

Sociology of Organizations – SOC XXXX

(Date), (Location), (Time)

I. Introduction

This course introduces students to the sociological study of organizations. The goal of the course is to gain understandings of the origins, structure, and dynamics of organizations and their relationships to their environment. Organizations are everywhere, permeating our everyday life in seen and unseen ways. This course will provide a broad overview of the theoretical and empirical developments in the study of organizations. We will also take an in-depth look at a variety of empirical cases, ranging from organizations like Google and Apple, to elite consulting firms, your local microbreweries, and onto labor unions and social movement organizations.

Objectives:

When you have finished this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and evaluate the central theories and concepts in the sociological study of organizations.
- Apply critical thinking skills and a sociological imagination in oral and written capacities when assessing the nature and role of organizations in society.
- Engage extant theory and empirical evidence to construct convincing arguments related to organizational processes and consequences.

Required Text & Tools:

- Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes (10th Ed.),
- Course eReserves (through Sakai)
- A cellphone that you can use to access PollEverywhere (via text or a web browser). If this is a problem, let me know today!

Web Tools:

This course is supplemented with materials on <http://sakai.nd.edu> (also accessible through insideND). You will need to visit the website to access various course materials – powerpoint slides, online readings, examples, and assignments – and to keep up with your grades. We will also utilize podcasts and videos throughout classes.

Contact Information:

Justin Van Ness

839 Flanner

jvanness@nd.edu

Office Hours: Tues. 2-3pm & Thurs. 1130-1pm, or by appointment

Contacting:

Before emailing me with a question, please check the syllabus and/or Sakai to see if it has been answered somewhere else. When you do email, please be patient and ***please write SOC XXXXX in the subject of your e-mail***. For example, your e-mail title might say ‘SOC XXXXX Exam Question’. I might respond immediately, I might not. Give me a day (or a weekend) to get back to you. You

don't need to schedule an appointment to come by during office hours, but if you want to meet outside of my regular office hours, contacting me to set up an appointment is the best way to ensure I am available.

II. Expectations and Policies:

Attendance:

Since sociologists like statistical facts so much, I'll drop one here – the single largest predictor of a final grade in any course is attendance (Credé, Roch and Kieczynka 2010), with doing the reading following a close second. That said, I will not take attendance or reduce your grade simply because you do not show up for class. However, I will not be held responsible for anything that you miss. I will not provide lecture notes or review what you missed during office hours, and even if you miss class, it's not an excuse to skip the assigned readings. I strongly encourage you to find a few “soc buddies” in the class with whom you can contact when you need to miss a class. In addition, remember that the days that you miss you will not be here for in-class assignments and activities which – depending on your performance when here *or* if you're chronically absent – could adversely affect your grade.

Participation:

Just being present is not enough. While you will not be evaluated directly on participation, it will surely factor in to your success in this course. Students do better if people participate. The student who is participating gets the answers they need and the others in the class gain a better understanding of something they might need help with as well.



There are a number of ways that you can participate: If you need me to slow down or to provide another example, *raise your hand and tell me*. If you have a question, *ask*. If you need something clarified, *let me know*. If you have an example that better illustrates what we're talking about, *share it*.

Academic Integrity:

Academic misconduct of any kind will not be tolerated in my course. If I have reason to believe that you have violated the honor code, I **will** follow through with the guidelines in the academic code of honor handbook: <http://honorcode.nd.edu>. You should all be familiar with the honor code and most punishable forms of cheating. If you have any questions or are in doubt, please ask me.

Class Conduct:

As a sign of respect to me and to your fellow classmates, please get to class on time. Do your best to avoid walking in late, stepping out, or leaving early. Put away laptops when class begins – as they are

not allowed during class time unless you have an accommodation from the university – and only use cell phones for approved uses. Please don't read *The Observer*, talk to your friends, text, sleep, listen to music, or pass notes during class. Not only are those things disrespectful and disruptive to me and your classmates, but they also limit your ability to participate in class and understand the material – it's basically a bad time for everyone. If you think you're being sneaky, you're not – I was a student once too.

