**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This PhD seminar introduces students to the foundational questions and theoretical paradigms in research on organizational theory. Generally, these research traditions bring a sociological lens to understanding organizations and the institutional contexts within which they operate. Throughout the semester we will read canonical pieces, as well as more contemporary papers that have advanced our understanding by developing theory and offering empirical examinations of key questions. We will spend each class session discussing that week's readings in topic to develop a collective understanding of the material.

Because this course is meant to prepare Ph.D. students in Management for the comprehensive exam, Students will learn to become critical consumers of organizational research and transition to producers of research, developing the tools necessary to identify what constitutes a contribution and to frame a research paper.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

You will be evaluated on four types of work throughout the semester: (a) class participation (40%); (b) leading class discussion (20%); (c) paper presentation (20%); and (d) final paper proposal (20%).

*Class Participation (40%)*

Classroom learning is always a shared responsibility, but it is especially critical in a doctoral seminar. Though I will structure and facilitate the discussion, it is your responsibility to come to class well prepared and ready to engage actively. This means that for our class session to be successful, each student is expected to be prepared, to engage thoughtfully in the discussion, and to be respectful of others. For most sessions, I will provide you with thought questions intended to help you draw connections across the readings. Though you do not have written assignments
each week, I encourage you to look at these questions before reading for the week and to reflect on these before class.

It is worth noting that the reading load for each session is substantial. You will typically be assigned 4-5 readings per week and some of the foundational work can take longer to parse. With practice, you will be able to hone your ability to read through texts quickly and efficiently without sacrificing comprehension. This is an important skill that all good scholars possess and must continually refine.

Please be sure to let me know in advance if you will miss a session. You are expected to keep up with the reading. Each session covers a great deal of territory, so missing even one session can significantly hinder preparing for the comprehensive exam.

**Leading Class Discussion (20%)**

Each student will be responsible for leading at least one session during the semester. To successfully lead a class discussion, you must:

1) thoroughly read the readings;

2) prepare responses to the thought questions for that week;

3) prepare 5-10 discussion-provoking questions for your classmates; and

4) lead an engaged and critical discussion around those readings.

We will have one discussion leader per session and I will have a sign-up sheet sent out where you can indicate the week which you would like to lead.

**Presentation of Paper Proposal (20%)**

Verbally communicating one’s research to an audience is a key element to success in academia. Often, before having a full draft of a paper, we present our research, for example at conferences or department seminars. You will have the opportunity to develop this skill by presenting your research proposal during the final weeks of the semester. These presentations will be 15-20 minutes in length and include a question and answer component, similar to typical conference session. You should plan to share a PowerPoint-style presentation and will be evaluated on your ability to communicate the motivation for your research, your central research question, the existing theory and literature, and a research design.

**Research Paper Proposal (20%)**

The final deliverable for the course is a research paper proposal. The purpose of this assignment is to develop your skills for motivating and framing a research paper. In this proposal, you should incorporate ideas from a number of readings in the course as well as other relevant research related
to your area. The proposal will resemble the front end of a published research paper and will include: your research question and the motivation for your research question (introduction), a theoretical framework consisting of a literature review that develops a logical argument; and a realistic and suitable research design for answering your research question.

Your proposal should be no longer than 15 double-spaced pages (Times New Roman 12-point font with standard one-inch margins).

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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WEEK 1

Introduction to Organizations and Organization Theory

September 17, 2018


Thought Questions:

If you had to pick one definition of the organization as the most useful (rational, natural, or open), which would you pick? Defend your choice with one or more examples from your experience.

What definition of organization would you say Coase is using in his analysis? Which conception of the organizational environment (from Scott’ & Davis's chapter 5) would you say Coase is using?

How would you define organization theory?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 2

Organizations and Environments I: Carnegie School and Contingency Theory
September 24, 2018

Required Readings:

Thought Questions:
The first two readings (Cyert & March; March & Simon) are frequently described as critiques of the rational actor model of organizations. Do you think this is an accurate characterization? Why or why not?
The Stinchcombe reading (ASQ paper) is a classic of contingency theory. What are the contingencies Stinchcombe describes? Are these still relevant for modern day organizations?

Supplemental Readings:
Thompson, James. D. Organizations in Action, chaps. 4-7.
Lawrence, P and Lorsch, J. 1969. Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration. Intro, Ch. 1 and Ch. 6.
ORGANIZATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS II: OLD AND NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

October 1, 2018

Required Readings:


Thought Questions:

Meyer and Rowan’s 1977 article and DiMaggio and Powell’s 1983 article are frequently cited together as having inaugurated the ‘neoinstitutional’ school of organizational analysis. Are these articles making the same argument?

What leads to the emergence of categories? What advantages/disadvantages result from categories?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 4

Organizations and Environments III: Organization Ecology
October 8, 2018

Required Readings:


Thought Questions:

DiMaggio and Powell disagree with Hannan and Freeman as to which is the most compelling question - ‘Why are there so many kinds of organizations?’ vs. ‘why there is such startling homogeneity of organizational forms and practices?’ Which question do you find more compelling?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 5

Organizational Power
October 15, 2018

Required Readings:


Weber, Max. “Class, Status, Party”


Thought Questions:

How well do you think that Weber’s three modes of stratification (class-status-party) apply to dynamics inside organizations?

