

## **THEORIES OF ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS & DECISION MAKING (SOC 1090)**

**Meetings:** Jan 27 - May 21, 2010; MWF 1:00-1:50pm – Salomon Center 001

**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 workings 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 with the goal of answering the question: "why do individuals in organization behave the way they do, how does this affect the organizations of which they are a part and how, in turn, are individuals affected by their organizations?"

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 interactively 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 seven 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 6-7 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 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.
- 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 the team will also submit a 1-2 page team feedback memo, which must include: 1) a 1-2 paragraph assessment of the team's experience with respect to the focal topic; 2) peer-feedback on each team member's performance including demonstrated core strengths and areas for improvement (1 brief paragraph per person), 3) 1 paragraph statement about what the team has learned about improving its effectiveness and 4) the signature of each team member verifying discussion of the team's experience and the peer feedback.

### **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 on reserve at Rockefeller Library and chapters indicated on the syllabus are available on MyCourses.

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 150 possible points, assigned as follows:

- I. **Class Participation** [10 pts]: 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 greater proportion of your participation will be based on peer assessment. The peer feedback memo described above counts both as part of the case report grade and as part of class participation. Members of teams with more-reflective and informed memos will receive higher participation grades. Also, members with exceptionally positive, null or negative feedback will have their contribution appropriately reflected in their final participation grade.
- II. **5 Case Reports** [50 pts - 10pts 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 explaining the week's theory focus and outlined key factors to be considered in making 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. **3 Quizzes** [15 pts - 5pts each]: As reflected on the below schedule of instruction there are three in-class, independent, closed-book quizzes related to recent course material. The quizzes are designed to assess your knowledge of the readings and ability to synthesize knowledge from the readings with content covered in lectures. Quiz questions are generally 5 short answer questions.
- IV. **Final Paper** [25 pts]: The final assignment is an individual assessment that 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. The analysis must draw on the core knowledge from 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 explain justify your analysis. Students are strongly encouraged to take notes on or journal their team experiences throughout the semester so that these may be drawn for the final assessment.

For students taking the course for a grade, as a general rule I consider 90-100 points roughly equivalent to an A, 80-89 points, roughly equivalent to a B, and 70-79 points roughly equivalent to a C. For student taking the course pass fail you must earn at least 75 points to earn a passing grade.

### SCHEDULE OF INSTRUCTION\*

#### INTRODUCTION

- Wed. Jan. 27     **OTT:** Introduction p.1-30  
**BBS 1:** Management and Organizational Behavior  
MY: The Individual in Organizational Studies (Nord & Fox) [*Recommended*]
- Fri. Jan. 29     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. Feb. 01     **OTT 3:** Individuals in Teams and Groups p.209-219
- Wed. Feb. 03     **BBS 5:** Group Dynamics p.148-178  
**MY:** Work Teams in Organizations (Hackman)
- Fri. Feb. 05     **BBS 6:** Work Teams and Intergroup Relations p.179-207
- Mon. Feb. 08     **OTT 3:** Framework for Diversity (Thomas) p.255-264
- Wed. Feb. 10     **MY:** Challenges to Leading a Diverse Work Force (Joplin & Daus)  
**MY:** More Effective Work Groups (Hackman)  
**MY:** How can we organize ourselves to meet our goals  
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. 12     QUIZ 1/ INITIAL TEAM MEETINGS**

#### LEADERSHIP POWER & INFLUENCE

- Mon. Feb. 15     **OTT 1:** The Giving of Orders (Follet) p.43-47
- Wed. Feb. 17     **OTT 5:** The Basis of Social Power (French & Raven) p. 346-354  
**BBS 7:** Leadership, Power, and the Manager p. 208-250  
**MY:** Case Reading: Chuck MacKinnon  
**MY:** Analyzing and Discussing Cases (Ellet):p.11-35; 89-101  
**OTT 1:** Leadership 1-42 [*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. 19     TEAM MEETING: Chuck MacKinnon Case

- Mon. Feb. 22 NO CLASS (Suggested: TEAM MEETING: Chuck MacKinnon Case)  
Wed. Feb. 24 **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. 26** **CASE DISCUSSION:** Chuck MacKinnon Case - Case Report 1 Due

### PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN MOTIVATION

- Mon. Mar. 01 **BBS 3:** Motivation p.70-111  
Wed. Mar. 03 **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. Mar. 05 TEAM MEETING: Jinjian Garment Factory Case  
Mon. Mar. 08 **OTT 2:** The Hawthorn Experiments (Roethlisberger) p.140-147  
Wed. Mar. 10 **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*]  
**Fri. Mar. 12** **CASE DISCUSSION:** Jinjian Garment Factory Case - Case Report 2 Due

### COGNITION & DECISION MAKING

- Mon. Mar. 15 **BBS 2:** Perceptions, Attitudes, and Individual Differences p. 41-69  
Wed. Mar. 17 **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. Mar. 19** **QUIZ 2/ TEAM MEETING:** Macintosh Financial Case  
Mon. Mar. 22 **OL:** Daniels, K. (1999) "Affect and Strategic Decision Making", The Psychologist 12:24-27  
Wed. Mar. 24 **MY:** Case Reading: Macintosh Financial Case  
**OTT 4:** Bureaucratic Structure & Personality (Merton) p.297-302

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*]  
**CASE DISCUSSION**: Macintosh Financial Case - Case Report 3 Due

**Fri. Mar. 26**

Mon. Mar. 29 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK  
Wed. Mar. 31 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK  
Fri. Apr. 02 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

### **SOCIAL IDENTITY & SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Mon. Apr. 05 **MY**: Informal Networks (Krackhardt)  
Wed. Apr. 07 **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. Apr. 09 **TEAM MEETING**: Merit Corporation Case

Mon. Apr. 12 **OL**: Meyer, G. (1994) "The company you keep affects your attitudes toward the company." *Academy of Management Executive* 8:3 p101-102  
Wed. Apr. 14 **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*]  
**TEAM MEETING**: Merit Corporation Case  
**Fri. Apr. 16** **CASE DISCUSSION**: Merit Corporation Case - Case Report 4 Due

### **THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURE & NORMS**

Mon. Apr. 19 **BBS 10**: Organizational Culture and Effectiveness p. 320-347  
Wed. Apr. 21 **MY**: Role of the Founder in Culture (Schien)  
**MY**: Corporations, Culture and Commitment (O'Reilly)  
**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. Apr. 23** **QUIZ 3/ TEAM MEETING**: Paula Evans Case

## MANAGING CHANGE

- Mon. Apr. 26     **OTT 6:** Organizational Change p.402-406  
Wed. Apr. 28     **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. Apr. 30**     **CASE DISCUSSION:** Paula Evans Case - Case Report 5 Due
- Mon. May 1-     READING PERIOD  
Mon. May 10
- Wed. May 12**     **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 database provided by the Brown University library. Readings are listed for the week and should be completed before the conclusion of each week. Recommended readings are indicated as such. All other readings are required.

## SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

1. Friday, Feb. 12, 2010: **Individual Quiz 1**
2. Friday, Feb. 26, 2010: **Team Case Report 1**
3. Friday, Mar. 12 2010: **Team Case Report 2**
4. Friday, Mar. 19, 2010: **Individual Quiz 2**
5. Friday, Mar. 26, 2010: **Team Case Report 3**
6. Friday, Apr. 16, 2010: **Team Case Report 4**
7. Friday, Apr. 23, 2010: **Individual Quiz 3**
8. Friday, Apr. 30, 2010: **Team Case Report 5**
9. Wednesday, May 12, 2010: **Final Paper**