SOCIOLOGY OF FORMAL ORGANIZATION (SOC 335)
3 Credit Hours, No Prerequisites

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Class Time: T/TH 12:30-1:45
Office Hours: T/Th 11-12:30; 1:45-4
OBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Theories of formal organization, bureaucratic systems, alternative systems and organizational change; special emphasis will be placed on the relationship between the organization and its environment

PURPOSE: Sociologists often argue that we live in an "organizational society" because organizations are pervasive, enduring social structures that powerfully influence every aspect of our lives. Organizations also reflect and mediate broad dynamics in society, such as social inequality and diversity, cultural change, and political action. To explore how organizations both influence and are influenced by society, this course is structured to answer several crucial questions: What are the origins of complex organizations? How do organizations operate? How do they influence contemporary society? How do organizations change? What are the key challenges faced by organizations and the people who work in them? How does the vantage point from which one views or experiences an organization influence how one understands that organization?

We first address these questions by providing brief conceptual foundations for the course, including a working definition for organizations, their basic elements, and some of the key issues of concern for both researchers and practitioners. We will then examine the internal dynamics of organizations from the perspectives of *rational systems* frameworks (that view organizations in terms of formal structures and goals), and then *natural systems* frameworks (that focus more on the informal, human side of organizations, including personal needs, culture, informal networks, decision making, and politics). Next, we address *open systems* frameworks that focus on the relationships between organizations and their external environments. The final part of the course investigates key challenges faced by all organizations: conflict, social inequality, deviance, technology, globalization and change. Throughout the course, we relate theory and research to the experiences of people like you who actually work, live, and play in organizational society.

OBJECTIVES: The primary objectives of this course are for students to**:**

(1) Learn the basic elements of organizations and the utility of organizational analysis;
(2) Become familiar with and understand the primary streams of organization theory;
(3) Be able to apply organization theory to critically analyze central organizational challenges.

TEXT AND REFERENCES:
All required readings are available on the course's Canvas page. You should complete reading assignments prior to the lectures/sections for which they are assigned.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES: The course objectives will be achieved through an integrated program of reading, lectures, class discussions, research paper, oral presentation, and examinations. You therefore are expected to do the assigned readings, attend class, participate in class and group discussions, write your organizational report, and complete the exams.

Class Lectures and Participation

Attendance at class lectures is mandatory for this class. Class lectures are organized around key topics related to the sociology of organizations. The vitality of any course depends in part on student questions, comments, and ideas. I welcome you to raise clarifying questions as the need arises. However, I hope you also raise substantive comments and questions.

You are also welcome to raise concerns and questions with the instructor during office hours or via email. Interaction with the instructor will help you understand the material, but will not be awarded participation points. Taking this course is a little like learning a language: if you do not learn the fundamentals early on in the semester and do not consistently keep up with the reading, you will be lost as the semester progresses. It is therefore extremely important that you attend every class, listen carefully, take detailed notes, and participate as much as you can.

Organizational Research Paper

One of the crucial skills you must learn in college is how to write clearly, persuasively, and succinctly. The only way to become a good a writer is to practice. You must carefully compose a report on a for-profit, not-for-profit, governmental, or community organization of your choosing. The organizational report is worth 200 points.

You will choose your organization (from a list I provide) and write a short topic paragraph by the fifth week of classes (Due on Friday, 9/16 by 5pm). Two drafts will be due before your final report is due—please pay attention to these deadlines on the course schedule. Your report must be both descriptive *and* analytic. The report should focus on characterizing the organization in terms of the primary theoretical and sociological aspects of organizations we've discussed in this course. That is, you *MUST* use course concepts (correctly and insightfully) when drafting your research report. Further details on the paper will be forthcoming and posted on Canvas.

Please address the following questions in your final report:

1. How did the organization get started and how has it changed since its founding?
2. What does the organizational structure look like? (include comments on complexity, formalization and centralization).
3. To what extent do the organization's internal characteristics illustrate rational systems (e.g., bureaucracy, scientific management)? Natural systems (e.g., informal relations, culture, power, how decisions are made)? Other? Explain your findings.
4. How would you characterize the relationship between the organization and its environment as an explanation for its internal characteristics?
5. In your research, have you discovered any issues involving conflict, ethics, deviance, inequality, and/or change that are useful for understanding the organization? If yes, briefly explain.
6. What are the effects of this particular organization on society (or its local context and environment, if society is too broad given the scope of the organization's operations)? In other words, what social outcomes does this organization produce?

Your final report should **be at least 2500 words long (not including appendix, tables and figures, references or notes)**, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins and 12 point font (with your name and M# on the upper right corner). A cover page is *not* needed. Please print on white paper and staple in the upper left corner.

You will be evaluated on your ability to compose a focused, well-organized, sociological report that is free from content (i.e., using concepts inaccurately) and stylistic errors (spelling, punctuation, grammar). In addition to formal citation techniques, you should indicate within the text of your report when documentation internal to the organization was used to draw your conclusions. Also, include at least two appendices:

Appendix A: A chart of the organizational structure
Appendix B: A brief account of your approach to collecting information on the organization and the organizational sources you used (e.g., website, year-end report, organizational members, etc.).

The final report is due December 2 by 5 pm on Canvas. Each student will also give a short (6-7 minutes) oral, powerpoint presentation on their report and findings during the 16th week.

Team Presentations/Debates: In the last half of the semester we will break the class up into teams to present and discuss certain articles, debates introduced in articles, and role-playing cases from the Harvard Business School. Details will be forthcoming about these assignments and participation in these activities will be part of your 100 points for presenting and participating in the course.

Exams: There will be three exams in the course. Each exam is worth 100. Exams will contain a mixture of short-answer and essay questions. Half of the exam questions will be based on the readings and half from class lectures. The final exam is cumulative, although more emphasis will be placed on the material covered since the second exam.

GRADING POLICY: Your final grade will be based on the quality of your performance with respect to the above responsibilities and assignments. The allocation of points for each set of responsibilities is as follows:

Exam 1	100	A	90%-100%	540-600 points
Exam 2	100	B	80%-89%	480-539 points
Exam 3	100	C	70%-79%	420-479 points
Debates/Presentations/Participation	100	D	60%-69%	360-419 points
Organizational Report and Pres.	200	E	< 60%	359 points or less
Total	**600**			

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Excessive absenteeism (more than 4 unexcused absences will result in the student's final letter grade being lowered one letter. Excused absences include personal illness or death of immediate family (documentation required) or other extraordinary personal circumstance (see MSU Undergraduate Bulletin for policies on other circumstances). It is the responsibility of the student to complete or make-up all work missed during an absence including all exams, quizzes, or other assignments. The student must make every attempt to make

arrangements with the instructor for making up work before the absence occurs and not after—if the student has no alternative but to make arrangements after the absence that must occur within a week after the absence. All make up work, including EXAMS, will be conducted during a time and on a schedule that the instructor establishes with the student.

If a student **MISSES MORE THAN ONE QUARTER** of the class periods during the semester they will receive an E for their final grade. Repeatedly arriving late for the course will not be accepted (unless there is a reasonable explanation). After being warned by the instructor each subsequent time s/he is late to class will amount to 10 points being deducted from that student's final grade.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT: MSU is an institution of HIGHER learning and the classroom should be maintained as a vital and vibrant learning space within our institution. The instructor will not tolerate: use of the internet; cell phone usage (including TEXTING); reading other course materials; sleeping; talking; whispering; wearing headphones; or engaging in any other disruptive behavior. If a student persists in any of these behaviors after being warned they will be asked to leave the classroom and will receive an unexcused absence for that class period.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT: Murray State University endorses the intent of all federal and state laws created to prohibit discrimination. Murray State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, veteran status, or disability in employment, admissions, or the provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities equal access to participate in all programs and activities.

For more information, contact the Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Diversity (IDEA), Equity and Access, 103 Wells Hall, (270) 809-3155 (voice), (270) 809-3361 (TDD).

