SYLLABUS

BA545a – Foundations of Organization Studies
Fall, 2014
Th 6:00 – 8:45 PM, Rehn 215

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Course Objective

This course will survey the contemporary literature in organization theory, in order to provide an overview of the field. The assumption that guides the course is that contemporary organization theory (OT) had its roots in the work of late 19th and early 20th century sociologists, particularly Max Weber. The contributions of Weber and others provided the basis for the development of what has been called “structural contingency theory” in the 1960s and early 1970s. For a time, structural contingency theory provided an integrative paradigm roughly similar to those that Kuhn describes for “normal science” disciplines. But the dominance of structural contingency theory broke down in the late 1970s, because of critiques of the perspective, the openness of organization theory to conceptual imports from other disciplines, and the responses of entrepreneurial scholars to opportunities for achieving reputation. The outcome of the breakdown was the differentiation of the field into a number of distinct perspectives, many of which conceptualized organizations and their relationships with their environments by borrowing heavily from other social or even natural science disciplines. These perspectives have now become institutionalized as distinct schools of thought in OT.

The perspective outlined above is one approach to understanding the recent intellectual history of OT, though certainly not the only possible one. It provides a framework within which to organize the readings for this course. We will first review structural contingency theory, focusing on the work of James Thompson and several chapters from Lex Donaldson’s 2001 book, The Contingency Theory of Organizations. We will then study five schools of thought that followed the dominance of structural contingency theory, and carry us up to the present day. These schools are: resource dependence theory, population ecology theory, transaction costs theory, managerial and organizational cognition, and neo-institutional theory. The last school has grown exponentially in the last two decades, and has subdivided into a number of distinct literature streams, organized around constructs such as institutional strategy, institutional entrepreneurship, and institutional logics. We will examine some of the literature in these streams at the end of the course.
Readings

The readings for this course are listed on the Course Outline and Schedule below. In order to make the workload manageable, readings include only the most important works in each school of thought. The readings listed under each school should be thought of as a very preliminary introduction to the literature in that school. These lists establish the basic intellectual and historical topography of the school, and give the student access to references that will allow him/her to explore particular schools in greater depth if desired.

The selections include journal articles that you can download from Google Scholar, JSTOR, or EBSCO. The readings also include chapters from several monographs and edited books. The Thompson volume (see Week 2), the Pfeffer and Salancik volume (see Week 5), and the Berger and Luckmann volume (see Week 12) can be purchased very cheaply on Amazon. I would ask that you order these books immediately, so it will not be necessary to Xerox chapters from them. The chapters from the other monographs and edited books on the Course Outline and Schedule will be Xeroxed and passed out in class.

A key at the end of the syllabus provides full titles for all the journals and edited books from which readings for this course are drawn.

Course Requirements

A. Literature Summaries. Students are required to write seven literature summaries, each covering a specific group of readings. These summaries should be no more than five pages long, and are due on September 8, September 22, October 6, October 20, November 3, November 17, and December 8. The date each summary is due and the readings it should cover are noted on the Course Outline and Schedule below.

Each summary should integrate the relevant readings around one or two central themes that tie the readings together. The task of detecting central themes and organizing literature around them is similar to the task that scholars perform in writing the literature review section of a paper. In cases where many papers are being integrated into a single summary, the central themes will necessarily be general. One possible integration device is to compare and contrast groups of papers along one or two dimensions.

The due dates for the summaries are scheduled so that students will already have participated in class discussion of the readings before the summaries must be handed in. The summaries can be submitted as hard copies or e-mailed to the instructor.
The summaries will be read by the instructor, graded, and handed back with comments. When citing published literature in the summaries, students should use the reference and citation format specified in the Style Guide for Authors that appears in all January issues of the *Academy of Management Review* (the Style Guide can also be found on the AMR website).

B. Class Discussion. To facilitate a focused analysis of the readings for each class, the students will take turns presenting the articles and book chapters. One student will be responsible for each article or section of a book to be covered on a given day. These assignments will be worked out informally in advance by mutual agreement between the instructor and the students. The job of each student presenting will be to make a brief (10-15 minute) summary and critique of the reading(s) he is responsible for. These presentations will be informal, but they should be made with PowerPoint slides.

On days where several articles or chapters are scheduled for discussion, this format may result in multiple student presentations per class. Thus it is important to keep the presentations concise and to the point. The role of the instructor will be to critique the presentations, moderate the class discussion, and integrate across articles or chapters. Of course, each student must keep up with all the readings in addition to the particular articles or chapters (s)he is responsible for presenting. This is especially important in order to be able to write an effective literature summary.

