

THEORIES OF ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS & DECISION MAKING (SOC 1090)

Meetings: Jan 21 - May 15, 2009; MWF 9:00am-9:50am List Art Center 120

Instructor: Professor Ebony N. Bridwell- Mitchell

Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30pm-5:30pm; by appointment

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Course Description

Theories of Organizational Dynamics and Decision Making focuses on the internal working of organizations. It examines how individuals' attitudes, actions, and interactions make a difference for organizational processes and outcomes. This focus is contrasted with macro-level approaches, which take the organization (instead of the individual) as the primary unit of analysis. For example, studies of organizations from an economic perspective are typically concerned with the performance of the organization relative to its competitors. Studies of organizations from a macro-sociological focus are typically concerned with an organization's structures and actions, contextualized by the broader environment. This course is concerned with the way individuals *inside* organizations enact organizational structures, actions and performance through their attitudes, actions, and interactions. Thus, this course takes a more micro and meso perspective that has the goal of answering the question: "why do individuals in organization behave the way they do and how does this affect the organizations of which they are a part?"

The overarching goal of the course is to prepare students to not only understand and assess organizational dynamics but also to become effective members, leaders, and entrepreneurs in the organizations of which they will inevitably become a part. By the end of the course students will be able to: (1) critically observe and assess organizational processes and outcomes to explain why they happen as they do; (2) apply theoretical understandings of organizational processes and outcomes to devise strategies for improving organizational dynamics; (3) engage in critical self-reflection about their own experiences, which might affect organizational processes and outcomes.

Course Format

The course is designed to help students develop theoretical knowledge, apply that knowledge to real organizations, and use the knowledge experientially by critically assessing their own experiences in group and organizational settings. Thus, the course takes a three pronged approach to teaching about internal organizational dynamics, which includes: classic and contemporary theoretical readings, case analyses, and simulated organizational experiences through team exercises and group work.

The theoretical readings in the course are organized around eight topical units, which comprise some of the core knowledge for analyzing internal organizational dynamics. Each topic will be addressed through a series of related readings, lectures, and discussions. The knowledge gained from the readings on each topic is synthesized and applied through a culminating case analysis and discussion. The case analyses also provide the context for students to observe, assess, and make recommendations about organizational dynamics through their own team experiences. Since the team case analyses play a critical role in integrating course knowledge, considerable class time and effort will be devoted to this activity.

- Case analyses and discussions are team activities. The first opportunity to learn from this activity is applying lessons about effective teams and groups to build a six- to eight-person team, which will be your work group for analyzing and discussing cases throughout the semester.
- Your team will work together during multiple meetings in class (and hopefully outside of class) to prepare case discussions and submit a case report. The five team case reports are the primary means by which your performance in the course will be assessed. Your team will have the opportunity to earn bonus points towards members' grades during in-class case discussions by offering insightful questions and comments, which distinguish your team from others.
- Individual evaluations of your team experience further demonstrate your ability to observe, assess, and make recommendations about internal dynamics. Specifically, when your team submits its case report, each team member will submit an individual evaluation of the group's dynamics and performance, specifically as it relates to lessons from the focal unit. The evaluations include a peer assessment, which provides feedback about each individual team member, using a rubric provided by the instructor.

Course Requirements and Assessment

The course has two required texts: *Classic Readings in Organizational Behavior* edited by J. Steven Ott, Sandra Parkes and *A Primer on Organizational Behavior* edited by James Bowditch, Anthony Buono, and Marcus Stewart. Both texts are available at the Brown University Bookstore. Also, required for the course are a number of cases, scholarly articles, and book chapters. These are accessible on-line through the electronic databases provided by the Brown University library or on our MyCourses site. There is one recommended text for the course: *The Case Study Handbook: How to Read, Discuss, and Write Persuasively About Cases* by William Ellet. This book is available at the Brown University Bookstore and chapters indicated on the syllabus are available on MyCourses. **Note:** There is a considerable amount of required and recommended reading in this course. In line with the team-focused orientation of the course you are encouraged to divide reading responsibilities amongst your team and devise strategies for sharing knowledge, such as creating and distributing synopses.