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY: You are expected to adhere to the tenets of academic honesty articulated in the *MSU Undergraduate Bulletin*: Cheating, plagiarism (submitting another person's material as one's own), or doing work for another person which will receive academic credit are all impermissible. This includes the use of unauthorized books, notebooks, or other sources in order to secure or give help during an examination, the unauthorized copying of examinations, assignments, reports, or term papers, or the presentation of unacknowledged material as if it were the student's own work. Disciplinary action may be taken beyond the academic discipline administered by the faculty member who teachers the course in which the cheating took place.

CONTENT OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE: While the instructor intends to follow this outline there may be deviations from this schedule which will be announced in class and posted on Canvas. The additional required readings will be accessible through Canvas.

The Internal and External Dynamics of Organizations

Week 1: Introduction and Conceptual Foundations. *Readings*: Scott and Davis Ch 1

Week 2: Rational Systems. *Readings*: Scott and Davis Ch 2, Ritzer "McDonaldization of

Society" (selections), Varian, "An Ipod has global value" (New York Times).

Week 3: Natural Systems I: IR and HR and Culture. *Readings*: Scott and Davis Ch 3, Adler and Adler "Intense Loyalty", Barley "Itinerant Experts" (selections)

Week 4: Natural Systems II: Decision Making. *Readings*: Simon "The Psychology of Administrative Decisions" Lipsky "Street-Level Bureaucracy" (selections), Shirky "Here Comes Everybody" (selections)

***9/10 Field Trip: Briggs and Stratton (Meet to the right of the parking lot, visitor's parking, be there by 12:40, Mike is our contact)**

Week 5: Natural Systems III: Power and Politics. *Readings*: Pfeffer "Understanding the Role of Power"
9/17 *Film: Inside Job*
***Topic Paragraph for Org Report and Reference List due on Canvas (Due 9/16 at 5 pm)**

Week 6: Eagly "Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about how Women become leaders" (selections), Krantz "Web of Board members" (USA Today); Mayer "Covert Operations"

9/26 First Exam in Class (Short Answer and Essay)

Week 7: Open Systems I: Contingency, Institutions, & Ecology. *Readings*: Scott and Davis Ch 4, Brint and Karabel "Community Colleges", Lamb et al. "Informational Environments"

Week 8: Open Systems II: Networks and Strategy. *Readings*: Benkler "The Wealth of Networks" (Selections)**,** Byrd and Jasny "Transnational Movement Innovation and Collaboration", Ganz "David Sometimes Wins"

External Dynamics and Organizational Challenges

Conflict and Convergence. *Readings:* Morrill "Conflict Management", Van Maanen "Drinking our Troubles Away"

Week 9: Social Inequality and Dignity. *Readings:* Prokos and Padavic "There Oughtta Be a Law Against", Pager and Quillian "Walking the Walk", Arcury "Latino Farmworkers"

Week 10: Deviance. *Readings:* Jesilow et al "Prescription for Profit" (selection), Vaughan "Challenger Launch Decision" (Selections)

10/24 Columbia HBS Case

Week 11: 10/29 Second Exam in Class (Short answer and Essay)

10/31 Video: The Corporation

Week 12: Technology. *Readings:* Orlikowski "Duality of Technology"
Social Media Reading
Change and Alternative Organizations. *Readings:* Scott and Davis Chs 10 and 13, Rothschild-Witt "Collectivist organization"

At least 1500 word draft of organizational report due

Week 13: Finish Change and Alternative Organizations Start: Globalization and Sustainability. *Readings:* Gereffi "Commodity Chains", Polman "Crisis Caravan", Burt's Bees HBS Case

Week 14: Finish Globalization and Sustainability (Debate on Globalization; details forthcoming)

Week 15: Strain, Revolution, and Collapse. *Readings:* Diamond "Collapse" (Ch 14), Davis "Ecology of Fear" (Ch. 1) Arab Spring Readings (on Canvas), CDC Zombies Webpage
David DeVoss, MSU Director of Emergency Management

Organizational Reports due by Monday, 12/2, 5 pm on Canvas
Will distribute final exam on Monday

Week 16: Presentations 5-7 Minutes (Org reports), Review and wrap-up

Due 12/10: 5 pm Final Exam (Take-home essay, cumulative)