III. Assignments & Evaluations:

Realizing that students have various strengths and weaknesses, I incorporate a number of different evaluation styles in my grading system:

- **In-Class Quizzes, Activities, and Responses (22%):** These exercises are varied and can be anything from quizzes on the readings to activities to class reactions to applications of what we are discussing. We will have these *nearly* every non-exam day, meaning there should be more than 20 opportunities (mostly in-class and a few out of class) for these. I will only count your 20 *best* scores.
- **Reflections (17%):** A crucial skill you must learn in college is how to write clearly, persuasively, and succinctly (and in this class, thoughtfully). The best way to acquire this skill is through practice. To this end, during the semester you are required to write three 3 page papers that reflect on how class materials, lectures, and/or readings relate to your everyday experience. There will be five opportunities. You will choose the opportunities that work best for you (whether based off due-date, topic, or procrastination comfort level). Due dates – when reflections must be turned in at the beginning of class – are marked with an asterisk (*) in the syllabus.
- **Examples from Everyday Life (4%):** I will use a number of examples from everyday life in lectures. This asks you to find your own examples of the concepts or theories that we are talking about in lecture or the readings to post on Sakai. You'll post a brief entry detailing what you found, how it can be explained with course material, and a link (if it's from the media).
- **Exams (57%):** There will be three exams for this course – two given during the semester and one during finals week. The exams will be comprised of three sections – multiple choice & true/false, short answer, and essay. The final is cumulative only in the sense that sociological concepts build on each other and that students *can* draw on all the readings (but won't be required to).

****No late assignments will be accepted****

Exams – including the final – will only be administered on the scheduled dates

Be sure to check the syllabus and plan accordingly

(Exceptions will only be made with a documented *official* university excuse.)

Grading:

Final grades will be determined based on the total number of points that you earn on exams and assignments. Please note that I do not round grades up.

<i>In-Class Exercises</i> (20, worth 5 points each)	100	A >93%	C 77-79.9%
<i>Reflections</i> (3, worth 25 points each)	75	A- 90-92.9%	C+ 73-76.9%
<i>Example from Everyday Life</i> (1, worth 20 points)	20	B 87-89.9%	C- 70-72.9%
<i>Mid Term</i> (2, worth 90 points each)	180	B+ 83-86.9%	D 60-69.9%
Final Exam (worth 75 points)	75	B- 80-82.9%	F <60%
Total	450		

Sometimes students have questions about what particular grades mean. According to Notre Dame's Faculty Handbook, letter grades reflect the following:

- A Truly Exceptional** – Work that meets or exceeds the highest expectations.
- A- Outstanding** – Superior work in *all* areas.
- B+ Very Good** – Superior work in *most* areas.
- B Good** – Solid work across the board.
- B- More than Acceptable** – More than acceptable, but falls short of solid work.
- C+ Acceptable: Meets All Basic Standards** – Work meets all the basic requirements and standards.
- C Acceptable: Meets Most Basic Standards** – Work meets most of the basic requirements and standards in several areas.
- C- Acceptable: Meets Some Basic Standards** – While acceptable, work falls short of meeting basic standards in several areas.
- D Minimally Passing** – Work just over the threshold of acceptability.
- F Failing** – Unacceptable performance.

IV. Topics, Assigned Readings, and Due Dates



Readings listed must be read *before* class the day listed. Students should come prepared on the first day ready to discuss the readings listed. Due dates and exam dates have an asterisk next to the date.

Week 1 Day 1 ***Introduction***

Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. *Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes* (10th Ed.), Chapter 1: “Thinking About Organizations”

Weber, Max. 1978. “Characteristics of Modern Bureaucracy”

Week 1 Day 2 ***Organizational Analysis: Rational and Natural Systems***

Gouldner AW. 1959. *Organizational analysis*. In *Sociology Today*, ed. RK Merton, L Broom, LS Cottrell Jr, pp. 400–28. New York: Basic Books

Week 2 Day 1 ***Rational Systems***

Tolbert and Hall, Chapter 2: “Organizational Structure: Key Dimensions”

Perrow, Charles S. 1972. *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Ch. 1, “Why Bureaucracy?”