Students are expected to attend ALL class sessions ON TIME. Frequent absence, lateness, or leaving class early (e.g. occurring more than 4 times – nearly 10% of the sessions) will be reflected in your final grade. Extenuating circumstances should be discussed in advance with the professor via e-mail. All students are expected to participate fully in cooperative class activities,

as judged by peer and instructor evaluations. All written assignments must be typed on neat 8.5" x 11" paper, free of grammar and spelling errors and composed in 12-pt Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins and double-spacing. I do not accept late assignments; I do not provide 'make up' assignments (again, extenuating circumstances should be discussed in advance). Your overall performance will be based on 100 possible points, assigned as follows:

- I. **Class Participation** [20pts]: Your participation will be judged based on your steady attendance and punctuality in class. Additionally, I will be evaluating the extent to which you are prepared for class based on your ability to thoughtfully participate in class discussions by asking and answer questions or posing insightful comments. However, the greatest proportion of your participation will be based on peer assessment. Along with each case report (described below) your team members will provide a peer assessment of your contribution to the working group using a rubric provided by the instructor. Exceptionally positive, null or negative contributions to the group will be reflected in your final grade.

- II. **5 Case Reports** [60 pts - 12pts each]: The five team case reports provide the opportunity to synthesize and apply your knowledge about internal organizational dynamics for both the business cases and your own team experiences. The reports, which are to be written in a standardized format, will be assessed using criteria that assess the extent to which your team has (1) effectively summarized relevant contextual information about the organization and also background information about key actors; (2) insightfully defined the problem, giving particular attention to the week's theory focus and outlined key factors to be considered in making a decision about the problem; (3) provided clear and well-justified recommendations for addressing the problem, including anticipated obstacles/risks associated with implementation. The recommended text, *The Case Study Handbook: How to Read, Discuss, and Write Persuasively About Cases* by William Ellet will be extremely useful in preparing your case reports.

- III. **Final Paper/Exam** [20 pts]: There are two options for the culminating class experience. The first option is a traditional final exam, which will be administered in class during exam period and will cover the breadth of knowledge and skills from the course. The second option is a 10-page case analysis of your own team. The analysis will follow the format of the previous case analyses with a focus on understanding how your team's internal dynamics contributed to its performance throughout the semester. Also, the analysis must draw on the core knowledge from all the topical units covered during the class. Your final paper will be assessed heavily based on the extent to which it incorporates course readings (included recommended readings) to justify your analysis. Students should determine early on whether they are interested in this option since the best final papers will likely draw on detailed notes about team dynamics, which have been taken during each team meeting throughout the semester.

Note to graduate students enrolled in the course: All graduate students enrolled in the course must take both the exam and submit the final paper. Additionally, your final paper will be assessed more heavily based on the extent to which you incorporate course readings (including recommended readings) AND outside research (i.e. literature not

included on the syllabus) to justify your analysis. The total points you receive for the final will be an average of those received on the exam and the paper.

SCHEDULE OF INSTRUCTION*

ORGANIZATIONS: CONTEXT AND DYNAMICS

- Wed. Jan. 21 **OTT:** Introduction p.1-30
Fri. Jan. 23 **MY:** The Individual in Organizational Studies (Nord & Fox) [*Recommended*]
OL: Davis-Blake, A. and J. Pfeffer (1989). "Just a Mirage: The Search for Dispositional effects in Organizational Research." *Academy of Management Review* 14: 385-400. [*Recommended*]

EFFECTIVE TEAMS AND GROUPS

- Mon. Jan. 26 **OTT 3:** Individuals in Teams and Groups p.209-219
Wed. Jan. 28 **OTT 3:** An Intergroup Perspective on Group Dynamics (Alderfer) p. 236-245; Why Teams (Katenbach & Smith) p.246-254
Fri. Jan. 30 **MY:** The Talent Myth (Gladwell) [*Recommended*]
BBS 5: Group Dynamics p.148-178 [*Recommended*]
BBS 6: Work Teams and Intergroup Relations p.179-207 [*Recommended*]
- Mon. Feb. 02 **OTT 3:** Framework for Diversity (Thomas) p.255-264
Wed. Feb. 04 **MY:** Challenges to Leading a Diverse Work Force (Joplin & Daus)
MY: Work Teams in Organizations (Hackman)
MY: More Effective Work Groups (Hackman)
MY: Analyzing and Discussing Cases (Ellet):p.11-35; 89-101
MY: How can we organize ourselves to meet our goals [*Recommended*]
MY: Team Decision Making [*Recommended*]
OL: Milliken, F. and L. Martins (1996). "Searching for common threads: Understanding the multiple effects of diversity in organizational groups." *Academy of Management Review* 21: 402-433. [*Recommended*]
- Fri. Feb. 06 **INITIAL TEAM MEETINGS**

