

ORGANIZATIONS, Spring 2015

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Tuesday 1-340

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I have two main goals in this course. The first is to cover basic issues in organizational sociology. The course does not cover all the cutting-edge issues in the field. My aim is to foster in you an organizational perspective. The second is to analyze some of the key current topics and arguments in social scientific thinking on organizations and organizationally relevant issues. “Organizationally relevant” means this: there are a lot of important debates and currents of thought in social science that depend in one way or another on organizations. For example, micro-level analyses about how people make choices among jobs must take account of how organizations set the menu of choices from which they choose. Or, to take a macro example: it’s not possible to understand how western culture shapes prevailing conceptions of rationality without understanding how organizational politics gave rise to those conceptions, and defeated others. Or take the recent problem of the financial crisis: understanding what happened there as an issue of organizational failure is very different from understanding it as a problem of individual greed (an issue of agency).

It is almost always a waste of time to lecture in graduate courses. Because this course is a seminar, it is important that everyone participate in the discussions. It will be impossible to participate intelligently without having done the reading, so please do it before the class in which we’ll be discussing it. As a device to facilitate discussion, a discussion leader (or leaders) will assume primary responsibility for leading the discussion. Leaders should prepare a set of crucial questions about the readings for the day. Regardless of whose week it is to lead discussion, everyone is responsible for reading the material. We will arrange the schedule on the first day of class. I’ll also give some tips on how to digest what might appear to be a large amount of material.

Course requirements:

1. Participation.
2. Weekly memos on readings.

If it is your week to lead the discussion, you don’t have to do this. Otherwise, this is ½ to 1 page of reflections on the readings. “Reflections” can be issues the readings raised for you, criticisms of the readings (and we’ll talk, over the semester, about what constitutes good criticism), ideas you had because of the readings. This is not just something you dash off the morning of the class. It should show careful reflection. These are due *no later*

than 9 am Monday morning. By “due” I mean posted to the “class discussions” section on Sakai; this is so that everyone can be reflective about others’ reflections.

3. Proposal, paper, or chapter. I am flexible about this, so that students have a choice that will work best with their intellectual agenda. Of course, the specific topic can be of your own choosing, but you should clear it with me first. If your proposal is built upon or might feed into a dissertation proposal, please see me before developing it. Toward the end of the course, you will present your work to the class, for friendly, constructive feedback.

I don’t give incompletes.

The following books are required, and are available at Barnes and Nobles. All are in paper, and will be cheap:

- Charles L. Bosk, *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure, second expanded edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 [1979]. ISBN: 0226066789
- Lee Clarke, *Mission Impossible: Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. ISBN-10: 0226109429
- Gerald F. Davis, *Managed by the Markets: How Finance Re-Shaped America*, Oxford University Press, 2009
- Dana Britton, *At Work in the Iron Cage: The Prison as Gendered Organization*, NYU Press.

The articles and chapters are on Sakai.

Generally, the naming convention I used is lastname_significant word.pdf. So, for example, the first reading is entitled “weber_bureaucracy.pdf.”

We’ll talk about how to get the other readings on the 1st day of class.

A few of the readings are Word documents. Let me know if that’s a problem for you and I’ll send it to you in another format. Most are PDF files.

List of readings, by week.

1. Jan 20. Introductions. The relevance of organizational analysis; importance of the perspective; place of organizational sociology in the field. Why I chose the books, and so on.
2. Jan 27. Models of organizations.

Here the point is to flesh out what it means to say “organizational analysis,” while giving some intellectual history along the way. As you read through this material look for assumptions about human nature and assumptions about the purposes of formal organizations. Also think, as you read, in whose interest organizations work, according to the authors?