Week 2 Day 2 ***Rational Systems***

Simon, Herbert. 1955. “A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 69(1): 99-118

March and Simon. 1981. “Decision-Making Theory” pp135-150 in *The Sociology of Organizations* Grusky and Miller eds

Suggested Reading: Richard Cyert, Herbert Simon, and Donald Trow. 1956. “Observation of a Business Decision,” *Journal of Business* 29: 237-248.

Suggested Reading: Simon, Herbert. 1979. “Rational Decision Making in Business Organizations,” *American Economic Review* 69: 493-513

Week 3 Day 1 ***Rational Systems***

Olson, Mancur. 1965. “Introduction” and “A Theory of Groups and Organizations” in *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups. Selected Pages*.

March, James & Herbert Simon. “Bounded Rationality and Satisficing”

Suggested Reading: Leidner, Robin. Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life.

Week 3 Day 2 * *Natural Systems*

Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes (10th Ed.), Pp 89-107

Burt, Ronald. 2005. "The Social Capital of Structural Holes." Pp. 10-38 (Chapter 1) in Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Krackhardt, David and Jeffrey R. Hanson. 1993. "Informal Networks: The Company Behind the Chart." Harvard Business Review 71:104-11

Week 4 Day 1 *Natural Systems*

Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes (10th Ed.), Pp 204-209)

Suggested Reading: Zald, Mayer N. and Patricia Denton. 1963. "From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA." Administrative Science Quarterly 8:214-234

Week 4 Day 2 *Natural Systems: Organizational Culture*

Van Maanen, John. 1999. "The Smile Factory: Work at Disneyland." Pp. 58-76 in Reframing Organizational Culture, P. Frost, L.F. Moore, M.R. Louis, C.C. Lundberg, and J. Martin (eds.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Vaughn, Diane. 1997. "The Trickle-Down Effect: Policy Decisions, Risky Work, and the Challenger Tragedy." California Management Review 39:80-102.

Suggested Reading: Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1968. "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study in Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities." American Sociological Review 33: 499-517.

Pierce, Jennifer L. 2003. "Racing for Innocence: Whiteness, Corporate Culture and the Backlash against Affirmative Action." Qualitative Sociology 26:53-70.

Week 5 Day 1 *Exam #1*

Week 5 Day 1 *Organizations as Open Systems*

Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes (10th Ed.), Chapter 8: "Managing Organizational Environments: Conceptions of the Environment"

Suggested Reading: Khurana, Rakesh. 2004. "'Everyone Knew He Was Brilliant': The Wooing of Jamie Dimon." Pp. 1- 19 (Chapter 1) in Searching for a Corporate Savior.

Week 5 Day 2 ***Open Systems: Resource Dependency***

Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. *Organizations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes* (10th Ed.), Chapter 4: "Power and Power Outcomes"

Suggested Reading: Pfeffer and Salancik. 1978. *External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. "Introduction to the Classic Edition" (pp xi-xxvi) and "The External Control of Organizations" (pp 39-60). Stanford: Stanford Univ Press.

Suggested Reading: Ouchi, William. 1980. "Markets, Bureaucracies and Clans." *ASQ* 25(1):129-141.

Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Suggested reading: Problem of Embeddedness." *AJS* 91: 481-510.

Week 6 Day 1 ***Open Systems: Population Ecology, Strategic Alliances***

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

Carroll, Glenn R., and Anand Swaminathan. 2000. "Why the Microbrewery Movement? Organizational Dynamics of Resource Partitioning in the U.S. Brewing Industry." *American Journal of Sociology* 106:715-762

Suggested Reading: Young, Ruth. "Is Population Ecology a Useful Paradigm for the Study of Organizations?" *AJS* 94 (1988):1-24.