LEADERSHIP, POWER AND INFLUENCE

- Mon. Feb. 09 **OTT 1:** Leadership 1-42
Wed. Feb. 11 **OTT 1:** The Giving of Orders (Follet) p.43-47
OTT 5: The Basis of Social Power (French & Raven) p. 346-354
MY: Case Reading: Chuck MacKinnon
OTT 5: Sources of Power of Lower Level Participants (Mechanic) p.355-361 [*Recommended*]
BBS 7: Leadership, Power, and the Manager p. 208-250 [*Recommended*]
OL: Friedkin, N. E. (1993). "Structural bases of interpersonal influence in groups: A longitudinal case study." *American Sociological Review* 58: 861-872. [*Recommended*]

Fri. Feb. 13 TEAM MEETING: Chuck MacKinnon Case

Mon. Feb. 16 NO CLASS (Suggested: TEAM MEETING: Chuck MacKinnon Case)

Wed. Feb. 18 **OTT 1:** The Leadership Challenge (Tichy and Ulrich) p. 65-74
OTT 1: What Makes a Leader (Goleman) p. 82-91
MY: The Nine Dilemmas Leaders Face (Stewart)
MY: Inspiring Others (Conger)
MY: Case Reading: Chuck MacKinnon

Fri. Feb. 20 CASE DISCUSSION: Chuck MacKinnon Case - Case Report 1 Due

PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN MOTIVATION

Mon. Feb. 23 **BBS 3:** Motivation p.70-111

Wed. Feb. 25 **OTT 2:** A Theory of Human Motivation (Maslow) p. 148- 157
OTT 2: Work and Motivation (Vroom) p. 168-173
MY: Case Reading: Jinjian Garment Factory Case
OTT 2: Motivation p. 130-139 [*Recommended*]
OL: Baumeister, R. F. and M. R. Leary (1995). "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation." Psychological Bulletin 117(3): 497-529 [*Recommended*]

Fri. Feb. 27 TEAM MEETING: Jinjian Garment Factory Case

Mon. March 02 **OTT 2:** The Hawthorn Experiments (Roethlisberger) p.140-147
OTT 2: The Role of Work Context (Wright) p.182-191
OTT 4: The Psychological Contract (Schien) p.331-335
MY: Case Reading: Jinjian Garment Factory Case
OL: Robinson, S. L. (1996). "Trust and Breach of the Psychological Contract." Administrative Science Quarterly 41(4): 574-599. [*Recommended*]

Wed. March 04 TEAM MEETING: Jinjian Garment Factory Case

Fri. March 06 CASE DISCUSSION: Jinjian Garment Factory Case - Case Report 2 Due

COGNITION & DECISION MAKING

Mon. March 09 **BBS 2:** Perceptions, Attitudes, and Individual Differences p. 41-69

Wed. March 11 **OTT 4:** Effects of Group Pressure (Asch) p. 290-296
OTT 4: Groupthink (Janis) p.303-309 ; The Abilene Paradox (Harvey) p.310-319
MY: Case Reading: Macintosh Financial Case
OL: Schwenk, C. (1984). "Cognitive simplification processes in strategic decision-making." Strategic Management Journal 5: 111-128. [*Recommended*]

Fri. March 13 TEAM MEETING: Macintosh Financial Case

Mon. March 16 **OL:** Daniels, K. (1999) "Affect and Strategic Decision Making", The Psychologist 12:24-27
MY: Case Reading: Macintosh Financial Case
OL: Tiedens, L. Z. and S. Linton (2001). "Judgment under emotional certainty and uncertainty: The effects of specific emotions on information processing." Journal of Personality & Social Psychology 81: 973-988 [*Recommended*]

