Organizations are heterogeneous social creations that take on a wide variety of forms and perform many different functions. They can include things like corporations, government agencies, humanitarian groups, labor unions, churches, terrorist networks, social movements, social-networking sites, and much more. We are all embedded within a complex network of organizations that shapes our lives in profound ways, determining—for instance—what our jobs are like, whether our neighborhoods are polluted, how we access public services, or whether we can communicate meaningfully with friends.

Rather than being isolated units, organizations are nested within larger social systems and operate as political entities. All organizations are imbued with ideologies, or hidden belief systems, that provide a script for decision-making and action. These ideologies also bleed into wider society, influencing what people value and what they see as possible. This course will take a social-science approach to understanding organizations in their larger social and cultural contexts. The emphasis will be on analyzing the ideologies, cultures, interdependencies, and roles of organizations in society. Additionally, we will explore alternative organizational forms that strive to challenge dominant belief systems and achieve social justice outcomes.

**READINGS**

- Electronic readings linked in OAK.

**ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING**

1. **Online Journal:**

   Starting in Week 2, online journal entries of approximately 750 words are due every Saturday by noon. The goal of these entries is to allow critical reflection and synthesis of the readings in the course. Journal entries should be based primarily on the reading for the week. You must show that you did the reading and listened attentively to class discussion, but not, for example, by listing your reactions in a series of unconnected paragraphs; you must write a short essay that develops them as a whole.

   I suggest, therefore, that you jot down ideas for your essays as you read for class or participate in the discussions, and afterwards step back for a moment to reflect on your overall reaction, that is, the theme for your essay. It is best to take a critical perspective for your theme. A critical perspective does not require that you be against the ideas expressed in the reading or lectures. It means simply that you have asked the material (and yourself) some hard questions. How do the readings for the week complement or challenge each other? What is your interpretation of them? Which arguments and insights do you find to be persuasive? Which do find to be less persuasive? Why? Be sure to back up your interpretations by analyzing specific examples and quotes from the readings.

   Journal essays will be due in weeks 2-6, 8, and 10-12. There will be a total of 9 essays in the course.
Mechanics: Post your entries to our course page on OAK under the proper week heading (e.g. “Week 2”) in the “discussion board” section. If you compose the entry in a word processing program, please cut-and-paste the text into OAK rather than attaching a file. These assignments will be graded on a pass / fail basis. If you make a sincere effort, you will pass. As with everything else, feel free to check with the professor or TA at any time throughout the semester if you are concerned about your progress with journal entries.

2. Mid-term Paper:

Ideology can be understood as a belief system that makes dominant political structures and institutions appear natural, oftentimes giving rise to and justifying relationships of inequality. Drawing upon the readings and themes covered so far in the course, write an essay about an organizational structure of your choosing that explores the following questions: How does ideology manifest in organizational forms, practices, and relationships? How does ideology influence the way people are treated (e.g., how workers are trained and managed, how organizations view their responsibilities to communities, how collective bargaining is conducted, or how organizations interact with clients or customers)? What are some of the ways that organizational ideologies shape cultural values on the societal level? To write a successful essay on such broad questions, it will be necessary for you to focus on a specific organizational form (e.g., Fordist), practice (e.g., training flexible workers), or relationship (e.g., between industry and the environment). This paper will be due on February 21 and should be 9-10 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins, please).

3. Final Team Project:

According to the HOD mission statement, we seek to advance “societies built on democratic participation, justice, and equality.” The final project in this course will push you to take that mission seriously. You will work in teams to identify a social problem, analyze it on the organizational level, and propose a detailed plan for solving that problem in a way that advances diversity, social justice, social participation, and empowerment. There are many possible approaches to this project. You could, for instance, propose the founding of a social entrepreneurial company, identify a novel way of assisting a non-profit organization, or propose changes that a corporation or government agency could make to achieve social-justice outcomes.

The final project will be a team research paper of 20 pages due at the beginning of the class period on Thursday, April 18. This document should take the form of a proposal to a diverse panel of stakeholders. Depending on the nature and location of your proposed activities, the stakeholders might include community members, organization representatives, policymakers, government funding agencies, venture capitalists, or others. You should envision your task as convincing this panel to support your recommendations and assist you in executing them. Ample attention will have to be given to existing conditions, contexts, and constraints, so teams will have to conduct additional research to make a compelling case. The course readings and concepts should be mobilized to assist with your framing and analysis.

