Studies in Organizational Change
Fall 2020

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Class Time: Mondays 1pm to 3:50pm

Overview
Organizations are ubiquitous. For most of us, our initial encounter with the world is in an organization – a hospital, and then most of us spend the bulk of our childhood and adolescences in another organization – a family. We spend much of our childhood and adolescence also attending yet another organization – the school. Most Americans still work in an organization as distinct from being self-employed. Organizations are a fixture in our lives at an early age and continue to play a central role across the lifespan. The ubiquity of organizations is such that we often take them for granted, rarely stopping to consider how they influence our lives.

Organizational change has garnered considerable attention from academics, private consultants and policy-makers. This interest cuts across organizational sectors — for-profit, non-profit, and government organizations. This class focuses on organizational change.

Studies in Organizational Change is an advanced course in the Learning & Organizational Change major designed to introduce students to key constructs and ideas about change in organizations. The class is organized as follows: We will begin with a discussion of the notion of change in general and organizational change in particular. We will identify different levels of analysis that scholars who study organizational change focus on. We will then examine different levers or resources for organizational change including – leadership, routines, human capital, social capital, technology, culture, identity and organizational environments. Throughout the class,
students will be expected to constantly apply the constructs and ideas to particular cases of organizational change.

**Requirements**

The course is organized as a seminar. We will use a blend of synchronous (all of us online at the same time) and asynchronous (activities that you will engage in between class) modalities. You will find uploaded to Canvas video lectures to watch (including from the instructor and from experts on the constructs for each week). You are expected to watch these, read one academic article and one case, and respond to discussion prompt before coming to class. Then, we will spend approximately 90 minutes each week in synchronous discussions of the readings. Following class, you will work with your group to analyze the case and prepare a short report-out that you will give at the beginning of the next class.

We expect each of you to attend class *and* come to class well-prepared to take-up the discussion questions for each week. Be prepared to listen to and respond to ideas and objections from peers. To participate in this way, you will have to read the assigned texts carefully and critically before each class. We expect your comments to be referenced to the readings, and to use the readings thoughtfully and effectively. Voicing opinions without a basis in and reference to the required readings or some other source is not very helpful. We expect you to bring copies of the readings to class, so you can reference them easily during discussions. Contributions to class discussions will count for 35 % of the course grade and judged based on:

1. **Weekly submissions** (2 points each) – roughly 300 words in response to a prompt related to the assigned readings. In order to receive the full 2 points, a response should:
   1. Make a clear argument and supports that argument with facts from the reading.
   2. Apply constructs from the readings to specific examples, when appropriate.
   3. Make connections across topics and critically evaluates the usefulness of ideas from readings.
   4. Not try to cover everything in the readings but rather opts for in-depth analysis.
   5. Avoid long quotes from the reading in favor of your original analysis of the reading.

   **Submissions are due by 11 am the morning of class.** You may skip one memo without penalty.

2. **Share-outs and group discussions of a case study in class.** Each week, half of the groups will share out on the case studies and the other half will serve as discussants. For group’s assigned to present, one student each week will be responsible for sharing out their group’s discussion. For group’s not presenting, one
student from each group will be assigned to serve as the lead questioner. Please see the following resources for how to approach cases:

- How to Prepare a Case
- https://writingcenter.ashford.edu/writing-case-study-analysis

3. Throughout the quarter, clear well-organized arguments, the use of evidence from the readings (or from other sources), and the ability to respond to the critique of peers.

There will be two additional assignments:

1. The first of these assignments will require you to use the constructs and ideas from the class to critically analyze a case of organizational change. It would be ideal to use the week that you present as the week to write your paper, but that is entirely up to your discretion. The paper should be 6 – 8 typed, double-spaced pages using APA style and submitted electronically. It will account for 35% of your final grade. You may submit the paper at any point during the quarter after the third class and before the 9th class of the quarter. Please see Canvas for a grading rubric.

