DPLS 701 Organizational Theory
Summer 2013  3 credits
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Meeting Logistics –
Room: TBA

Course Overview
The course explores the foundations of organizational theorizing and practice. It also involves an extended discussion of the relationship and distinction between management and leadership and their roles in human 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. Both Stacey and Ladkin offer interpretations and worked out ideas for approaching both organization and leadership in ways consistent with the overall theme of the course.

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. It is also a way to conceive of situated and dynamic activity as a credible unit of analysis for empirical work. Building off modernist perspectives this text 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.

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 embodied, social/linguistic, and transcendent/abstract 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.
• **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, aims, and learning outcome goals for the course are:**

• To think critically about the distinction between leadership and management.

• To probe the boundary and relationship between embodied subjective experience and the experience of rational thought and action.

• To understand and apply phenomenological interpretations of leadership phenomena to practice situations.

• To develop a working knowledge of the history & concepts of organization theory as it relates to leadership studies.

• 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 develop and understand a credible model of situated activity such that empirical research can be carried out in organizational settings and exhibit ecological validity.

• 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 for any reason will result in an incomplete and require either taking the course again or auditing it at some future time. (10% of grade)
• Other assignments will be posted on a revised syllabus closer to the commencement of the class

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 are 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 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 on Blackboard:


• Other readings may be posted

Course Schedule will be available closer to the commencement of the course
Related Literature informing my perspective:


