

SOC 1315
Organizations & Society
SPRING 2018

Instructor: Dan Hirschman

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Lecture Time and Location: 9:00am-10:20am Tuesdays & Thursdays, Room TBD

Office Hours: 1:00pm-3:00pm Thursdays, 209 Maxcy Hall (and by appointment)

TAs: TBA

Overview and Objectives

We live in a society of organizations. We are born inside organizations, we are educated inside organizations, we work inside organizations, and when we die, we will be buried by organizations. These organizations, in turn, are governed by another collection of organizations in the form of the state, and are pressured by organized social movements beyond the state. Organizations are the source of social problems from poverty to racial inequality to climate change, and yet they have the potential to ameliorate each of those problems.

In this course, we will endeavor to understand the organizations that comprise society by looking at how those organizations are shaped by their environments. Organizations' environments mainly consist of other organizations. For-profit firms are attentive to their competitors, their suppliers, their customers, and their regulators. Non-profits manage relationships with funders, from foundations to state granting agencies. Social movements routinely form enduring organizational infrastructures, and routinely target organizations. Universities grapple with accrediting bodies. Indeed, this very syllabus exists as an organizational artifact, with multiple purposes designed to serve multiple audiences — informing students of the plan of the course, while simultaneously assuring outside evaluators of the rigor of Brown's curriculum.

This course has three major units. In the first, shortest unit we will ask, *why* do we live in a society of organizations? This unit provides multiple perspectives from economics, sociology, and history that differentially emphasize efficiency, culture, power, and inertia. In the second unit, we will explore the major organizational theories that guide contemporary understandings of the relationships between organizations and their environments. Again, these theories place different weight on explanations that foreground the role of efficiency (or rationality), culture (or values), power (or politics), and inertia (or emergence). Finally, the third unit of the course will showcase how these theories combine to help us explain the relationship between organizations and society across a diverse array of problems, from law and regulation, to race and gender inequalities, to pollution and the natural environment.

This course is a natural complement to Sociology 1311, which focuses on individuals and groups acting inside organizations, though the two courses may be taken in any order.

Requirements

Attendance and Lateness: You are required to attend all lectures and sections. Your first unexcused lecture absence and your first unexcused section absence will not affect your grade. Further unexcused absences will affect your participation grade. Unexcused excessive lateness will be counted as an absence. Absences for religious observances are excused, as long as you notify your TA in advance, as are absences for illness (with a doctor's or Dean's note) or other personal or family emergencies (with a Dean's note).

Readings: This upper-level course carries a substantial reading load. You are expected to read all assigned material before coming to class. Lectures, discussions in section, and assignments will engage deeply with the readings.

Respect: There are many ways to interpret the course readings in class and many competing views on the topics we will discuss, and I hope we will debate many contrasting viewpoints. We will be covering issues relevant to current policy debates, including sensitive topics related to race, sex/gender, and class. To facilitate good discussion, please keep in mind that we are debating ideas, not each other as individuals. This type of debate might take the form of "I disagree" instead of "you are wrong." Please keep the difference in mind so that we can engage in useful and vigorous discussion!

Major Assignments: The course has three major assignments: two short (5-7pp) papers and an end-of-term exam. The papers are designed to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the material taught in class; you will not be required to do significant outside reading or research to complete them. Each paper will be due approximately one week after the assignment is distributed. The exam will take place during the designated final exam time. It will consist entirely of multiple choice questions and will cover material from the entire semester.

Time Expectations: Students should expect to devote approximately 180 hours to completing the work for this course. Attendance in class constitutes approximately 44 hours (25 lectures * 4/3 hours and 11 sections * 1 hour). Out-of-class activities — primarily course readings — should take approximately 91 hours total (7 hours per week * 13 weeks). The two paper assignments should take approximately 26 hours total (13 hours per paper * 2 papers). Studying and taking the final exam should take approximately 19 hours (two 8 hours days of studying plus the 3 hour exam).

Grading

Your grade has three components.

Lecture Attendance: 10%

Perfect attendance is worth 10% towards your final grade. For each unexcused lecture absence beyond the first, you receive 1% less towards your final grade.

Section Attendance & Participation: 15%

For details of section grading, see your section syllabus. Note that section will meet each week of term, including the first week, but excluding the slot between 7 and 8 (Long Weekend) and lectures 16 and 17, just before and after Spring Break.

Major Assignments: 75%

There are three major assignments. In order to prevent a single bad paper or exam from dramatically influencing your grade, we will “half-drop” your lowest grade. In practice, this means that two of the assignments will be worth 30% each, while the last assignment will be worth 15%. So, for example, if you received 100 on both papers, and a 40 on the exam, you would receive 66% towards your final grade ($100*30\%+100*30\%+40*15\%=66\%$).

Grade Appeals

Your papers and exam will be graded by your TA following standards determined jointly by myself and your TA. If you have a question about your grade, please consult one of us during office hours and we will be happy to provide a more detailed explanation and feedback to help you improve your work for future assignments or classes.

If you feel that an *error* has been made, you may appeal your grade to me within *one week* of receiving your grade. To appeal your grade, you must provide a written explanation of the error you believe has been made, and I will re-grade the assignment in consultation with your TA. Please be advised that there is no guarantee that I will raise your grade; in fact, it is possible that I may lower it. For this reason, you should appeal a grade as a last resort when you feel *certain* that you have been graded unfairly.

Administrative Issues

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable. Information on the University’s academic integrity policy is available [here](#). Any student who plagiarizes will fail the course and will receive any other sanctions imposed by the University.

Accommodations for Learning: Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact [Student and Employee Accessibility Services](#) (phone: 401-863-9588, email: SEAS@brown.edu). Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the Dean of the College office.

Email Policy: All course emails must contain “1315” in the subject line. Any email that does not contain 1315 in the subject may be marked as spam and deleted. Emails marked 1315 will be filtered properly. The TAs and I will try to respond to email within 24 hours during

the week. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, please send a follow-up email. Emails sent on Friday or during the weekend may be answered on the following Monday or Tuesday. We expect emails to be polite and professional.

Writing Expectations: The University has many resources to help you with your writing, starting with the [Writing Center](#). In addition, we are happy to offer feedback on the mechanics of writing a clear and well-argued paper. Finally, good writing is a habit. We will pay attention to your writing in each assignment as well as in our written communication such as emails. Emails don't require the same level of formality as a research paper, but we will expect a professional and polite tone, complete sentences, well-formulated thoughts, and so on.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Turn off your cell phone and store it during lecture. If you might need to receive a call during class for some reason, put your phone on vibrate and step out quietly as needed. Similarly, please store your laptop during class. Research shows that using a laptop during class impedes both your learning *and* the learning of students around you (see, e.g., [Sana et al. 2013](#), and [Dynarski 2017](#)). There will be pauses during each lecture where I will encourage you to check your devices. Otherwise, please refrain from using them.

We will designate one area of the lecture hall as a “laptops permitted” zone. Students may sit in this zone if they feel, for any reason, that you would benefit from using a laptop to take notes. Students using laptops or cellphones for purposes other than note taking will be asked to leave and be counted as absent for the class.

Required Texts

All of the readings will be available as pdfs on the course website. The list of readings is subject to change. In particular, I may assign topical short articles from newspapers, magazines, etc. to complement the more scholarly texts on the syllabus. I will give you at least one week's notice before altering or adding any required readings. We will discuss the required readings in both lecture and section. I recommend trying to read articles *before* the lecture with which they are associated, but you may find it useful to skim the articles before lecture and then read them more deeply before section. In addition, there will be a short packet of topical readings (primarily newspaper and magazine articles) associated with each of the paper assignments. Some readings, or portions of readings, are marked as recommended.

Course Outline

Unit 1: Why Organizations?

Lecture 1: Course Overview (1/25)

- Read the syllabus!

Section 1

Lecture 2: A Society of Organizations (1/30)

- Simon, Herbert A. 1991. "Organizations and Markets." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5(2):25-29 (required), 29-44 (recommended).
- Perrow, Charles. 1991. "A Society of Organizations." *Theory and Society* 20(6):725-62.

Lecture 3: Why Organizations? Efficiency! (2/1)

- Coase, Ronald. 1937. "The Nature of the Firm." *Economica* 4:386-405.
- Chandler, Alfred. 1977. "Introduction." Pp. 1-12 in *The Visible Hand*.

Section 2

Lecture 4: Why Organizations? Power, Culture, Inertia (2/6)

- Dunlavy, Colleen. 2004. "From Citizens to Plutocrats: Nineteenth-century Shareholder Voting Rights and Theories of the Corporation." Pp. 66-93 in *Constructing Corporate America*.
- Anderson, Elizabeth. 2017. "Private Government." Pp. 37-71 in *Private Government*.

Unit 2: Theoretical Approaches to Organizations & Society

Lecture 5: Efficiency (Agency Theory) (2/8)

- Jensen, Michael & William Meckling. 1976. "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure." *Journal of Financial Economics* 3:305-360. [Excerpt from Handel, pp. 269-275].

- Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. 1989. "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review." *The Academy of Management Review* 14(1):57-74.
- Desai, Mihir. 2017. "Capitalism the Apple Way vs. Capitalism the Google Way." *The Atlantic*.

Section 3

Lecture 6: Efficiency (Transaction Cost Economics) (2/13)

- Williamson, Oliver. 1981. "The Economics of Organization: The Transaction Cost Approach." *American Journal of Sociology* 87(3):548-77.

Lecture 7: Power (Resource Dependence) (2/15)

- Emerson, Richard M. 1962. "Power-Dependence Relations." *American Sociological Review* 27(1):31-41.
- Pfeffer, Jeffery. 1987. "A Resource Dependence Perspective on Intercorporate Relations." Pp. 25-55 in *Intercorporate Relations: The Structural Analysis of Business*.

No Section — Fall Weekend

Lecture 8: Power (Class and Corporate Control) (2/22)

- Glasberg, Davita and Michael Schwartz. 1983. "Ownership and Control of Corporations." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9(1):311-32.
- Mizruchi, Mark and Mikell Hyman. 2014. "Elite Fragmentation and the Decline of the United States." *Political Power and Social Theory* 26:147-185 (required), 185-195 (recommended).

Section 4

Lecture 9: Culture (Institutions, Fields, and Logics) (2/27)

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

- Tolbert, Pamela S. and Lynne G. Zucker. 1983. "Institutional Sources of Change in the Formal Structure of Organizations: The Diffusion of Civil Service Reform, 1880-1935." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28(1):22-39.

Lecture 10: Culture (Institutions, Myths, and Decoupling) (3/1)

- Meyer, John and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structures as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83(2):340-63.
- Binder, Amy. 2007. "For Love and Money: Organizations' Creative Responses to Multiple Environmental Logics." *Theory and Society* 36(6):547-71.

Section 5

Lecture 11: Inertia, Accident, & Emergence (Organizational Ecology) (3/6)

- Hannan, Michael T. and John Freeman. 1977. "The Population Ecology of Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(5):929-64.
- Rao, Hayagreeva. 2009. "Evange-Ale-ists and the Renaissance of Microbrewing." Pp. 43-68 In *Market Rebels*.

Lecture 12: Inertia, Accident, & Emergence (Path Dependence and Imprinting) (3/8)

- Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94(2):251-67.
- Johnson, Victoria. 2007. "What Is Organizational Imprinting? Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Founding of the Paris Opera." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):97-127.

Section 6

Paper 1 Distributed 3/9

Unit 3: Topics in Organizational Analysis

Lecture 13: Networks of Organizations (3/13)

- Scott, W. Richard and Gerald Davis. “Networks In and Around Organizations” Pp. 278-309 in *Organizations and Organizing*.
- Uzzi, Brian. 1996. “The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness for the Economic Performance of Organizations.” *American Sociological Review* 61:674-98.
- Healy, Kieran. 2013. “Using Metadata to Find Paul Revere.” *Slate*. Available at http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2013/06/prism_metadata_analysis_paul_revere_identified_by_his_connections_to_other.html

Lecture 14: Organizations as Networks (3/15)

- Powell, Walter W. 1990. “Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization.” *Research in Organizational Behavior* 12:295-336.
- Whitford, Josh and Francesco Zirpoli. 2016. “The Network Firm as a Political Coalition.” *Organization Studies* 37(9):1227-48.

