

Sociology 6950: Sociology of Organizations
Fall 2007
(tentative syllabus created 7/26/07)

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Instructor: Linda Renzulli
Class Schedule: Tuesday, Thursday
Classroom and Time: Baldwin 114A @ 12:30-1:45
Office hours: 11:00– 12:00 Thursday (and by appointment)
Phone: 542-3213 **E-mail:** renzulli@uga.edu
Class Web Page: webct

Course Objectives

Organizations are the building blocks for action. Organizations can accomplish things that sole endeavors cannot. Organizations are inherently social entities with structure and culture.

In this course we will review classic and contemporary literature on organizations, judging it against the criterion of how well it uses, supports, and creates organizational theory. The course is organized (no pun intended) in the following ways:

1. We will read classic theoretical pieces.
2. We will read a contemporary piece that uses, extends, or critiques the classics.
3. In student lead discussions, we will evaluate the classic and contemporary piece.

Evaluations and Grades.

1. Take-home essay exams. There will be two exams. Each exam will require students to answer questions which will be similar to compressive exam questions. You will have a week to write each exam and will be able to use your course materials . Like your comps, each essay response will be a maximum of 10 pages in length. Each exam is worth 20%.

2. Participation. Participation does not just mean talking in class. I will evaluate four aspects of your participation. I will look for clear demonstration that you 1) have read, thought about, and are engaged with the readings 2) understand the concepts that you are reading (this does not mean that everything needs to be crystal clear to you or that you can't have questions – rather it means that you did not just skim the articles and are regurgitating memorized bits and pieces), 3) relate the material to previous readings – that is you can synthesize the works and 4) can evaluate the arguments you read based on sociological logic.

If you demonstrate point 1 and no other your maximum participation grade will be a C. An A for participation means that you demonstrate points 1-4 most of the time. Therefore, to participate well in this class, you will need to spend a good deal of time reading, taking notes, and referring back to past discussions and readings.

I will give you a midterm participation grade and a final participation grade. Each will be worth 20%.

3. Student-lead discussions. In the early part of the semester, you will be responsible to find contemporary empirical works using particular theoretical frameworks. The logistics of this will be

hammered out the first week of class when registration is finalized. The total number of student-lead discussions due for each student will be determined. In total it will be 20% of your grade.

You will be required to:

1. Find 1 contemporary article using the theoretical frame you have been assigned. Article must be from 2000 on to be considered contemporary. (Some exceptions can be had but will need to be passed by me first).
2. Provide citation, abstract, and annotation to the class the day of the discussion.
3. 48 hours prior to class, a link to the article or a pdf, or a hard copy in the mailroom should be provided for the students and me.
4. Prepare a discussion based on the article, the classics, and the other readings we have already discussed. The goal is to summarize, critique, synthesize, and evaluate the theoretical frame.

Readings:

A note on the readings: There are some classic books that are not on this syllabus. Books such as TVA and the Grass Roots still warrant reading, but thousands of articles have been published in the interim and the best ones have made use of the pioneers' insights. If you intend to make a career in the field of organization studies, you should go back and read the classics on your own.

1. Howard E. Aldrich and Martin Ruef, Organizations Evolving. 2006. London: Sage.

I have ordered at the bookstore but you can order it on-line as well. We will not begin reading this book until October. Please be sure to get the 2006 edition.

2. Other readings will be available as pdfs on webct.

It is imperative that readings be completed *prior* to the session in which they will be discussed.

Overview of the Field

If you want a general overview of the sociology of organizations field, you should consult the following books:

1. Howard E. Aldrich, Organizations and Environments. 1979.
2. Charles Perrow, 1986. Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay. (An iconoclastic look at the history of Organizational Theory in America.)
3. W. Richard Scott, 1998. 4th Edition. Organizations, Rational, Natural, and Open Systems (Very comprehensive.)
4. Joel A. C. Baum, editor. 2001. Companion to Organizations. Blackwell.

Evolutionary Books:

5. Carroll, Glenn R. (ed.). 1988. Ecological Models of Organization. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
6. Singh, Jitendra V. (ed.). 1990. Organizational Evolution. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage..
7. Baum, Joel and Jitendra Singh (eds.). 1994. Evolutionary Dynamics of Organizations. New York: Oxford University Press.
8. Carroll, Glenn R. and Michael T. Hannan (eds.). 1995. Organizations in Industry: Strategy, Structure, and Selection. New York: Oxford University Press.

Course Format:

Most of class time will be spent critiquing, evaluating, and synthesizing the works. We will discuss how to critique, evaluate and synthesize work on the first day of class.

