Management 8300: Seminar in Advanced Organization Theory

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Course Description:

This seminar is designed and intended for Ph.D. students within the field of management. The seminar emphasizes organization theory. Organization theory is a set of approaches to the understanding of how organizations form, survive and grow, interact with each other, recruit and process members, gain and manage resources, and deal with internal and external problems.

Course Objectives:

The major objective of this course is to enable seminar members to pursue theory-driven research on organizations. In order to accomplish this goal, we will endeavor to:

- develop a thorough knowledge of the major approaches to studying organizations;
- encourage a creative and critical engagement with existing research and theory;
- gain an historical and contemporary understanding of organization theory;
- improve our ability to articulate arguments and propose new research ideas.

We will examine both important historical contributions and more recent treatments of key topics. Each session may contain both theoretical and empirical contributions. Because of time limitations, our examination of topics will be introductory rather than exhaustive.

Course Format

Students are expected to come to class thoroughly prepared to discuss the articles assigned for that week. As your workload grows throughout the semester, the temptation will be great to be a “free rider.” Don't do it -- anyone who has preceded you in a doctoral seminar will tell you that you only get out of it what you put in it. For each set of readings, members of the class will be assigned to summarize each article and lead the discussion. The following questions should help you in preparing to discuss an article:

1. What is the author's basic argument?

2. What are the key relationships the author describes and/or examines? What is the theory underlying these relationships?
3. (If applicable) Is the methodology used appropriate? What are the assumptions and trade-offs inherent in using this method?

4. How useful is this article to scholars? managers?

5. How does this piece relate to others you have encountered?

6. What future research directions might be sparked by this article?

When you are a discussion leader for an article, you need to come to class with answers to the above questions. My main role in class will be to facilitate discussion and provide context for the topics being discussed.

**Grading**

30% of your grade will be based on your contribution to class discussions, both as a discussion leader and as a participant. The course will be conducted as a seminar, which means that all participants bear responsibility for contributing to the common experience. *The seminar format focuses on student discussion, not faculty lectures.* Students will be expected to have mastered the assigned readings for each session. There must be ACTIVE participation throughout. Participation can also include asking intriguing or clarifying questions. I expect that questions will not be directed at me, but rather to the seminar participants as a whole. The discussion should relate each week’s readings to one another, as well as relating the readings from the current week to prior weeks.

30% will be based on a presentation that you will do for the class of one of the ‘classic’ books listed below. Your presentation should last approximately 30 minutes and should reflect what you believe are the key points of the book based on your reading of the book.


40% of the grade will be based on a conceptual research paper. Your paper will involve applying a variety of theories to an organizational issue of interest to you in order to generate new insights about the issue. I will provide examples of what your paper should look like. All students will make a presentation of their papers at the end of the semester. My strong suggestion is to select a topic and provide me a one-page summary for review by October 3. Your paper is due to me via email by 5:00 pm on December 7.

*****No incompletes will be allowed at the end of the semester.

**STATEMENT RELATED TO POLICIES ON UNANNOUNCED QUIZZES AND CLASS ATTENDANCE:** Attending class a key to success in this class, and participation is a major component of the grading system. Unannounced quizzes will not be given.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
Students who need special accommodations should make an appointment to discuss the Accommodations Memo with me during my office hours as soon as possible. If scheduled office hours conflict with classes, please arrange an alternate appointment time. If you do not have an Accommodations Memo, but need special accommodations, contact The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 334.844.5943 (Voice T/O).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**
All portions of the Auburn University Honesty Code (Title XII) found in the Tiger Cub will apply to this class.

**STATEMENT REGARDING EMAIL AS OFFICIAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION:**
Email is the university approved form of communication. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure that s/he receives e-mail.

**Class Schedule**

Note: We may find it useful to add, delete, and/or move around some specific articles based on how our discussions develop. Most of the articles are available electronically via JSTOR, ABI/INFORM, and other websites.

**August 22**

**Organizational meeting**


**August 29**

**Systems theory**


**September 5**

**Contingency theory and resource dependence theory**


**September 12**

**Institutional theory**


**September 19**

**Resource based theory**


**September 26**


**Organizational ecology**


**October 3**


**Transaction cost theory and agency theory**


**October 10**


**Upper echelons theory and network theory**


**October 17**


**Socio-cognitive theory**


**October 24**


**Real options theory**


**October 31**


**Critical theory**


**November 7****Attend Southern Management Association Meeting**
November 14


**Multi-level theory**


November 21  Thanksgiving Break

November 28  Paper Presentations

December 5  Paper Presentations