DPLS 772 Complexity & Organizational Leadership

Summer 2009  3 Credits  
**Professor:** Chris Francovich, Ed.D.  
**Office Phone:** 509-313-3592  
**E-mail:** francovich@gonzaga.edu  
**Office hours:** Please call for an appointment  
**Thursday evenings** 6-10  
**Room:** TBA  
**Dates:** 6/25, 7/2, 7/9, 7/16, 7/23, 7/24, 7/30

**Course Overview**  
This course is a survey of complexity theories as understood or applied in society, organizations, and to the self. The course is also an inquiry into the roots of complexity thinking and its relationship to language, sociality, and rational thought. Inquiring into complexity is (in my view) an outgrowth of the possibilities and cynicism of postmodernism. I use an idiosyncratic definition of postmodernism that co-counts its official beginnings with (for example) non-Euclidean geometries, Einstein, Marx, and Quantum Theory.

Communications and the consequent physical networks of coordination and movement have increased the complexity and uncertainty of society. The course is (in part) about how it is that we can know what is best for ourselves and others in the context of leading one's self or others into an uncertain future. Issues of power, privilege, and what is counted as ‘normal' are central to the interpretation of what it is that we know and how this (what we think we know) is used as a reason to lead or direct people or organizations.

The course will begin with an overview of the various perspectives of class members on complexity. Selected readings will introduce chaos theory and dissipative systems. We will also look in depth at complex adaptive systems. We will critically analyze and review current applications and interpretations of complexity and systems thinking through the lens of participative and ethical leadership and governance. Woven throughout the first part of the course is the text by Winograd and Flores that challenges modernist thoughts about rational planning and anticipates the current complexity that we are now encountering.

Uhl-Bien & Marion present an edited volume of works exploring many of the implications and avenues of possibility that a study of complexity offers Leadership Studies. This text will form the basis for group collaboration in both writing a coherent paper and presenting a series of chapters to colleagues.

Selected readings will help bridge the gap between adaptive, rational, natural law and transformative teleologies. Complexity as an object of inquiry requires patience, tolerance of ambiguity, uncertainty, and a willingness to both share and accept your own and others' incomprehension and confusion. This course is structured as a dialogic participative inquiry. Dr. Francovich will present some ideas using slides and notes but the bulk of class time will be spent in a seminar format.
Course Hopes and Aims
- To develop a sound foundation in the basic vocabulary and concepts of complexity
- To understand and apply fundamental concepts of complexity to our own experience or work situations
- To understand and apply to our experience a Hedieggerian approach to phenomena.
- To relate ethical, normative, and teleological arguments to complexity and the notion of complex adaptive systems.
- To stimulate and stretch our thinking about leadership, complexity, and the world
- To connect the phenomena of complexity to the ethics of leadership.

Assignments & Grading
- Please check Blackboard regularly for posted readings and copies of my reading notes. The organization of my class discussions and slides are based on the structure of my reading notes.
- Read all materials and attend all classes and participate with all your attention. Please let me know if you intend to miss any classes. (10% of Grade)
- Pre Class assignment - Write a preliminary essay/reflection on your interpretation of complexity and its relationship to your thinking about leadership 3 - 5 pages. Use APA and DPLS conventions. Be prepared to present your paper to the class. See Course Document on Blackboard for more specifications about this assignment (15% of Grade)
- Group Project - Write an essay and present assigned 3-4 Chapters of Uhl-Bien & Marion (see Blackboard for specifics) 30%
- Final paper. Due August 1st. 12 - 18 page (excluding title pages) paper in APA format. This paper should synthesize and summarize for you the course as a whole. What have you learned and what has been stimulated in you as a result of this course? Please use your imagination and feel free to exercise wide latitude in creating a topic for discussion. (45 % of Grade)
- Late papers or missing 2 or more classes will likely result in grade reduction and/or an incomplete.

Expectations and Assessment
Assessment of doctoral work in leadership studies is problematic for me. 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 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 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


Class Outline

Pre-class reading and assignment:

- Read Text: Winograd & Flores pp. xi - 26;
- Blackboard Readings: Richardson and Cilliers: What is Complexity Science?; Capra: Complexity & Life; & Kuhn: Why utilize complexity principles in social inquiry?

Write a preliminary essay/reflection on your interpretation of complexity and its relationship to your thinking about leadership 3 - 5 pages. Use APA and DPLS conventions. Be prepared to present your paper to the class. See Course Document on Blackboard for more specifications about this assignment.

1st Meeting:

- Readings discussed and papers presented.
- Group Work - Work groups defined. Peer review process developed. Class presentations discussed.

2nd Meeting:

- Readings discussed: Winograd & Flores, Harnessing Complexity and Richardson_SysTheory&Complexity#1&2.pdf
- Group Work
- Reading assignment: Winograd & Flores pp. 54- 106; Harnessing Complexity pp. 62 - 160

3rd Meeting:

- Readings discussed: Winograd & Flores and Harnessing Complexity
- Group Work
- Reading assignment: Winograd & Flores pp. 107 - 142; Complexity & Management pp. 1 - 84
- Blackboard reading: Applied_Svyantek&Brown
4th Meeting:
- Readings Discussed: Winograd & Flores & Complexity
- Group Presentations.
- Reading Assignment: Winograd & Flores 143-179; Complexity & Management pp 85-126

5th Meeting:
- Readings Discussed: Winograd & Flores & Complexity & Management
- Group Presentations.
- Reading Assignment: Complexity & Management pp 127-194 & BLatour_Interobjectivity.pdf (available on Blackboard)

6th Meeting:
- Readings Discussed: Complexity & Management & BLatour_Interobjectivity.pdf
- Group Presentations.
- Reading Assignment: Emergence of Leadership pp. 1-219

7th Meeting:
- Readings Discussed: Emergence of Leadership
- Group Presentations.

Recommended Reading:

References & Bibliography