Academic Honesty:

The University of Georgia seeks to promote and ensure academic honesty and personal integrity among students and other members of the University Community. A policy on academic honesty has been developed to serve these goals. All members of the academic community are responsible for knowing the policy and procedures on academic honesty.

The link to more detailed information about academic honesty can be found at:

<http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>

Grievances:

Human Rights Statement

All students should know that the department of Sociology has a Human Rights Committee for the resolution of student grievances. Any student registered for a sociology course at the University of Georgia who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner by an instructor is advised to follow these procedures:

- 1) The student should discuss his or her problems with the instructor of the course, unless extenuating circumstances prohibit this.
- 2) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance, the student should then discuss the problem with the Head of the Department of Sociology.
- 3) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the student, the student may request the activation of the Human Rights Committee by submitting a letter to the Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia.

The Human Rights Committee will have the responsibility of investigating all charges in accordance with the procedures on file in the Sociology office, copies of which are available to students. The Committee will also have the responsibility of making recommendations in writing to the Head, copies of which will be made available to the student complainant and the instructor involved. The Department Head will review the recommendations and make a decision in writing, with copies to the student complainant and the instructor of staff member involved. Any appeal of that decision must be to the Dean of the college of Arts and Sciences.

CLASS SCHEDULE

I. Introduction

Day 1 (Aug 16)

Read over the syllabus, talk about it, meet your classmates, and discuss course expectations.

II. Five Perspectives Fight For Supremacy

Day 2 (Aug 21)

Institutional Theory – Classics

Zucker, L.G. (1987). Institutional Theories of Organization. *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 13, pp. 443-464

Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology*, 83: 340-363.

DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter W. Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review*, 48: 147-160.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) In the 21st century, which of the 3 forms of isomorphism will be most prevalent? Why?
- (2) What questions can we ask using an institutional framework?

Day 3 (Aug 23)

Institutional Theory – Empirical works.

Ruef, Martin and W. Richard Scott. "A multidimensional model of organizational legitimacy: hospital survival in changing institutional environments." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43 (1998): 877-904.

Meyer, John, W. Richard Scott, David Strang. 1998. "Centralization, Fragmentation, and School District Complexity." *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 43. 877-904.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) To what is the institutional environment that Ruef and Scott refer? How is it similar and or different to the environment Meyer, Scott and Strang discuss?
- (2) Are both these article clearly placed with the institutional framework? How? How do they deviate?

Day 4 (Aug 28)

Student lead discussion – critique and more info on Institutional theory.

Day 5 (Aug 30)

Ecological Theory: The classics

Hannan, Michael T. and John Henry Freeman. (1977). "The Population Ecology of Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (March): 929-964.

Hannan, Michael and John H. Freeman. (1984). "Structural Inertia and Organizational Change." *American Sociological Review*. 49, 2 (April): 149-164.

Chapter on ecology by D. Charles Galunic & John Weeks pages 75-97 in Baum, Joel A.C. (ed.). (2002). Companion to Organizations.

Recommended:

Baum, Joel. 1996. Organizational Ecology. In Handbook of Organizational Studies. Ed.s Clegg, Stewart, Cynthia Hardy and Walter Nord. Pages 77-114.

Questions of the day:

1. To what extent is the ecology framework more or less useful than the institutional framework?
2. Do people matter?

Day 6 (Sept 4)

Ecological Theory: Empirical works.

Hannan, Michael and John Henry Freeman. (1988). "The Ecology of Organizational Mortality: American Labor Unions, 1836-1985." *American Journal of Sociology*. 94, 1 (July): 25-51.

Carroll, Glen. R. and James Wade. 1991. "Density Dependence in the Organizational Evolution of the American Brewing Industry Across Different Levels of Analysis." *Social Science Research* 20. 271-302.

Fligstein, Neil. (1985). "The Spread of the Multidivisional Form Among Large Firms, 1919-1979." *American Sociological Review*. 50 (June): 377-391.

Recommended:

Sorensen, Jesper B. and Toby E. Stuart. (2000). "Aging, Obsolescence, and Organizational Innovation." *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 45, 1 (March): 81-112.

