ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

[Spring, 2010]

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Overview

   The purpose of the course is to help students understand organizations and to take effective action in them. Understanding and managing organizations isn't easy — that's why Dilbert fans chuckle at the message that most managers are clueless. Whether you are trying to lead, follow or just survive, better understanding helps to reduce surprise and confusion, and to increase your chances of success. Sound intuition, valid theory, and management skills are all helpful and needed. The course seeks to strengthen intuition and to expand theory and skills.

Scope of the Course

       The conceptual framework for the course emphasizes four "frames" or perspectives for understanding leadership and organizations.   Each frame provides a distinctive view that provide a conceptual umbrella for much of the existing theory and research on organizations:

       1.   A *structural frame* that emphasizes goals, roles, formal relationships, and the rational side of organization.

       2.   A *human resource frame* that emphasizes needs, attitudes, skills and the human side of organizations.

       3.   A *political frame* that examines power, conflict, and coalitions among organizational participants who have interests and agendas to protect and advance within a context of scarce resources.

       4.   A *symbolic frame* that explores how organizations create meaning and belief through symbols -- including myths, rituals, and ceremonies.

Classes will include a combination of lecture, case discussion, developmental assessments, simulations, and learning team activities.

Readings

The following book has been ordered and should be available for purchase in the book store:

Bolman L. G. and Deal, T. E. *Reframing Organizations, 4d ed*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

Other readings will be available either on the Blackboard course site, or for purchase at the Harvard Business School web site (a link to the HBS site is on Blackboard).

Learning teams

Everyone will be a member of a learning team that will meet throughout the semester and serve several functions:

1. Learning teams will work together on the group portion of Developmental Assessments.

2. Each team will conduct an organizational diagnosis, write a report, and make a presentation in class.

Grades

Grades will be based on a combination of:

1. Developmental Assessments

2. Team Project Paper and Presentation

3. Class participation.

3. [Optional] Final Paper

Assignments

1. *Developmental Assessments*

Developmental assessments will be conducted in class, and each will include the following steps:

1. Individual assessment

2. Group assessment. (Group members will meet in class immediately after completing the individual assessment, and develop a consensual answer to the questions on the individual assessment.)

3. Grading and feedback

4. (Optional:) Groups or individuals may file written appeals in cases where they believe they have been graded incorrectly. The instructor will respond to appeals by the next class.

The two developmental assessments will test for understanding of basic ideas and concepts in the course readings, and for ability to apply those concepts to the cases. Dates for exams are indicated in the syllabus.

2. *Team Project and Presentation*

Each learning team will engage in a project to apply Bolman and Deal's four-frame model to an organization or organizations. There are two options for the project:

a. *Organizational Field Study*.

The team will select an organization or organizational unit, conduct field research, and report the results of its work.

b. *Film/video Case Study*

Groups choosing this option will identify two different organizations in two different film or video sources (such as feature films, television series, or documentaries).

For either option, the team will produce (a) a final paper that provides an analysis of the organization(s) it studied, and (b) a one-hour presentation in class.

The paper will be graded on clarity, and quality of analysis. The presentation will be assessed for overall educational value and impact. (Each team member will receive the same grade. Grading will be based on instructor's assessment, with input from class members' feedback.) Groups must submit a copy of their presentation outline to the instructor, as well as any auxiliary materials such as Powerpoint presentations. More information is available in "Guidelines for Team Project."

3. *Class Participation*

The class will be highly interactive, and the quality of our dialogue will depend on preparation and active participation. Class participation will be graded on a combination of attendance (you can't participate if you're not there), and quality of contribution to class discussions. Effective participation can include active listening, asking good questions, and making thoughtful or insightful contributions to class discussions. The emphasis is on quality, not quantity of participation.

4. *Final Papers* (optional)

The final paper is an option for students who want feedback on their writing, and would prefer to have part of their course grade based on an individual writing assignment.   The paper will use ideas and insights from the course (class and readings) to do an analysis of one of the following: (a) the student's experience on his/her project team; (b) the student's experience in the organization simulation; (c) an analysis of BMA505 as an organization.

Papers should present a clear, thoughtful and organized essay in the light of both the case under analysis and the conceptual material covered in readings and in class. Final papers should not exceed 10 pages double-spaced.

Final papers are due at the beginning of the final class on April 29. Late papers will be reduced one letter grade for each day that they are late.   Exceptions are possible only under compelling circumstances, and *only* if negotiated in advance of the deadline.

Grading

There are two options for computing the course grade. Option 1 is for students who elect not to write a final paper. Option 2 is for those who do submit a final paper.

		Option 1	Option 2
Developmental Assessment #1	Individual:	12.5%	10.0%
	Group:	12.5%	10.0%
Developmental Assessment # 2	Individual:	12.5%	10.0%
	Group:	12.5%	10.0%
Team Presentation		15.0%	10.0%
Team Paper		15.0%	10.0%
Class Participation		20.0%	20.0%
Final Paper		0.0%	20.0%
	Total:	100.0%	100.0%

Grade Appeals: As you are probably aware, a copy of the Student Grade Appeal procedure is on file and can be obtained in Room 334, Bloch School.

