INTRODUCTION
This course covers classical and key contemporary works in organization theory and surveys the main paradigms that are now active in the field. Organization theory draws on disciplinary roots in (alphabetically) economics, political science, psychology, and sociology to explain the origins, persistence, disappearance, and effect of institutional structures that order economic life (organizations, firms, networks, markets, and others).

The theoretical perspectives and topics covered rely upon original sources (mainly journal articles and books) as well as upon secondary sources (review articles and books). You will be challenged to develop your own criteria to evaluate, critique, and synthesize existing research, rather than relying exclusively upon the criteria and biases of other scholars.

Topics that are explored include organizational learning, reputation, authenticity, networks, status, legitimacy, framing and sensemaking, stakeholder activism and firm response, principles of market category creation, optimal distinctiveness, the role of institutional logics in influencing organizational behavior and strategy, as well as the construction and organizational impact of social evaluations such as ratings, rankings, and certifications.

SEMINAR FORMAT
The goal of this course is to get you engaged with these works and to start a discussion that helps us think through them. To do this, each week the seminar will be based on a discussion and critique of the readings for that week. Two members of the class will have been designated as primary discussants for that class and can divide up the readings proportionately. You will find more information on the criteria for good discussion leadership below.

The success of this class depends strongly on your active engagement with these readings. I will be looking for quality rather than quantity of contributions and will be seeking out participation throughout the semester. It goes without saying that you will have to be well prepared for each class. A cursory reading will not suffice—you will need to actively engage the readings. I encourage (though not require) you to form reading groups to discuss the readings before class.

Grading:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in weekly discussions</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session discussant roles</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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REQUIREMENTS

This course has four requirements: class participation, discussion of assigned readings, a paper which will take the form of a research proposal, and a peer review of the paper.

Class Participation. Because this course is a seminar, most of the action takes place during class discussion. Thus, all participants should show up prepared to discuss the readings. Please also email me 2-3 questions you would like to see addressed during the discussion by 8:00 AM the day of the class (Monday).

Student Discussants. Each week, we will have 2 discussion leaders that can divide up the readings proportionately. Your job is to open the seminar with a 15 to 20-minute discussion of the articles then use that to drive our discussion of the themes that emerge from considering each paper’s motivations, argumentation, and implications. The best papers we read will be strong in all three dimensions and teach us about their topics while also teaching about the craft of doing great research. You should know, however, that not all assigned papers meet this standard equally well, by design. Make and share your own judgments about differences in importance and quality of the assigned papers and be prepared to debate your conclusions with others!

Here are the guidelines for these session “opener” talks:
1. 20-25 minutes
2. Bring a handout for everyone – 1-3 pages (can be emailed)
3. No PowerPoint slides
4. No summaries of the readings
5. Diagrams or tables are helpful
6. Analytical narrative is permitted, but keep it short
7. Conclude with a set of questions that we will debate and discuss

The best “openers” will lead to discussions that cover the papers thoroughly because we are asking hard questions about what the value of what they mean to say, whether they succeed, and what we might do next. All this goes well beyond just figuring out what is in the papers.

In sum, good discussants will deliver an opener that does the following:
- Integrates the readings using an analytical framework
- Identifies and makes explicit the commonalities and differences in implicit assumptions that underlie the various readings
- Where possible, exposes theoretical gaps with suggest avenues for development beyond the readings
- Engages the other seminar participants in a discussion of the readings by taking a clear and perhaps provocative position.
- AVOID questions such as “What do you thinks of the authors’ arguments?” or “Do you agree with that point?” Your job is to have a position on these
Research Paper. The goal for this assignment is that you develop a paper that you will submit to the Academy of Management Conference (or the appropriate professional conference for your field). You have three options for this:

1) Empirical Project Proposal: abstract, theory, hypotheses, research design, and discussion of anticipated contributions. Note that this does not include any requirement for data collection or analysis—that will come later after the completion of the course. In previous years, students developed an idea of what they’ll do during the semester and then work on it over the summer.

2) Complete Empirical Paper: same as (1) but with data collection, analysis, and discussion of results. This is much tougher (!), so you probably only want to take this route if you already have data or know a faculty member who has data you can use (many of us do), or a strong lead on data that you can get quickly. Because of the additional burdens of data collection and analysis, I do not require you to perform all the analyses a full paper would require. Again, that will come later.

3) Theory Paper: following the format of the theory papers you will see in our readings (especially the Academy of Management Review), this will require a clear statement of the problem; review of the prior literature; development of a new perspective, approach, theory, framework, etc. (perhaps but not necessarily including clear propositions); and conclusion with discussion of potential strategies for empirical research.

Peer Review of Proposal

As part of this course, we will engage in a review process where you review each other’s papers. Accordingly, there will be several interim deliverables with the final product being due during the exam period. The deliverables are as follows:

1) February 4       Submit proposal of research (by email)
2) March 28        Submit draft of proposal (by email)
3) April 4          Submit feedback to peers
4) April 18, 25    Presentations delivered
5) May 2           Final papers due (by email)
Session 1. (January 10) Behavioral Decision Theory: The Carnegie School


Additional Readings

Session 2. (January 24) Contingency Theory, Configuration Theory, and Resource Dependence Theory

Contingency theory

Configuration theory

Resource dependence theory
**Additional Readings**


**Session 3. (January 31) Networks**


**Additional readings**


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**Session 4. (February 7) Organizational Ecology, Categories, Authenticity**

**Ecology**


**Categories**


**Authenticity**


**Additional readings**


**Session 5. (February 14) Institutional Theory (Normative, Cognitive, Regulatory pillars)**


**Additional Readings**
Session 6. (February 28) Institutional Logics


**Additional Readings**


**Session 7. (March 7) Status and Reputation**

**Status**


**Reputation**


**Additional Readings**


**Session 8. (March 21) Social Movements (i.e., stakeholders) and Organizations**


Odziemkowska, K. “Frenemies: When Firms and Activists Collaborate” *Administrative Science Quarterly*: forthcoming

**Additional readings**


Session 9. (March 28) Cultural Entrepreneurship, Framing, and Sensemaking


Additional readings


Session 10. (April 4) Market Category Emergence and Optimal Distinctiveness


**Additional Readings**


**Session 11. (April 11) Social Evaluations, Certifications, and Rankings (with Prof. Chad Carlos)**

*Commensuration process*


*Impact of social evaluations*


**Additional Readings**


Session 12. (April 18) Paper Presentations