Studies discussed in table 4 of Chapter on ecology by D. Charles Galunic & John Weeks pages 75-97 in Baum, Joel A.C. (ed.). (2002). Companion to Organizations. Most can be found through jstor

Questions of the day:

1. What benefits do we get from studying unions and microbreweries in this way?
2. Why unions? Why breweries?

Day 7 (Sept 6)

Student lead discussion – critique and more info on Ecological theory

Day 8 (Sept 11)

A. The Great Rapprochement: Ecology and Institutional Theory Collide

Heather A. Haveman and Hayagreeva Rao, "Structuring a Theory of Moral Sentiments: Institutional and Organizational Coevolution in the Early Thrift Industry." *American Journal of Sociology*, 102, 6 (May 1997): 1606-51.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) Is this a forced integration & synthesis or are there natural affinities between the two?
- (2) Are the methodological demands of such work greater than for other kinds of organizational research? Why or why not?

Day 9 (Sept 13)

The Resource Dependence: Classics

Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerry Salancik, The External Control of Organizations. 1978. Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-61.

Finkelstein, S. 1997. "Interindustry merger patterns and resource dependence: A replication and extension of Pfeffer (1972)." *Strategic Management Journal*. 18:787-810.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) According to resource dependence, are managers important or not?
- (2) How useful is RD according to Finklestein? Was it a good test?

Day 10 (Sept 18)

Resource Dependence: Empirical Works

Arum, Richard. 1996. "Do Private Schools Force Public Schools to Compete?" *American Sociological Review* 61:29-46.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) Describe how this empirical work is a test of resource dependence. How does it fall short (if it falls short)?
- (2) Does this "prove" that intuitionism" does not play a role in school behavior?

Day 11 (Sept 20)

Student lead discussion – critique and more info on RD theory

Day 12 (Sept 25)

Transition Cost Economics: Classics (and its critique)

Oliver E. Williamson, 1994. Chapter 4, "Transaction Cost Economics and Organization Theory," in Neil Smelser and Richard Swedberg, editors, Handbook of Economic Sociology, Princeton University Press, pp. 77-107.

Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic-Action and Social-Structure - the Problem of Embeddedness." *American Journal of Sociology* 91:481-510.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) Is Granovetter right about Williamson? Why or why not?
- (2) How might you design a study that would test propositions from TCE?

Day 13 (Sept 27)

TCE: Empirical Works

Ouchi, W. G. 1980. "Markets, Bureaucracies, and Clans." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25:129-141.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) What is Ouchi's critique?

- (2) How is Ouchi more sociological than Williamson?

Day 14 (Oct 2)

Student lead discussion – critique and more info on TCE theory

Day 15 (Oct 4)

Organizations as Learning Entities: Basics

Linda Argote and Ron Ophir, “Intraorganizational Learning,” Pp. 181-207 in Joel Baum, editor, Companion to Organizations. Blackwell, 2001.

Martin Schulz, “Organizational Learning,” Pp. 415-441 in Baum, op cit.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) In what ways is organizational learning different from individual learning?
- (2) What are the characteristics of a “learning organization”? Where is its memory?

Day 16 (Oct 9)

Student lead discussion – Org Learning

III. Evolutionary Theory

Day 17 (Oct 11)

Evolutionary theory: Aldrich’s Statement

Aldrich, Howard E. and Martin Reuf. 2006. *Organizations Evolving*. London: Sage. Pages 1-60.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) See questions on page 60 to text.

Day 18 (Oct 16)

Evolutionary Theory: Variation – New orgs

Aldrich and Ruef. 2006. Organizations Evolving, Chapter 4.

Arthur L. Stinchcombe. 1965. “Social Structure and Organizations.” Pp. 142-193 in James G. March (ed.), *Handbook of Organizations*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) Why do most organizations start small?
- (2) Why are radically innovative new organizations so rare?
- (3) What is the role of the entrepreneur?

Day 19 (Oct 18)

Evolutionary Theory: An Empirical Work

Renzulli, Linda A. 2005. "Organizational Environments and the Emergence of Charter Schools in the U.S." *Sociology of Education* 78:1-26.

☑Questions of the day:

- (1) How does this piece use an evolutionary framework?
- (2) What strengths and weaknesses does it have? (Be honest and don't worry about offending me- I have very thick skin)

Day 20 (Oct 23)

Take home exam today

Day 21 (Oct 30)

Organizational Boundaries

Howard E. Aldrich. 2006. Organizations Evolving, Chapter 5.

Roberto M. Fernandez and Nancy Weinberg, "Sifting and Sorting: Personal Contacts and Hiring in a Retail Bank," *American Sociological Review*, 62, 6 (December, 1997): 883-902.