Office Hours and Communication: If you have questions, or want to talk, I'm available. I'll be in my office (322 Bloch) from 6:15 to about 6:45 preceding each class, and you're welcome to drop in. I can also meet right after class, if that's convenient for you. If you'd like to set up some other time to meet, drop me an email or check before or after class. My phone and email are at the top of the syllabus. I check messages regularly, and you can usually expect a reply within 24 hours.

Disabilities: I would be happy to discuss any concerns or questions that you have. The university asks that I remind you of the following: If you have any questions or disability, or if you desire accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact the Office of Disabled Student Service, 235-1083.

Changes to Syllabus: The syllabus is based on information available at the time of writing, but is subject to change in response to new developments and unforeseen circumstances, including, but not limited to, weather emergencies and student input.

Class Schedule

January 14: **Introduction**

January 21: **Team Formation**

Reframing, chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 14

Lencioni, "The Trouble with Teamwork" (Link on Blackboard)

January 28: **Leadership and learning**

Argyris,"Teaching Smart People How to Learn" (HBS course packet)

Case: The Case of the Underperforming Executive (Blackboard)

Study Questions:

1. What is a theory for action? What is the difference between an espoused theory and a theory-in-use?

2. What is your assessment of Sandy's effectiveness in the meeting with Bill? In what ways was Sandy effective or ineffective?

February 4: **The Structural Frame**

Reframing, *Reframing Organizations*, chapters 3, 4

Case: Campbell & Bailyn's Boston Office: Managing the Reorganization (HBS)

Study questions:

1. What are the major assumptions and concepts of the structural frame?
2. What changes in its industry and customers were affecting Campbell & Bailyn in 2007?
3. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the C & B brokerage division prior to the changes described in the case?
4. In the light of the changes in the marketplace, was creating KAT a good idea? If not, what should Ken Winston have done?

February 11: **The Human Side of Enterprise**

Reframing Organizations, chapters 6, 7

"The Costco Way," *Business Week* [Blackboard]

Case: The Men's Wearhouse: Success in a Declining Industry [HBS]

Study questions:

1. What are the central concepts and assumptions of the human resource perspective?
2. Costco and Men's Wearhouse have both been successful in brutally competitive retail industries by bucking conventional wisdom and investing in people. Why does it work?
3. Would similar practices work in other industries, or is there something special about retailing? Would these ideas work in your workplace?

Developmental Assessment #1 (all readings to date)

February 18: **A Political View**

Reframing Organizations, chapter 9, 10

Case: West Point: the Cheating Incident (A) [HBS]

Study questions:

1. What are the basic assumptions of the political frame?

2. Politically, what was happening at West Point?

3. Symbolically, what was happening at West Point?

4. It is May 19, 1976. What should General Berry do?

February 25:   **Symbols and Leadership**

Reframing Organizations, Chapters 12, 13

Case: Outback Steakhouse [Blackboard]

Study questions:
1.   In an intensely-competitive industry with a high failure rate, Outback has been a phenomenon.   What symbolic and cultural elements have been critical to their success?
2. Looking through the other three frames, are there structural, human resource and political factors that are significant at Outback?
3. Outlook was founded and built by a troika of Chris Sullivan, Bob Basham, and Tim Gannon. If "three's a crowd," this should be a recipe for disaster. Why has it worked for Outback? Can it continue?

March 4: **Organization Simulation**

An in-class simulation will provide opportunities to practice skills in diagnosing and managing organizational processes. **Required:** Bring $5 in cash to be used as working capital in the simulation.

Bolman and Deal, "Monarchs, Lords and Serfs" (Blackboard)

March 11: **Doing the Right Thing**

Reframing Organizations, chapter 19

Case: Jonah Creighton (A) [HBS]

Study questions:

1. What's happening between Jonah Creighton and his superiors?
2. Is Creighton doing the right thing?
3. What should he do now?

March 18: **Putting it all together: what leaders do**

Reframing, chapters 17, 18

Case: Taran Swan at Nickelodeon Latin America (A) [HBS]

Study questions:

1. Describe the culture at Nickelodeon Latin America.
2. How did Swan build that culture?
3. Which of the frames do you see in Swan's leadership? What does she do well? What if any weaknesses do you see?
4. What are the most important challenges she faces at the end of the case? What should she do about them? Should she appoint someone as interim director?

March 25: **Preparation for Team Presentations**

Class time is set aside for use by teams in preparing for team presentations.

April 1: **NO CLASS – UMKC Spring Break**

April 8: **Team Presentations**

April 15: **Team Presentations**

April 22: **Team Presentations**

April 29: **Conclusion**

Developmental Assessment #2 (all readings from Feb. 16 forward)

(Optional) Final papers due at beginning of class.