- Weber, Max. "Bureaucracy," *Economy and Society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, editors, Volume 2, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. This is a pretty boring reading. I recommend skimming it with considerable seriousness.
- Perrow, Charles, *Why Bureaucracy*, Chapter 1, in *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, 3rd ed., NY: Random House, 1986.
Frederick Winslow Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management*. NY: Norton, 1947, pp. 5-29.
- Roethlisberger, F.J., and William J. Dickson. *Management and the Worker*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939 Pp. 3-18 and Chapter 24.
- Donald Palmer, *Taking Stock of the Criteria We Use to Evaluate One Another's Work: ASQ 50 Years Out*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2006, 51, 535-559.

NB: You are not required to read the following, but they're good to know:

- Dana Bramel and Ronald Friend, Hawthorne, *The Myth of The Docile Worker*, and *Class Bias in Psychology*, *American Psychologist*, 1981, 36:867-78.
 - Was there a Hawthorne effect?, Stephen R.G. Jones, *AJS*, 1992, 98(3):451-468.
 - Worker interdependence and output: the Hawthorne studies reevaluated, *ASR*, 1990, 176-190.
 - Neil Fligstein, *Organizations: Theoretical debates and the scope of organizational theory*, *Handbook of Sociology*.
3. Feb 3. What makes organizations do what they do? The institutionalist answer. Usual answers to that question involve efficiency or some other functional reason that makes sense. These authors come up with other answers altogether, and it matters for what organizations look like and how they act. Of course, all theories leave out things so be on the lookout for what is missed here.
- Charles Perrow, *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, NY: McGraw Hill, 1986, Chapter 5.
 - Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, *The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organization fields*, 1983, 48(2):147-160.
 - Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1991. Introduction.
 - Mizuchi, Mark S. and Lisa C. Fein. "The Social Construction of Organizational Knowledge: A Study of the Uses of Coercive, Mimetic, and Normative Isomorphism." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 1999, 44:653-683.
 - John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan "Institutional organizations: Structure as myth and ceremony, *AJS* 83 (1977): 340-63. Reprinted in Powell and DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*.

Other relevant readings, not required for class but key to further understanding the institutional perspective:

- Paul J. DiMaggio "Constructing an organizational field as a professional project: U.S. art museums, 1920-40," pp. 267-92 in Powell and DiMaggio *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*.

- Frank Dobbin and John Sutton, “The Strength of a Weak State: The Rights Revolution and the Rise of Human Resources Management Divisions.” *AJS* 104 (1998): 441-76.
 - Lauren B. Edelman, C. Uggen, H. Erlanger. “The Endogeneity of Legal Regulation: Grievance Procedures as Rational Myth.” *AJS* v. 105 (1999): 406-54.
 - Ezra Zuckerman, “The Categorical Imperative: Securities Analysts and the Illegitimacy Discount.” *AJS* 104 (1999): 1398-1438.
 - Lynne Zucker, “The role of institutionalism in cultural persistence,” pp. 83-107 in Powell and DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*.
 - Stephen Brint and Jerome Karabal. 1991. “Institutional Origins and Transformation: The Case of American Community Colleges”, pp. 337-60 in Powell and DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*.
 - Philip Selznick, “Institutionalism ‘old’ and ‘new.’” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41 (1996): 270-277.
 - Frank Dobbin and Erin L. Kelly, How to stop harassment: professional construction of legal compliance in organizations, *AJS*, 1007, 112(4):1203-1243.
4. Feb 10. Gender is everywhere. So is organization. Here’s a place that they meet in particularly interesting ways.

Dana Britton, *At Work in the Iron Cage: The Prison as Gendered Organization*, NYU Press.

5. Feb 17. Organizational contexts & social networks
More arguments about the social structures that shape people’s life chances in various ways. Look at the trust writings in that light.
- Mark Granovetter, *Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1985, 91(Nov.): 481-510.
 - Brian Uzzi. 1997. "Social Structure and Competition in Interfirm Networks: The Paradox of Embeddedness." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42:35-67.
 - Neil Fligstein, *Markets as politics: a political-cultural approach to market institutions*, *American Sociological Review*, 1996, 61(4):656-673.
 - Neil Fligstein and Peter Brantley Bank control, owner control, or organizational dynamics: who controls the large modern corporation?, *AJS*, 1992, 98(2), 280-307
 - Val Burris, *Interlocking Directorates and Political Cohesion among Corporate Elites*, *AJS*, 2005, July.

