

Psychology 204 – Spring 2007. Tuesdays 5 – 7:30 PM

Industrial Psychology & Organizational Development

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Objectives

The central objective of this course is to provide both a conceptual and an experiential learning environment on topics related to group dynamics and organizational change. The course is intended for business professional of all sorts, as well as graduate students in psychology. The course content is primarily psychological in origin, as is the mainstay of the knowledge base in human resources. Although the conventional for-profit organization is the typical point of departure, non-profit and governmental organizations are equally relevant to the course purview.

The experiential aspects of the course take the form of individual and group exercises that exemplify key principles addressed in the course. The group exercises are valuable techniques for anyone who might become involved in team building activities, group problem solving, or group therapy.

Another indispensable, objective of the course is to focus on the place where standard thinking meets the cutting edge of theoretical developments on the subject. Hence chaos and complexity theory or nonlinear dynamical systems (NDS) contributes many of the new ideas. Perhaps the most important new organizing theme from this perspective is concept of the organization as a complex adaptive system (CAS). A CAS is critically poised on the so-called edge of chaos, where it can adapt flexibly to new events arising from outside the organization and also from within it. It is also capable of re-organizing itself to make continual adaptations to novel events.

Required Texts

French, W. L., & Bell, C. H. Jr. (1999). *Organization development: Behavioral science interventions for organizational improvement* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Guastello, S. J. (2002). *Managing emergent phenomena: Nonlinear dynamics in work organizations*. Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (2004). *Handbook of organizational change and innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Class Schedule

The plan for the course appears below. It should be regarded as “initial conditions,” with the understanding that issues and ideas will come up that we might like to pursue further. Psyc 204 is traditionally a small class, so modifications will spontaneously occur based on students’ particular interests.

Abbreviations are given for the required readings. FB# = Chapters in French & Bell; MEP# = *Managing Emergent Phenomena*; H# = Poole & Van de Ven’s *Handbook*.

Date – Topic

- 1/16 How organizations differ. What is organizational development? (F&B: 1-5; H:1-2).
- 1/23 Action research and organizational development. Introduction to the nonlinear paradigm. (F&B: 6-7; MEP, 1, 2, 4; H:12).
- 1/30 Achievement, affiliation, and power motivation. Recognizing motivational themes in the work place. (MEP: 5; F&B: 16).
- 2/6 Other motivation theories.
- 2/13 Student presentation: Surveys and related diagnostic techniques.
- 2/20 Creativity in individual, group, and organizational behavior. (H: 4-5; MEP 6).
- 2/27 (Catch up day). Mid-term essays handed out.
- 3/6 Mid-term essays due, class discussion.
- 3/20 Group dynamics (MEP 7-8; H:3; F&B: 8-9).
- 3/27 More group dynamics.
- 4/3 Perspectives on leadership (MEP 9; F&B: 14-15).
- 4/10 Negotiation and conflict resolution (F&B 10).
- 4/17 Modifying organizational culture and organizational structure (H: 6-7).
- 4/24 Research strategies for OD: Grappling with events that change over time (H: 8-10).
- 5/1 Students’ term paper presentations. Final essays handed out.
- 5/8 Final essays due.

Web resource:

Students who desire more information about nonlinear dynamics specifically, either for purposes of this course or for other research areas, should make a visit to: www.societyforchaostheory.org/tutorials/

Graded Assignments

Grades in Psyc 204 will be based on the diagnostic resources report (20%), two essay exams (2 x 20%) pertaining to factual content and conceptual integration, and the term paper and presentation (20%). The balance of credits is allocated to the completion of class activities as well (20%). Exams will take the form of a set of take-home essays. They will require brief but thoughtful preparations from the students, and equally thoughtful input from the professor who is reading them 😊.

Diagnostic Resources Assignment

Surveys and questionnaires are common tools in OD research and the practical objectives of organizational diagnosis. The Raynor library is stocked with resources that a person might use in such a project. Resources might take the form of stocks of questionnaire items, or books and journal articles where particular instruments are discussed and presented in usable form. The goal of the assignment is to browse your resources and select one resource to present in class on the scheduled day.

We will do some internal logistics in class to ensure that everyone is reporting on something different. Further instructions will be forthcoming when we get a week or two into the class.

Term Paper Assignment

It's a classic term paper in most ways. To begin, pick a topic that is captured in any of the chapters of your texts (including any chapters that have not been explicitly assigned). Develop the topic in your term paper to capture the theoretical and empirical studies related to the topic. Here you can focus on a particular aspect of what was covered in the target chapter, or expand and combine ideas with new ones. A literature search using an academic database will be necessary to identify publications that pertain to what you are trying to accomplish. You are encouraged to think creatively about the questions you define for the paper, and to develop your views regarding what unanswered questions currently exist and how one might go about answering those questions in new research.

We will do some internal logistics in class to ensure that everyone is covering a different topic. Further instructions for preparing your term paper will be forthcoming.

For presentations to the class, you are welcome to use any AV media that the classroom has to offer.