POLI 8970
Special Topics: Public Organization

Justification for Graduate Credit

This is a rigorous course—taught only by professors with graduate faculty status—that requires mastery of advanced literature. Students are expected to apply critical analytic skills in the discussion of the literature, both in seminar sessions and in a series of rigorous writing assignments.

Course Description and Objectives:

The theme of this course is to utilize organizational and management theories to develop the skills for understanding, appraising and analyzing an organization’s need and capacity for change. After completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Identify and discuss key terms associated with the research literature on administrative and organizational theory and apply them to a specific organization;
- Identify and discuss major authors and scholarly works associated with that literature and appraise their utility on behalf of organizational change;
- Discuss major problems of public organizations as viewed by the research literature; and
- Critically apply current research theory on public organization and management to a specific public organizational context.

Common Required Books:


**Writing Assignments**

**Report One:**
Improving efficiency and effectiveness is an issue which confronts every public organization. For an organization with which you are familiar, discuss how each of the general theories of organizational behavior would explain why efficiency and effectiveness are not optimal and what steps management should take to address the problem. Include at least 4 of the following: (Classical Organization Theory, Neoclassical Organization Theory, Organizational Behavior Theory, Modern Structural Organization Theory, Power and Politics Organization Theory, Organizational Culture Theory). Write a 10 page double-spaced paper with references and citations.

**Report Two:**
Every public organization has difficulties in responding to changes and in initiating and implementing change within the organization. Use at least 4 of the metaphors discussed in Morgan’s text to identify, compare and contrast how management could conceptualize the organization. Identify the questions that management would ask and the information they would seek to implement change depending upon the metaphor used. In practice, which is the prevailing metaphor used by management in your organization? Justify. Write a 10 page double-spaced paper with references and citations.

**Report Three:**
Herbert Simon uses a rational approach to decision-making in organizations. For your organization and its recent experiences, how is Simon’s approach helpful? What are its shortcomings? On balance, is Simon’s approach useful in diagnosing problems in your organization and in remedi ing these problems? Write a 10 page double-spaced paper with references and citations.
Report Four:
Identify the specific relevance of the approach used by the “Tipping Point” to your organization. What are the implications for management, strategic planning, and the mission of the organization? What are the implications for the public good? Write a 10 page double-spaced paper with references and citations.

Report Five:
Identify the specific relevance of the approaches used in Butterfly Economics and the Wisdom of Crowds to your organization. What are the implications of these two approaches for management, strategic planning, and the mission of the organization? What are the implications for the public good? What are the strengths and weaknesses (practical and theoretical) of each approach to your organization? Write a 10 page double-spaced paper with references and citations.

Final Paper:
This paper is a final analysis on how to direct and manage change at the mid-level of your organization. What needs to be done? How can it be done? How would success be measured? How would the probability of successful change be maximized? Write a 10-20 page double-spaced paper with references and citations. This paper can borrow and adapt from the earlier papers.

Grading Schedule:

| Report 1 thru 5 | 15% each |
| Final Paper    | 25%      |

Grading Scale:

A = 90 and above  
B = 80-89  
C = 70-79  
D = 60-69  
F = Below 60
**Reading Schedule:**

Week 1: Orientation  
Week 2: Denhardt, Chapters 1 – 5; Shafritz et al., Chapters 1 - 4  
Week 3: Denhardt Chapters 6 – 8; Shafritz et al., Chapters 5 - 9  
Week 4: Paper One; Morgan, Chapters 1 - 4  
Week 5: Morgan, Chapters 5 – 12  
Week 6: Paper Two; Simon, Chapters 1 - 3  
Week 7: Simon, Chapters 4 - 7  
Week 8: Simon, Chapters 8 – 11 & Appendix  
Week 9: Paper Three; Levitt & Dubner, Intro & Chapters 1 - 3  
Week 10: Levitt & Dubner, Chapters 4 – 6  
Week 11: Gladwell, Intro & Chapters 1 - 8  
Week 12: Paper Four, Surowiecki, Chapters 1 - 6  
Week 13: Surowiecki, Chapters 7 – 12; Ormerod, Chapters 1 - 6  
Week 14: Paper Five; Ormerod, Chapters 7 – 12  
Week 15: Final Paper; Ormerod, Conclusion

**Notes**

Students needing accommodations should arrange a meeting the first week of class. Come during office hours or email for an alternate time. Bring the Accommodation Memo and Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. Discuss items needed in this class. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need special accommodations, make an appointment with The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT)

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to behave with integrity. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the manner specified in the Tiger Cub.

Students may withdraw (although with a W on their transcript) until midsemester.

Make-ups for all missed and late work are allowed with proper University approved excuses within one week of the original due date.

Student emails will be answered within 48 hours of receipt.

Class attendance is required.

All readings are to be completed before coming to class.

There are no unannounced quizzes.