C. Class Participation. Class participation covers the presentation role described above as well as the normal role of contributing class member. Evaluation of class participation will be based on two general criteria. The first, and more easily assessed criterion, is quantity of participation. The second, and less easily assessed criterion, is quality of participation. Examples of questions that underlie the evaluation of quality include: Does the student demonstrate a basic understanding of the assigned reading material? Can the student identify common themes in the readings, and use those themes to link and compare the articles and chapters? Does the student use the readings as a foundation to develop new theoretical ideas or insights? Can the student formulate appropriate critiques of the readings, and defend his or her position in discussion with other class members?

**Grading Weights**

These weights are approximate, and reflect the relative emphasis put on different course requirements in the overall evaluation of the student:

- Literature summaries: 60%
Course Outline and Schedule

Week 1
August 21
Introduction

Week 2
August 28
Structural Contingency Theory


Week 3
September 4
Structural Contingency Theory (cont.)


September 8
Summary #1 due (Week 2 and 3 readings)

Week 4
September 11
Resource Dependence Theory

Emerson (1962): ASR.

Week 5
September 18
Resource Dependence Theory (cont.)

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003): The External Control of Organizations (Ch. 6 and 7).
Casciaro and Piskorski (2005): ASQ.
Hillman, Withers, and Collins (2009): JOM.
September 22  Summary #2 due (Week 4 and 5 readings)

Week 6  Population Ecology Theory
September 25

Hannan and Freeman (1977): AJS.
Hannan and Freeman (1984): ASR.
Young (1988): AJS.

Week 7  Population Ecology Theory (cont.)
October 2

Hannan and Carroll (1992): Dynamics of Organizational Populations (Ch. 1, 2).
Barnett and Hansen (1996): SMJ.
Barnett and Freeman (2001): OS.

October 6  Summary #3 due (Week 6 and 7 readings)

Week 8  Transaction Costs Theory
October 9

Williamson (1981): AJS.
Williamson (1991): ASQ.

Week 9  Transaction Costs Theory (cont.)
October 16

Ghoshal and Moran (1996): AMR.
Roberts and Greenwood (1997): AMR.
David and Han (2004): SMJ.

October 20  Summary #4 due (Weeks 8 and 9 readings)

Week 10  Managerial and Organizational Cognition
October 23

Weick (1979): The Social Psychology of Organizing (Ch. 5, 6).
Weick and Roberts (1993): ASQ.
Porac and Thomas (1990): AMR.
Week 11
Managerial and Organizational Cognition
October 30

Neale, Tenbrunsel, Galvin, and Bazerman (2006): HOS (2nd ed.).

November 3
Summary #5 due (Weeks 10 and 11 readings)

Week 12
Neo-Institutional Theory
November 6

Meyer and Rowan (1977): AJS.
DiMaggio and Powell (1983): ASR.

Week 13
Neo-Institutional Theory (cont.)
November 13

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006): HOS (2nd ed.).
Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, and Suddaby (2008): HOI.
Heugens and Lander (2009): AMJ.

November 17
Summary #6 due (Week 12 and 13 readings)

Week 14
Institutional Strategy and Institutional Entrepreneurship
November 20

Lawrence (1999): JOM.
Garud, Jain, & Kumaraswamy (2002): AMJ.
Greenwood & Suddaby (2006): AMJ.

Week 15
Thanksgiving
November 27

Week 16
Institutional Logics
December 4

Thornton and Ocasio (1999): AJS.
Dunn and Jones (2010): ASQ.
Shipilov and Greve (2010): AMJ.
December 8    Summary #7 due (Week 14 and 16 readings)

December 13   Commencement

Key
AJJS = American Journal of Sociology
AMJ = Academy of Management Journal
AMR = Academy of Management Review
ASQ = Administrative Science Quarterly
ASR = American Sociological Review
BE = Business Economics
HBR = Harvard Business Review
HIWO = Handbook of Industrial, Work and Organizational Psychology
       (edited book)
HOS = Handbook of Organization Studies (edited book)
HOI = Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism (edited book)
HR = Human Relations
JOM = Journal of Management
JMS = Journal of Management Studies
OrgS = Organization Studies
OS = Organization Science
PP = Personnel Psychology
SC = Strategic Change
SEJ = Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal
SMJ = Strategic Management Journal

Other Useful Information

The following link contains some general information that may be useful to students:

http://pvcaa.siu.edu/index1/Syllabus%20Attachment_Fall20143.pdf