The question of trust

- Lynne Moulton, *Divining value with relational proxies: how moneylenders balance risk and trust in the quest for good borrowers*, *Sociological Forum*, 2007, 22(3):300-330.
- Dmitry Khodyakov, *The complexity of trust-control relationships in creative organizations: insights from a qualitative analysis of a conductorless organization*, *Social Forces*, 2007, 86(1):1-22.

6. Feb 24. Accidents, Mistakes, and Chance

- Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living with High Risk Technology*, Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1999. Chapter 3 & Postscript on Y2K
- Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety*, Chapter 4, *Redundancy and Reliability: The 1968 Thule bomber Accident*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Diane Vaughan, *Dark side of organizations*, *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999) 271-305.
- Steven F. Freeman, Larry Hirschhorn, and Marc Maltz, *Moral purpose and organizational resilience: Sandler, O'Neill & Partners in the aftermath of September 11*, 2001.
- Karl Weick, *The vulnerable system: an analysis of the Tenerife air disaster*, *Journal of Management*, 1990, 16, 571-593.

Also excellent, but not required:

- Charles Perrow, *The Next Catastrophe: Reducing our Vulnerabilities to Natural, Industrial, and Terrorist Disasters*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, Chapter 7, *Disastrous Concentration in the National Power Grid*.
- Editors (1994). "Systems, organizations and the limits of safety: a symposium." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 2(4): 205 - 240. The selections begin with "JCCM"
- Gregory A. Bigley and Karlene H. Roberts, *The Incident Command System: High Reliability Organizing For Complex and Volatile Task Environments*, *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(6):1281-1299.
- Columbia Accident Investigation Board, Chapter 7, "The accident's organizational causes," and Chapter 8, "History as Cause":
http://caib.nasa.gov/news/report/pdf/vol1/full/caib_report_volume1.pdf

7. Mar 3. Organizations and capitalism

Is there anything organizations can say about the recent economic meltdown? Gerald Davis thinks so:

Managed by the Markets: How Finance Re-Shaped America, Gerald F. Davis, Oxford University Press, 2009

8. Mar 10. New Organizational Forms

- Lazerson, Mark, *A New Phoenix? Modern putting out in The Modena Knitwear Industry*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1995, 40(1):34-59.
- Walter W. Powell. *Neither Market Nor Hierarchy*, in *Research in Organizational Behavior* v. 12: 295-336, ed. Barry Staw and L.L. Cummings (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1990).
- Karen Lee Ashcraft, *Organized Dissonance: Feminist Bureaucracy as Hybrid Form*, *Academy of Management Journal*, 2001, 44(6):1301-1322.

- Paul DiMaggio, Making Sense of the Contemporary Firm and Prefiguring Its Future, Chapter 1, The Twenty-First Century Firm, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Recommended but not required:

- Arthur Stinchcombe, Social structure and organizations, Handbook of Organizations.

9. Mar 24. Sense making in organizations

- Herbert Simon, The psychology of administrative decisions, Chapter 5 of Administrative Behavior
- Karl Weick, The Nature of Sense Making, chapter 1 of Sense Making in Organizations
- Karl Weick, The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: the Mann Gulch disaster, ASQ, 1993, 38(4):628-652.
- Cohen, Michael, James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 1972, A garbage can model of organizational choice,” Administrative Science Quarterly, March:1-25

10. Mar 31. Moral Games in Organizations

Charles L. Bosk, Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure, second expanded edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 [1979]. ISBN: 022606678

11. Apr 7. Organizations and inequality.

A huge amount of the important stratification in modern society happens inside and because of organizations. Yet they are often neglected. Here we wonder what purchase is gained by bringing organizational analysis to bear in inequalities, and vice versa.