Section 7

Paper 1 Due 3/16

Lecture 15: Categories and Evaluations (3/20)

- Espeland, Wendy Nelson and Michael Sauder. 2007. “Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds.” *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1):1-40.
- Hsu, Greta. 2006. “Jacks of All Trades and Masters of None: Audiences’ Reactions to Spanning Genres in Feature Film Production.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 51(3):420-450.

Lecture 16: Free Space (3/22)

- In-class discussion.

No Section — Spring Break

Lecture 17: Organizations and the Law (4/3)

- Edelman, Lauren B. and Mark C. Suchman. 1997. “The Legal Environments of Organizations.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:479-515.

Lecture 18: Organizations and Politics (4/5)

- Hacker, Jacob S. and Paul Pierson. 2010. “Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States.” *Politics & Society* 38(2):152-204.
- Funk, Russell J. and Daniel Hirschman. 2017. “Beyond Nonmarket Strategy: Market Actions As Corporate Political Activity.” *Academy of Management Review* 42(1):32-52.

Section 8

Lecture 19: Organizations and Inequality (4/10)

- Acker, Joan. 2006. “Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations.” *Gender & Society* 20(4):441-64.
- Cobb, J. Adam. 2016. “How Firms Shape Income Inequality: Stakeholder Power, Executive Decision Making, and the Structuring of Employment Relationships.” *Academy of Management Review* 41(2):324-48.

Lecture 20: Organizations and Race (4/12)

- Kelly, Erin and Frank Dobbin. 1998. “How Affirmative Action Became Diversity Management Employer Response to Antidiscrimination Law, 1961 to 1996.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 41(7):960-84.
- Berrey, Ellen. 2015. “Diversity is for White People.” *Slate*. Available at https://www.salon.com/2015/10/26/diversity_is_for_white_people_the_big_lie_behind_a_well_intended_word/
- Kalev, Alexandra. 2016. “How ‘Neutral’ Layoffs Disproportionately Affect Women and Minorities.” *Harvard Business Review*.
- Wooten, Melissa E. and Lucius Couloute. 2017. “The Production of Racial Inequality within and among Organizations.” *Sociology Compass* 11(1):1-10.

Section 9

Lecture 21: Organizations and Gender (4/17)

- Petersen, Trond and Laurie A. Morgan. 1995. "Separate and Unequal: Occupation-Establishment Sex Segregation and the Gender Wage Gap." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(2):329-65.
- Beckman, Christine M. and Damon J. Phillips. 2005. "Interorganizational Determinants of Promotion: Client Leadership and the Attainment of Women Attorneys." *American Sociological Review* 70(4):678-701.

Lecture 22: Social Movements and Organizations (4/19)

- Rojas, Fabio. 2006. "Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies." *Social Forces* 84(4):2147-66.
- McDonnell, Mary-Hunter and Brayden King. 2013. "Keeping up Appearances: Reputational Threat and Impression Management after Social Movement Boycotts." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 58(3):387-419.

Section 10

Paper 2 Distributed 4/20

Lecture 23: Organizations and the (Natural) Environment (4/24)

- Delmas, Magali A. and Michael Toffel. 2012. "Institutional Pressures and Organizational Characteristics: Implications for Environmental Strategy." Pp. 229-247 in *The Oxford Handbook of Business and the Natural Environment*.
- Wright, Christopher and Daniel Nyberg. 2017. "An Inconvenient Truth: How Organizations Translate Climate Change into Business as Usual." *Academy of Management Journal* 60(5):1633-61.

Lecture 24: After Organizations? (4/26)

- Davis, Gerald F. 2013. "After the Corporation." *Politics & Society* 41(2):283-308.

Section 11 (Note Reading Period Begins Here, Section Will Meet)

Paper 2 Due 4/27

Lecture 25: Final Exam Review (Optional) (5/1)

Final Exam Date TBD.