

SO410/810: ORGANIZATIONS SEMINAR

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Office hours: W 10-12; Th 3-4*

*Class meets: 9am-12noon Friday
96 Cummington St., room 275*

Course Objective and Focus:

The objective of this course is to familiarize students with classic and contemporary themes in sociological organization theory. Through better understanding of the world of organizations, this course should provide a solid basis from which to pursue research, teaching or further study in organizational sociology and management.

As we cover the major schools of thought in organization theory from the classic origins in Weber to continuing developments in current perspectives such as new institutionalism, a common theme through the course will be *connections*. Sociology is a social science of human connection, not of isolated human decisions or of a solitary firm's strategies. Not only will we read studies that demonstrate the interconnections between organizations, but we will also consider the linkages between different ways of knowing and understanding organizations. For example, some organization theories tend to privilege explanations of access to resources through structures, others tend to focus on how members of organizations construct systems of belief and routines or cultures. In this course, rather than treating them as mutually exclusive, we will think about the connections between organizational structures and cultures. As well, we will read and discuss innovative scholarship that brings together the study of organizations with other substantive areas of sociology, such as social movements research.

Course Readings:

The books are:

Kunda, G. 1993. *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*. Temple University Press.

Powell, W.W. and P. DiMaggio (eds). 1991. *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. University of Chicago Press.

Smelser, N. and R. Swedberg (eds). 2005. *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, 2nd edition. Russell Sage Foundation.

Smith-Doerr, L. 2004. *Women's Work: Gender Equality vs. Hierarchy in the Life Sciences*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

In addition, other readings will be available on the course website as pdf files (see CAS SO410 through Course Info). Each week's readings will be available one week in advance.

Course requirements:

This is a seminar; students are expected to attend every class meeting and participate as fully prepared members in discussion. To prepare, students must complete the assigned readings *in advance* of the class meetings. Because the emphasis is for students to master and respond thoughtfully to the course material rather than conduct original research during the semester, no term project is required. No previous background in organization studies is required.

Final grades will be based on three kinds of evidence of students' mastery of the material:

1. Class participation. Full participation includes attendance at every class meeting. Students will also demonstrate, through thoughtful contributions to discussion, that they have understood the required reading material sufficient to formulate informed questions, applications and criticisms. 410: 25%, 810: 20%
2. Leading discussion. Twice during the semester all students will lead discussion. Discussion assignments will be made on the first day of class. When leading discussion, students should complete all of the additional readings for the week as well as prepare to lead the class in discussion of the required readings. Discussion leaders will bring some kind of creative handout to distribute to the class (e.g., an abstract, a list of questions, a table or figure, an applicable story from the business press with commentary). 25%
3. Written memoranda. Students will complete short papers of 4-6 double-spaced pages to demonstrate their ability to synthesize independently and think critically about a week's reading. Memos must be handed in at the beginning of class for which the readings are assigned. No credit will be given for memos handed in later. Students may choose which weeks' topics they wish to engage in more detailed questions and creative thinking through memos. For the memos, it may be more helpful to consider the readings in terms of how you would build upon or come up with new ideas from them, rather than merely criticize. Another helpful approach for memos is to think about how different theories of organizational life compare, conflict or connect. The students enrolled in 410 will complete 5 memos on the reading during the semester, students in 810 will complete 4 reading memos and one research memo.

For the research memorandum, graduate students will reflect on how the course material will be useful in pursuing their own research agendas. The research memo will be due December 15. Memoranda on readings: 10% each, research memorandum: 15%. *All written memoranda must represent the student's own independent, original work.*

Another important requirement for the course is to treat other seminar members with respect, including those with whom you disagree. Part of respecting the class is leaving your laptops, cell phones and other gadgets at home (if you must bring them into the classroom, turn them off).

Weekly schedule of topics and reading assignments:

[Notes:

- a. SS is an abbreviation for the Smelser & Swedberg edited volume.
- b. The asterisk (*) indicates required readings.]

Week 1). Sept. 9: Introduction, Course Orientation, Definitions of Organization

Week 2). Sept. 16: Bureaucracy and the Emergence of Large Organizations

*Morris, Ian and J. Manning, "The Economic Sociology of the Ancient Mediterranean World" in SS.

*Weber, Max, "Characteristics of Modern Bureaucracy" and "The Position of the Official" p. 956-63 of *Economy and Society*, online.

*Chandler, Alfred D., Jr. 1977. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction, p. 1-12, online.

Michels, Robert, 1915 "Mechanical and Technical Impossibility of Direct Government by the Masses," p. 63-77 of *Political Parties*, online.

Perrow, Charles, 2002, Chapter 6 in *Organizing America*, online.

Thompson, E. P. 1967. "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism." *Past and Present* Dec.: 56-97, online.

Week 3). Sept. 23: The Managerial Revolution—Scientific Management and Human Relations

*Taylor, Frederick, 1911, “The Principles of Scientific Management,” p. 30-48, 57-60, online.

*Kunda, Ch. 1-3.

Dobbin, Frank, “Comparative and Historical Approaches to Economic Sociology,” in SS. Edwards, 1979, *Contested Terrain*, selections, online.