Anne S. Miner "Structural Evolution Through Idiosyncratic Jobs: The Potential for Unplanned," *Organization Science*, 1, 2 (1990): 195-210.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) Why do people do things inside organizations that they would never do, on their own, outside the organizational context?
- (2) How often do you think the "constructing members" process breaks down? Why?
- (3) Under what conditions might organizational leaders desire a more homogeneous membership? What are the costs of a more homogeneous membership?
- (4) Are Fernandez and Weinberg's results "scalable"? That is, do they apply to smaller as well as larger organizations? Why or why not?

Day 22 (Nov 1)

Culture

Emergence of an Organizational Culture

H. E. Aldrich, 2006. Organizations Evolving, Chapter 6.

Paul DiMaggio, "Culture and Cognition," Annual Review of Sociology, 23 (1997): 263-87.

McDonald, Peggy. 1991. "The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee: Developing Organizational Culture in the Short Run." Pp. 26-38 in P.J. Frost, L.F. Moore, M.R. Louis, C.C. Lundberg, and Joanne Martin (eds.), Reframing Organizational Culture. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Recommended:

DiMaggio, Paul. J. 1991. "Constructing an Organizational Field as a Professional Project: U.S. Art Museums, 1920-1940." In W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*: 267-292: University of Chicago Press.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) See questions on page 131 of OE

Day 23 (Nov 6)

Student lead discussion – Culture and Organizations

IV. Transformation, Social Change, and Models for Historical Analysis

Day 24 (Nov 8)

Transformation

Aldrich and Ruef, 2006. *Organizations Evolving*, Chapter 7 and 8.

Tushman, M. L. and P. Anderson. 1986. "Technological Discontinuities and Organizational Environments." *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 31:439-465.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) How important are leaders' roles in organizational transformation? Why?
- (2) Assess the likelihood of a typical new organization getting really Really REALLY BIG. How would they do it?
- (3) How would an evolutionary perspective view competence-enhancing and destroying technologies?

Recommended: Conditions for Effective Transformations

Steven Peter Vallas, "Why Teamwork Fails: Obstacles to Workplace Change in Four Manufacturing Plants," *American Sociological Review*, 68, 2(April, 2003): 223-250.

Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman, "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement," *American Journal of Sociology*, 106, 2 (September, 2000): 303-49.

☑ Questions for the recommended readings:

- (1) Reprise: How important are leaders' roles in organizational transformation? Why?
- (2) Why don't members get more involved in "their" organizations?

Day 25 (Nov 13)

The Web of Interorganizational Affiliations

Ranjay Gulati and Martin Gargiulo, "Where Do Interorganizational Networks Come From?" *American Journal of Sociology*, 104, 5 (March, 1999): 1439-93.

Wayne E. Baker, Robert R. Faulkner, and Gene A. Fisher, "Hazards of the Market: the Continuity and Dissolution of Interorganizational Market Relationships." *American Sociological Review*, 63, 2 (April, 1998): 147-77.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) To what extent can a deficit in knowledge be overcome by "good references"?
- (2) Is the whole world networked? What is NOT a "networked" organization?
- (3) So, where DO interorganizational networks come from? And do they really know?
- (4) Imagine Granovetter and Williamson debating the merits of these articles. What would they say?

Day 26 (Nov 15)

Emergence of New Populations

Aldrich and Ruef. 2006. Organizations Evolving, Chapter 9 and 10.

David Strang and Sarah Soule, "Diffusion in Organizations and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 (1998): 265-290.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) At the beginning of the new millennium, will new populations still face formidable barriers? Why or why not?
- (2) Reformulate Strang and Soule's argument, using evolutionary language. What's different, if anything?
- (3) What would Hannan and Freeman and the ecologists say about Aldrich's founding and disbanding chapter?

Day 27 (Nov 20)

A Grammar for New Populations and Communities

Aldrich and Ruef. 2006. Organizations Evolving. Chapter 11

Hayagreeva Rao, "Caveat Emptor: The Construction of Nonprofit Consumer Watchdog Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 4 (January 1998): 912-61.

☑ Questions of the day:

- (1) Are communities really evolutionary units of selection? Why or why not?
- (2) How much importance would you attribute to entrepreneurs in new communities? Why?

Day 28 (Nov 27)

Free day to catch up on things if we need

Day 29 (Nov 29)

Where is the study of organizations going?

Stern, Robert and Stephen Barley. 1996. "Organizations and Social Systems: Organization Theory's Neglected Mandate." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41(1): 146-62.

Questions of the day:

- (1) Are Stern and Barley right that research has neglected the social system? Remember their work was written in 1996.
- (2) Look this article up on web of science – it was cited 40 times. What has empirical work done to fill the hole Stern and Barley talk about?

Take home exam 2 due- Dec 6