Special treat: Our colleague Pat Roos will join us for half the class to talk about some of her important work with Barbara Reskin.

- Reskin and Roos chapters 1 & 2 from Job Queues, Gender Queues
- Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Some Effects of Proportions in Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women. American J. of Sociology 82 (1977): 965-90.
- Reskin, Barbara F. and Debra Branch McBrier. 2000. “Why Not Ascription? Organizations’ Employment of Male and Female Managers.” American Sociological Review 65:210-223.
- Joel Podolny and James Baron, Resources and relationships: social networks and mobility in the workplace, American Sociological Review, 1997, 62:673-693.
- Joan Acker, Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies:
<http://www.susans.org/reference/gendorga.html>

Extra relevant readings

- Dana M. Britton, The epistemology of the gendered organization, *Gender & Society*, 2000, 14(3):418-434.
- Mark Granovetter, Small is Bountiful: Labor markets and establishment size, *ASR*, 1984, 49(3)
- Ibarra, Herminia and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 1997. "New Directions in Social Network Research on Gender and Organizational Careers." In C.L. Cooper and S.E. Jackson, eds., *Creating Tomorrow's Organization: A Handbook for Future Research in Organizational Behavior*. Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Biggart, Nicole Woolsey. 1990. "Introduction" (pp. 1-19) and "Family, Gender, and Business" (pp. 70-97) in *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in the United States*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990.
- The social organization of the American business elite, Michael Useem, *ASR*, 1979, 44(4)
- Michael Useem. 1982. "Classwide Rationality in the Politics of Managers and Directors of Large American Corporations in the U.S. and Great Britain." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 27: 199-226.
- Pathways to top corporate management, Michael Useem and Jerome Karabel, *ASR*, 1986, 51(2)
- Calvin Morrill, Conflict Management, Honor, and Organizational Change, *AJS*, 1991, 97(3):585-621.

12. Apr 14 . Organizational production of culture

The fundamental point here is that organizations make and use symbols. But what are the mechanisms? Why do they make the symbols as they do? What are the alternative arguments? Extra credit for anyone who can identify the connections with classical organization theory.

Lee Clarke, *Mission Impossible: Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

13. Apr 21. Special topics: what does organizational analysis have to say about 9.11 and the response to 9.11?

- Richard Clarke, *Evacuate the White House*, Ch. 1 of *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, Free Press, 2004.
- Tierney, K. J. 2003. "Disaster Beliefs and Institutional Interests: Recycling Disaster Myths in the Aftermath of 9-11." Pp. 33-51 in Lee Clarke (Ed.) *Terrorism and Disaster: New Threats, New Ideas*. Research in Social Problems and Public Policy, Vol. 11. Elsevier Science Ltd.
- William L. Waugh, Jr. and Richard T. Sylves, Organizing the War on Terrorism, *Public Administration Review*, September 2002, Volume 62, Special issue, pp. 145-153.

- Nafeez Mossaddq Ahmed, Chapter 5, The Collapse of Standard Operating Procedures on 9-11, in The War on Freedom: How and Why America was Attacked, September 11, 2001. This one is available as a web page.
- Louis Comfort, Rethinking security: organizational fragility in extreme events, Public Administration Review, September 2002, Volume 62, Special issue, pp. 98-107.
- Graham Allison, Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis, American Political Science Review, 1969, 63(3):689-718

14. Apr 28. Student presentations.

Diversity Statement:

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Learning goals:

- To understand basic concepts in current and past theories of organizations.
- To apply these concepts to case studies.
- To learn to think critically and argue about constructively how and why organizations work as they do.

Assessment:

- Students will write weekly memos, shared with the entire class, about the things in the “learning goals.”
- Students will write a paper, chapter, or proposal of at least 10 pages that advances their intellectual and professional goals.
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