There will be three components to this project: the written proposal, an in-class presentation, and a short group-evaluation paper. In total, the project will be worth 35% of your grade (20% for the group paper, 10% for the presentation you give in class during the last week, and 5% for a group-evaluation paper.) Experimentation is highly encouraged for this project, just be sure to discuss your plans with the professor before initiating your research. Be creative and have some fun!

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent. Additionally, no late or emailed writing assignments will be accepted.

Academic Honesty

In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing.
these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

ESL/LD Students

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the professor’s office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

Grading

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COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance: This class will be conducted with a focus on in-class discussions and activities. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. You can miss up to two classes throughout the semester without penalty, but you must turn in assignments ahead of time and arrange to get notes from a colleague. Your final grade will go down by 5 points (out of 100) for each additional class missed. Finally, if you fail to show up for a scheduled meeting with the professor or TA without canceling 24 hours in advance, your final grade will be docked by 5 points.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. You must bring your book or copies of the readings to each class. See the course outline below for details on weekly readings.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

Technology: Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Gender-Fair Language

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequalities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he,” or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether.

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Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introduction to Course

Tuesday, January 8:
  **Readings:**
  - Review syllabus

Thursday, January 10:
  **Readings:**
  - *Understanding Organizations* Ch.1 (pp.1-17)

Week Two: Managerial Visions

Tuesday, January 15:
  **Readings:**
  - *Understanding Organizations* Ch.3 (pp.40-60)

Thursday, January 17:
  **Readings:**

Saturday, January 19:
  - First online journal essay due by 12pm (and every Saturday hereafter unless otherwise noted).

Week Three: Culture

Tuesday, January 22:
  **Readings:**
  - *Understanding Organizations* Ch.4 (pp.61-84)

Thursday, January 24:
  **Readings:**
Week Four: Dysfunctions

Tuesday, January 29:

Readings:
- Understanding Organizations Ch.5 (pp.85-104).

Thursday, January 31:

Readings:
- Ford, Richard Thompson. 2007. Bad Think: The Supreme Court mixes up intending to screw over your employee and actually doing it. Slate, May 30 (2 pages).

Week Five: Contexts

Tuesday, February 5:

Readings:
- Understanding Organizations Ch.6 (pp.105-131).

Thursday, February 7:

Readings:

Week Six: Post-Fordism and Globalization

Tuesday, February 12:

Readings:

Thursday, February 14:

Readings:

Week Seven: Social Movements

Tuesday, February 19:
Readings:
• Understanding Organizations Ch.8 (pp.154-172).

Thursday, February 21:
Readings:
• Review some stories at www.indymedia.org.
• In-class film clip: The Yes Men.
• Mid-term paper due.
• No journal essay due this week.

Week Eight: NPOs and Social Entrepreneurialism

Tuesday, February 26:
Readings:
• Understanding Organizations Ch.7 (pp.132-153).

Thursday, February 28:
Readings:
• Ashoka. 2011. What is a social entrepreneur? www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur (1 page)

Week Nine: Spring Break

No Classes or readings. No journal essay due this week.
Week Ten: Online Worlds

Tuesday, March 12:
Readings:
• No readings for today. We will have an in-class, group-forming activity, so attendance is essential.

Thursday, March 14:
Readings:

Week Eleven: Cellular Organizations

Tuesday, March 19:
Readings:

Thursday, March 21:
Readings:

Week Twelve: Military and Security Configurations

Tuesday, March 26:
Readings:

Thursday, March 28:
Readings:
Week Thirteen: The Future of Organizations

Tuesday, April 2:
  **Readings:**
  • **Understanding Organizations** Ch.9 (pp.173-192)

Thursday, April 4:
  **Readings:**
  • No readings; work on your final projects in class.
  • **No journal essay due this week.**

Week Fourteen: Group Research

Tuesday, April 9:
  **Readings:**
  • No readings; work on your final projects in class.

Thursday, April 11:
  **Readings:**
  • No readings; work on your final projects in class.
  • **No journal essay due this week.**

Week Fifteen: Final Project Presentations

Tuesday, April 16: Final project presentations

Thursday, April 18: Final project presentations
  • **No journal essay due this week.**
  • **Final project due.**