OL: Bartel, C. and R. Saavedra (2000). "The Collective Construction of Work Group Moods." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 45: 197-231
[*Recommended*]

Wed. March 18 TEAM MEETING: Macintosh Financial Case
Fri. March 20 CASE DISCUSSION: Macintosh Financial Case - Case Report 3 Due

Mon. March 23 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

Wed. March 25 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

Fri. March 27 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

SOCIAL IDENTITY & INFORMAL NETWORKS

Mon. March 30 **MY**: Informal Networks (Krackhardt)

Wed. April 01 **MY**: Case Reading: Merit Corporation Case

OL: Ashforth, B. E. and F. Mael (1989). "Social Identity Theory and the Organization." *The Academy of Management Review* 14(1): 20-39.
[*Recommended*]

Brewer, M. and W. Gardener (1996). "Who is This we: Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representation." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71: 83-93. [*Recommended*]

Fri. April 03 TEAM MEETING: Merit Corporation Case

Mon. April 06 **OL**: Meyer, G. (1994) "The company you keep affects your attitudes toward the company." *Academy of Management Executive* 8:3 p101-102

MY: Case Reading: Merit Corporation Case

OL: Salancik, G. and J. Pfeffer (1978). "A Social Information Processing Approach to Job Attitudes and Task Design." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 23(2): 224-253. [*Recommended*]

Wed. April 08 TEAM MEETING: Merit Corporation Case

Fri. April 10 CASE DISCUSSION: Merit Corporation Case - Case Report 4 Due

THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURE & NORMS

Mon. April 13 **BBS 10**: Organizational Culture and Effectiveness p. 320-347

Wed. April 15 **MY**: Role of the Founder in Culture (Schien)

MY: Managing Corporate Culture (Kerr and Socum)

MY: Case Reading: Paula Evans Case

OL: Little, J. W. (1982). "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success." *American Educational Research Journal* 19(3): 325-340 [*Recommended*]

Fri. April 17 TEAM MEETING: Paula Evans Case

Mon. April 20 **MY**: Corporations, Culture and Commitment (O'Reilly)

Wed. April 22 **MY**: The Smile Factory (Van Maanen)

MY: Case Reading: Paula Evans Case

OL: Trice, H. and J. Beyer (1984). "Studying Organizational Culture through Rites and Ceremonials." *The Academy of Management Review* 9(4): 653-669
[*Recommended*]

Fri. April 24 TEAM MEETING: Paula Evans Case

MANAGING CHANGE

Mon. April 27 **OTT 6:** Organizational Change p.402-406
Wed. April 29 **BBS 11:** Organizational Change and Development p. 368-388
 OTT 6: The Fifth Discipline (Senge) p. 438-444
 OTT 6: Transforming Organizations (Kotter) p. 445-451
 MY: Case Reading: Paula Evans Case
 OL: Robertson, P., D. Roberts, et al. (1993). "Dynamics of Planned
Organizational Change: Assessing Empirical Support for a Theoretical
Model." *The Academy of Management Journal* 36(3): 619-634.
 [*Recommended Research*]
Fri. May 01 CASE DISCUSSION: Paula Evans Case - Case Report 5 Due

COURSE SUMMARY

Mon. May 04 Review Past Readings

Wed. May 06 - NO CLASS – Reading Period
Wed. May 13

***Thrs. May 14 FINAL EXAM & FINAL PAPER DUE**

* **Note:** “OTT” refers to readings available in the text by Ott and Parkes, numerals refer to chapter numbers; “BBS” refers to readings available in the text by Bowditch, Buono and Stewart; “MY” refers to readings available on My Courses site; “OL” refers to readings available through on-line databases provided by the Brown University library. Many of the “on-line” readings are recommended research readings, which should be particularly helpful for graduate students enrolled in the course.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Friday, February 20, 2009: **Case Report 1**
Friday, March 6, 2009: **Case Report 2**
Friday, March 20 2009: **Case Report 3**
Friday, April 10, 2009: **Case Report 4**
Friday, May 1, 2009: **Case Report 5**
Thursday, May 14, 2009: **Final Exam and Paper**