is recognized that underlying good writing is both clarity of thought and an adequate grasp of concepts and frameworks. These forums used in conjunction with my own critique of student work will assist in the development of sound scholarship. This will be a particularly important part of your essay assignment.
- **Project and activity work** - One of our first activities will be for groups to develop an agreement about group process and individual responsibilities. Other group activities will be developed.
- **All assigned work other than projects** is to be emailed to me at francovich@gonzaga.edu on or before the assigned due date.

Most 4 hour meetings will open with an overview of the readings. Small group discussions of course notes and readings will then follow. We will generally take a 20-30 minute break. Following the break we will work on projects, conduct full group debriefs, continue discussion, or review readings or video presentations.

It is also my habit to prepare interpretive notes of the readings and make them available on Blackboard prior to our meeting. 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.

My intentions and aims for the course:

- To absorb and reflect on the possibilities of current innovations in social tools - peer to peer networking and a general decline in the cost of organizing (transaction costs).
- To develop a working knowledge of the history & concepts of organization theory as it relates to leadership studies.
- To develop an understanding of person-environment psychology as a bridge to practical strategies for living, leading, and working in organizations.
- To understand both conceptually and historically the role of modernist theories of organizations & groups.
- To understand both conceptually, personally, and historically the role of symbolic, interactionist, and social theories of organizations & groups.
- To survey, discuss, and develop an understanding of postmodern interpretations of organization theory as well as issues of power and diversity in organizations,
• To connect a leadership theory of transformation to organization theory and the possibility of transformative change in both private and public organizations and institutions.

**Expectations, Assignments & Grading**

- Please read all assignments and my course notes posted on Blackboard. These notes are meant to be an initial factor in the reading triangulation strategy that involves the author(s) work, your interpretation of that work, my interpretation, and finally our collective interpretation. This process is much more effective when all participants commit to doing the reading. Some group activities will be structured around these notes.
- Participants will be expected to attend all sessions. If you miss a meeting please inform me via email or phone prior to the missed meeting. Missing more than two meetings will result in an incomplete and require either taking the course again or auditing it at some future time. (Participation - 10% of grade)
- Participants will be expected to complete a pre-course writing assignment on Shirky's book *Here Comes Everybody*. Specific guidelines are on Blackboard under Course Assignments (10% of grade)
- Participants will present in teams of 2 or 3 persons a 1 hour presentation summary and a facilitated discussion of a book chapter from: Person-Environment Psychology: Models and Perspectives. (PEP) This task will be assigned and materials provided at the first meeting as well as made available on Blackboard. Instructions will be posted on Blackboard before our second meeting. (10% of grade)
- Post weekly reading notes on the Classics of Organizational Theory. See Blackboard for more complete instructions. You will post these on the Discussion Space that is reserved for your PEP group. (20% of grade)
- Write a capstone paper synthesizing the readings and discussions central to Organization Theory. This will be a 15-20 page paper (excluding title page and references). Please use 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font in APA format. You can exercise wide latitude and judgment in writing the paper but it must be grounded in one or more of the three broad perspectives of the course (Modernist, Symbolic, and Postmodern). Your paper should include references citing course materials but also should include references and sources not found in the assigned course materials. See Blackboard under Course Assignments for more details. (50% of grade). Due date is August 1.

**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.

However, behind my 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 taking this course 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 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 meetings and the style and density of expression of the readings. On the other hand, papers should not be too complicated or wide in scope. The art of scholarly writing is (in part) to go into a narrow area deeply and show its relevance to the wider literature.

**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 be 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.
Point/Grade correspondence:
95-100% = A
90-94.99% = A-
85-90% = B
80-84.99% = B-

Required Texts

Other Readings will be provided via hardcopy and on Blackboard


Meetings Outline
Pre-Meeting Assignment:
- Read Here Comes Everybody
- Read Cooper & Burrell (see Blackboard 1st Meeting folder)
- Write 3 page response (see Blackboard Assignments folder)

First Meeting
- Organization Theory
- Housekeeping Issues - group selections, PEP assignments, processes, etc.
- Introductory Lecture & Dialogue - How is the organizational perspective related to social tools relevant to organizational theory? What are the implications of the Cooper & Burrell perspective?

Readings for session 2:
- Read pp. IX - p. 139 in Organization Theory by Hatch
- Read Chapter 9 Classics in Organizational Theory
- Assigned groups read chapters in Person Environment Psychology handouts
Second Meeting
- Organizational Theory, Environments, Structures & Structuring
- Person Environment Psychology (PEP) Chapters 1 & 2 Presentations
- Post Reading Notes Chapters 1 -2 from Classics on Blackboard.

Readings for Session 3:
- Hatch pp. 141-219
- Read Chapter 7 Classics in Organizational Theory
- Assigned groups read chapters in PEP handouts and prepare for presentation

Third Meeting
- 1st Classics of Organizational Theory Essay Due (Chapters 1 - 4)
- Technology & Organizational Culture
- PEP Presentation Chapters 3&4
- Post Reading Notes Chapters 3-5 from Classics on Blackboard.

Readings for Session 4:
- Hatch pp. 221-250
- Read Gieryn - What Buildings Do (on Blackboard in 4th meeting folder)
- Assigned groups read chapters in PEP handouts and prepare for presentation

Fourth Meeting
- Physical structure, space, and organizing
- PEP Presentation Chapters 5 & 6
- Post Reading Notes Chapters 6-7 from Classics on Blackboard.

Readings for Session 5:
- Hatch pp. 251-345
- Assigned groups read chapters in PEP handouts and prepare for presentation

Fifth Meeting
- Power, Control, & Conflict
- PEP Presentation Chapters 7 & 8
- Film
- Post Reading Notes Chapters 8-9 from Classics on Blackboard.

Readings for Session 6
- Wenger pp. xi-142

Sixth Meeting
- 2nd Classics of Organizational Theory Essay Due (Chapters 5-9)
- Practice

Readings for Session 7
- Wenger pp. 143-277
- Read Chapter 8 in Classics of Organizational Theory
Seventh Meeting
• Identity & Meaning
• and Wrap Up

Some Related Literature:

Posted 11 March by PS, date change 16 may jb