2. The final assignment will be a group project where students will pick one case of organizational change from three or four options and use the constructs discussed in the course (and where necessary additional constructs) to analyzed organizational change. Students will present their case in class and submit a written summary of their analysis as a report 8 – 10 pages, typed and double-spaced, using APA style. It is due no later than December 7th and will account for 25% of your final grade. Each group member will also complete a confidential evaluation of their peers’ contribution to the group project.

**General Expectations for Written Assignments**

- Assignments should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1” margins and should not exceed page length recommendations outlined in requirements.
- Assignments should be submitted in Canvas as a word-processing file (i.e., Word, Pages).
- You should use APA formatting for citations and references (http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx)
- All assignments are subject to a TurnItIn scan or equivalent technology.

**Final Grading Scheme**

The final grade will be composed of the following:

- Individual case paper - 35%
- Group final paper – 25%
- Final Presentation – 5%
• Weekly memos – 15%
• Weekly share-outs of group case analysis – 10%
• Class Participation – 10%

Your final letter grade will be determined based on the following scale:

A  100-94%  C  <77-74%
A- <94-90%  C- <74-70%
B+ <90-87%  D+ <70-67%
B  <87-84%  D  <67-64%
B- <84-80%  D- <64-61%
C+ <80-77%  F  <61-0%

Policies

**University Policy on Privacy and Recordings for On-line Instruction**
This class or portions of this class will be recorded by the instructor for educational purposes. These recordings will be shared only with students enrolled in the course and will be deleted at the end of the spring quarter. Your instructor will communicate how you can access the recordings.

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU.
Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Accommodations for students with disabilities
Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition
is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Academic Integrity
Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html)

Learning Together in a Pandemic

These are unprecedented times that call for understanding and compassion. I want us to maximize learning and engagement with the course material, but my priority is everyone’s well-being. Some expectations to maximize what we all get out of the course:

1. Come to class having completed the reading and with questions or reactions ready.
2. Feel free to engage in discussion in whatever ways feel most comfortable – via the chat function in Zoom, during whole-group discussions, and/or in breakouts.
3. If you have kids, family, or other things going on in the background, that is fine. We would still rather have you in class to the extent possible.
4. Please have your video on during class to the greatest extent possible.
5. Be a responsible and communicative group member by deciding together how work will be distributed and adhering to group agreements.
6. Use this space to try out ideas and to respectfully disagree with course readings and with each other.
7. Courses are a space for developing understanding, and, in that spirit, please do not quote or post any portion of classes on social media.
8. You automatically are granted an extension for any assignments on which you need it. We will not be deducting points because of lateness. Still, it is helpful if you communicate about your needs.
9. If you have extenuating circumstances that require some flexibility, please communicate with the instructors so that we can find a reasonable accommodation.

**Week 1: Definitions and Dimensions of Organizations and Change**

**Required Readings:**

Case: US Women’s National Team

**Reference Materials:**


**Week 2: Organizations, Institutions, and Environments**

**Required Readings:**


**Reference Materials:**


Week 3: Race, Class, Gender, and Status in Organizations

Required Reading:


Case: Detroit water authority

Reference Materials:


Week 4: Organizational Culture and Identity

Required Readings:


Reference Materials:


**Week 5: Organizational Structure, Hierarchy, and Learning**

**Required Reading:**


Case: National Geographic

**Reference Materials:**


**Week 6: Human and Social Capital**

**Required Readings:**

Han, Han, and Brass (2014). *Human capital diversity in the creation of social capital for team creativity*. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 35,54–71 (2014)

Case: Re-analyze the National Geographic case.

**Reference Materials:**


Week 7: Organizational Routines

Required Readings:


Reference Materials:


Week 8: Organizational Leadership

Required Readings:


Case: Choose any of the previous cases

Reference Materials:


**Week 9: Organizational Resilience and Response to Crisis**

**Required Readings:**

No Case

**Week 10: Final Presentations**

See Canvas for assignment details