Consider the articles by Barley, Fligstein and Salancik & Pfeffer. Are there additional dimensions of stratification that are more salient in organizations?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 6

Organizations, Employment and Diversity
October 22, 2018

Required Readings:


Thought Questions:

Castilla and Pager et. al point to the ways that organizations and their constituents can reproduce inequality in outcomes, which in labor market research is commonly referred to as demand-side mechanisms of inequality. In my presentation this month, you saw a study focused on supply-side mechanisms, or the ways individuals' own choices may also affect outcomes. Do you think these two are independent? How might demand- and supply-side factors interact in the labor market?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 7

Networks, Brokerage and Social Capital
October 29, 2018

Required Readings:


Thought Questions:

Ronald Burt argues that certain actors (individuals, firms) whose networks have many “structural holes” enjoy a competitive advantage. Why is this? Do you agree?

Several of the readings such potential mechanisms leading individuals to have access to different rewards (e.g., being a broker, having weak ties, and being a majority group member leads to greater benefits). Consider the interplay between these mechanisms. How should an individual structure their network?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 8

Social Movements and Diffusion (w/ Dan Wang)
Organizational Theory Seminar: Social Movements
Reading List for November 12, 2018
Dan Wang

*Denotes required reading for entire class
A Required reading for Group A
B Required reading for Group B

What is a Social Movement?


Goldstone, J.A. 1991. “A Demographic/Structural Model of State Breakdown.” In: Goldstone, J.A. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World.* University of California Press. pp. 5-12 [This summarizes an old theory of social movement emergence often referred to as “Strain Theory.” This was popular in scholarship until McCarthy and Zald (1977). In contemporary movements research, it sounds ridiculous, but in the popular press, it is probably the most intuitive narrative that is broadcasted to explain the rise of movements like #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, Arab Spring, etc.]

Tilly, C. 2004. *Social Movements 1768-2004.* Paradigm. pp.1-15. [Tilly was a legendary professor at Columbia for decades. He held full professorships in Sociology, History, and Political Science. His influence on the social movements field was profound – indeed, he was one of the persons who founded the field as an area of scientific inquiry. This small excerpt sums up his approach most effectively. Reading it is not required, but you should at least know the name and his influence.]

How do Organizations and Social Movements Interact? Theoretical Foundations

Campbell, J.L. 2005. “Common Mechanisms in Organizations and Social Movements Research.” In: Davis, G.F., McAdam, D., Scott, W.R. and Zald, M.N. (Eds.) *Social movements and organization theory.* Cambridge University Press. pp. 41-68. [This is an excellent summary of why we should think about movements and organizations as two sides of the same coin.]
Fligstein, N. and McAdam, D., 2012. *A theory of fields*. Oxford University Press. pp.3-33. [This book attempts to create a unifying theory of organizations and social movements. In fact, the authors suggest that they are one and the same. Grand social theory is something that economists, sociologists, and political scientists are all after – curiously, psychologists have avoided this approach likely because they realize that it is a largely fruitless endeavor – so check out this chapter if you’d like to see what an attempt at the closest thing to a unified field theory in social sciences looks like.]

**How do Organizations and Social Movements Interact? Empirical Cases**


Weber, K., Rao, H. and Thomas, L.G., 2009. From streets to suites: How the anti-biotech movement affected German pharmaceutical firms. *American Sociological Review, 74*(1), pp.106-127. [This innovative article is one of the first to connect external movement dynamics and internal organizational changes.]

**Influence of SM on OT**


Rao, H., 2008. *Market rebels: How activists make or break radical innovations*. Princeton University Press. [This is an excellent book that draws an innovative link between entrepreneurial activity and social movement forces. Sine and Lee (2009) is similar in spirit, but this book is much more comprehensive. I am always surprised that few scholars have followed up in this line of theoretical inquiry because it could really break open the field of entrepreneurship.]

**Influence of OT on SM**


between social movement organizational behavior and firm strategic alliances. Also making an appearance is the Knowledge-/Resource-based view of the firm.

WEEK 9

Cultural Markets (w/ Michael Mauskapf)
November 19, 2018

Required Readings:


Thought Questions:

How do each of these papers (explicitly or implicitly) define "culture," or "cultural market," or "cultural industry"? Is there consensus? Should there be?

Based on these definitions, can you think of markets or industries that aren't "cultural"?

Why do you (or why do you not) think "cultural markets" should be recognized as a unique domain of study that is relevant and important for organizational scholars?

Does my paper with Noah make a contribution to organization theory? Can it do so if organizations are not a central unit of analysis in the paper?

Supplemental Readings:


Status, Gender and Evaluations
November 26, 2018

[TO BE FINALIZED]

Required Readings:


Thought Questions:

Compare and contrast Gould and Podolny’s theories, in terms of the questions they are trying to explain and how they go about addressing those questions.

Status is commonly thought to affect evaluations in cases where it is difficult to assess actual quality or performance. Botelho & Abraham show that status (gender) may affect outcomes even when there is clear performance information. What are possible the extensions of their findings?

Supplemental Readings:


WEEK 11

Course Wrap-up and Presentations
December 3, 2018

Required Readings:
TBD