Suggested Reading: Brüderl, Josef, and Rudolf Schüssler. 1990. "Organizational Mortality: The Liabilities of Newness and Adolescence." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 35(3):530-47

Suggested Reading: Martin, John Levi. 2003. "What Is Field Theory?" *American Journal of Sociology* 109(1):1-49.

Week 6 Day 2* ***Neo-Institutional Theory***

Tolbert, Pamela and Richard Hall. 2009. Pp 58-67

DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. 1991. "Introduction." Ch. 1 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*

Suggested Reading: DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter W. Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48:147-60

Suggested Reading: Lom, Stacy. 2015. "Changing Rules, Changing Practices: The Direct and Indirect Effects of Tight Coupling in Figure Skating" *Organization Science*

Suggested Reading: Bielby, William T., and Denis Bielby. 1994. "All Hits Are Flukes": Institutionalized Decision Making and the Rhetoric of Network Prime-Time Program Development." *American Journal of Sociology* 99: 1287-1313

Week 7 Day 1 ***Neo-Institutionalism***

Westphal, James D. and Edward J. Zajac. 1998. "The Symbolic Management of Stockholders: Corporate Governance Reforms and Shareholder Reactions." *ASQ* 43: 127-53.

Suggested Reading: Karl Weick, 1976. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," *ASQ* 21: 1-19.

Suggested Reading: Scott, James M. 1998 *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Week 7 Day 2 ***Conflict and Inequality in Organizations***

Hirschman, A. O. 1970. Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states: Harvard. Selected Pages.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. Men and Women of the Corporation. Selected Pages

Coser, Lewis A. 1974. *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*. Selected Pages.

Suggested Reading: Edgell, Penny. 1999. Congregations in Conflict.

Suggested reading: Zald, MN. 1978. "Social Movements in Organizations: Coup d'Etat, Insurgency, and Mass Movements" *AJS*.

Suggested Reading: Meyerson, Debra E. and Joyce K. Fletcher. 2000. "A Modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling." *Harvard Business Review* 78:127-36.

Week 8 Day 1 * ***EXAM #2***

Week 8 Day 2 ***Making Decisions***

Michael D. Cohen, James G. March and Johan P. Olsen "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice" *ASQ* 17: 1-18, 1972

March and Olsen. 1976. "Organizational Choice under Ambiguity" pp248—260 in *The Sociology of Organizations*, Grusky and Miller eds.

Suggested Reading: Anderson, Paul A. 1983. "Decision Making by Objection and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28(2):201-22.

Week 9 Day 1 ***Networks and Organizations***

Brass, D. J., J. Galaskiewicz, H. R. Greve, W. Tsai. 2004. Taking stock of networks and organizations: A multilevel perspective. *Acad. Management J.* 47(6) 795–817.

Suggested Reading: Borgatti, S. and Foster, P. (2003). The network paradigm in organizational research: A review and typology. *Journal of management*, 29(6):991– 1013.

Week 9 Day 2 ***Networks and Creativity***

Burt, Ronald. 2004. "Structural Holes and Good Ideas." *AJS* 110:349-399

Uzzi, Brian, and Jarrett Spiro. 2005. "Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem." *AJS* 111(2):447-504

Suggested Reading: Krackhardt, David and Jeffrey R. Hanson. 1993. "Informal Networks: The Company Behind the Chart." *Harvard Business Review* 71:104-11

Week 10 Day 1 ***Institutional Change: Social Movements***

King, Brayden G. and Nicholas A. Peace. 2010. "The Contentiousness of Markets: Politics, Social Movements, and Institutional Change in markets." *American Review of Sociology* 36:249-267

King, Brayden G. and Sarah A. Soule. 2007. "Social Movements as Extra-Institutional Entrepreneurs: The Effects of Protests on Stock Price Returns." *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 52:413-42

Week 10 Day 2 ****Institutional Change: Labor Unions***

Kim Voss & Rachel Sherman. 2000. "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement" *AJS*. 106(2): 303-349.

mm.dd.yy * **FINAL EXAM Time TBA Location TBA**