Week 4). Sept. 30: Informal Organization and Coalitions—Organizational Sociology and The Carnegie School

*Kunda, Ch. 4-6.

*Dalton, Melville, 1959, *Men Who Manage*, Ch.3, online.

March, James and Herbert Simon. 1958. *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. Ch. 6, “Cognitive Limits on Rationality,” online.

Cohen, Michael, James G. March and Johan P. Olsen. 1972. "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17:1-25, online.

Week 5). Oct. 7: Rational to Open Systems—Contingency Theory

*Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1959. "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production: A Comparative Study." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4:168-87, online.

*Davis, Gerald, “Firms and Environments,” in SS.

Thompson, James D. 1967. *Organizations in Action*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Chapters 1-3, online.

Weick, Karl E. 1976. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21:1-9, online.

Week 6). Oct. 14: Resource Dependence and Power

- *Pfeffer, Jeffrey and Gerald Salancik. 1974. "Organizational Decision making as a Political Process: The Case of a University Budget." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19:135-51, online.
- *Stearns, Linda and Mark Mizruchi, "Banking and Financial Markets," Ch. 13 in SS.
- *Fligstein, Neil. "The Structural Transformation of American Industry: An Institutional Account of the Causes of Diversification in the Largest Firms, 1919-1979," in Powell and DiMaggio.

Burt, Ronald S. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1 and 3, online.

Fligstein, Neil, "The Political and Economic Sociology of International Economic Arrangements," Ch. 9 in SS.

Week 7). Oct. 21: Nonprofit Organizations (guest lecturer Prof. Emily Barman)

- *Barman, 2002. "Asserting Difference: The Strategic Response of Nonprofit Organizations to Competition." *Social Forces* 80:1191-1222, online.
- *Alexander. 1996. "Pictures at an Exhibition: Conflicting Pressures in Museums and the Display of Art." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(4):797-839, online.

DiMaggio, "Constructing an Organizational Field as a Professional Project: U.S. Art Museums, 1920-1940," in Powell and DiMaggio.

Galaskiewicz, "Making Corporate Actors Accountable: Institution-Building in Minneapolis-St. Paul," in Powell and DiMaggio.

Wuthnow, "New Directions in the Study of Religion and Economic Life," Ch. 26 in SS.

Week 8). Oct. 28: By the Numbers—Transaction Costs and Organizational Ecology

- *Nee, "The New Institutionalisms in Economics and Sociology," Ch. 3 in SS.
- *Singh et al., "Institutional Change and Ecological Dynamics," Ch. 16 in Powell and DiMaggio.

Williamson, Oliver. 1985. *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*. New York: Free Press. Chapters 1, 2 and 9, online.

Abolafia, Mitchel Y. 1996. *Making Markets: Opportunism and Restraint on Wall Street*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Ch. 1, online.

Hannan, Michael T. and John Freeman. 1977. "The Population Ecology of Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology* 82:929-64, online.
Aldrich, "Entrepreneurship," Ch. 20 in SS.

Week 9). Nov. 4: New Institutionalism

*Ch. 1-3 in Powell and DiMaggio.

*Intro, and Ch. 3 in Smith-Doerr.

Friedland and Alford, "Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions." Ch. 10 in Powell and DiMaggio.

Brint and Karabel, "Institutional Origins and Transformations: The Case of American Community Colleges." Ch. 14 in Powell and DiMaggio.

Jepperson, "Institutions, Institutional Effects, and Institutionalism" Ch. 6 in Powell and DiMaggio.

Week 10). Nov. 11 (Veteran's Day reschedule): Organizational Boundaries, Networks and Lateral Organization

*Smith-Doerr and Powell, "Networks and Economic Life," Ch. 17 in SS.

*Smith-Doerr, Ch. 1-2.

King and Szelenyi, "Post-Communist Economic Systems," Ch. 10 in SS.

Zelizer, "Culture and Consumption," Ch. 15 in SS.

Scott, Allen J. 2005. *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry*. Ch. 1-2, online.

Nov. 18—I am out of town, class meeting rescheduled for Nov. 11.

Nov. 25—Thanksgiving Break

Week 11). Dec. 2: Critical lenses—Gender and Power Inequalities

*England, "Gender and Economic Sociology," Ch. 27 in SS.

*Smith-Doerr, Ch. 5-6.

Smith-Doerr, Ch. 4, 7

Berezin, "Emotions and the Economy." Ch. 6 in SS.

Streeck, "The Sociology of Labor Markets and Trade Unions," Ch. 12 in SS.

Week 12). Dec. 9: Political Connections—Social Movements, The State, Globalization

*Timmermans and Berg, 2003, “Standardizing Risk: A Case Study of Thalidomide.” Ch. 6 in *The Gold Standard*, online.

*Gereffi, “The Global Economy: Organization, Governance and Development.” Ch. 8 in SS.

Campbell, John L., 2004, *Institutional Change and Globalization*, Ch. 5, online.

Orru, Biggart and Hamilton, “Organizational Isomorphism in East Asia,” Ch. 15 in Powell and DiMaggio.

Huber and Stephens, “Welfare States and the Economy,” Ch. 24 in SS.

Schnaiberg, “The Economy and the Environment,” Ch. 30 in SS.