Course Focus

Organizational behavior is the study of how and why people do the things they do in organizational settings. The premise of this class is that understanding organizational behavior is central to technical work in modern organizations. Employees, managers, and leaders require more than technical skills to succeed. You must continually tap your knowledge of organizational behavior to accomplish your work and influence the work of others. Much of this knowledge is intuitive and, often, this is enough. But intuition can also be misleading. Moreover, without a language for our understandings and expectations of organizational behavior, it is often difficult to recognize, analyze, and develop strategies to deal with what can be very critical events in organizational life.

The intent of this course is to develop your ability to deal with issues of behavior (both yours and others') that are the result of the organizational context. Throughout, the concern is with developing your skills in understanding and using the ideas covered in this course, such as individual motivation, influence, creativity, power and politics, and organizational culture and leadership.

As such, the course goals are:
1. Learn the theoretical foundations—the language—of organizational behavior.
2. Develop the ability to recognize and analyze examples of individual, group, and organizational behavior.
3. Develop the skills to exploit this awareness of these organizational phenomena to guide your own professional decisions and actions.

Course Materials

MGT150 – Technology Management - Course Reader

Course Format

We will begin with a brief overview of organizations (e.g., what are they? why study them? why do they look the way they do?). Then we will look at issues of individual behavior in organizations. Over the length of the course, our focus will move gradually from the individual to how individuals interact in groups, to groups, and finally to the relationship between individuals, groups and the organization.
The course is concerned with understanding real-world phenomena. We will use cases, videos, and exercises to provide common experiences to discuss and interpret together. You are expected to take a high level of responsibility for your own learning and that of your peers. Reading assignments should be read in advance of class, and everyone is expected to participate in discussions. Lectures and exercises will build on the readings rather than review them, and you are ultimately responsible for topics covered in both the readings and the course lectures. In addition, you are encouraged throughout the lectures to draw on your own experiences to add to or test the applicability of the topics being discussed.

**Course Requirements**

**Short written assignments.** Throughout the class there will be a series of one page (750 words max.) written assignments. These assignments provide you with the opportunity to apply the ideas provided in the course to a concrete organizational situation. They are also intended to sharpen your ability to communicate in a limited space (roughly the length of a long e-mail). These papers will be graded on a scale of 1-10. The lowest grade of these papers will be dropped. Each assignment is due on the date marked in this course outline, before the class meets. Too avoid punishing those who finish the assignments on time, papers turned in late will be marked down 1 point for each day after the deadline that is submitted.

These assignments are not essays. Their purpose is to communicate your ideas to me as you would to your manager or others in an organization. You will be graded on the thoughtfulness of your answer, and how well you integrate ideas from the readings into that answer. When you use concepts from the course, identify them by the terms used in the readings, define them briefly, and explain how they apply in the context of your discussion. These writing assignments are short, and as a result they are often more difficult to write than longer papers. You will need to refine your ideas to remain both thoughtful and succinct. I encourage (and expect) you to print out, review, and edit drafts of your paper before handing in a final version. These assignments will make up 40% of your grade.

**Group project (paper and presentation).** This assignment is to be done in teams. The goal of this project is to identify an issue of organizational behavior in this organizational setting (for example, the problem of motivation within a fast-food restaurant) and make recommendations for dealing with that issue in that setting. You will present your findings in a professional quality presentation to the class at the end of the semester. You will also submit an executive summary that details your diagnosis and solutions for the problem. This project will constitute 40% of your grade.

**Class participation and citizenship.** Classes will entail discussion of the reading and materials presented in class, and many classes will also use films, cases, and exercises to trigger and guide discussion. Because much of the learning will result from these discussions, you are expected to be an active and civil participant in them. Class participation will account for 20% of your grade.
I use the following grade scheme to grade student participation in each class:

3: Excellent
2: Good
1: Satisfactory
0: Absent with cause and advance notification
-3: Absent without cause

Course Schedule

Monday, Jan 9th: Course Introduction and Theories of Motivation

Wednesday, Jan 18th: Influence

Assigned readings:
- Cialdini: “The Science of Persuasion”
- Case: “Lessons in exerting influence without authority”

Assignment due: Describe what happened in “Lessons in exerting influence without authority” and how Monica might have done better.

Monday, Jan 23rd: Decision-Making

Assigned readings:
- Mintzberg, Managerial Work: Analysis from Observation
- Eisenhardt, “Speed and Strategic Choice”
- Hammond, et. al, “Hidden Traps in Decision Making”

Assignment due: Describe a decision you’re facing in the near future. Using the readings, what possible traps might you fall into and how could you avoid them?

Monday, Jan 30th: Creativity in Organizations

Assigned readings:
- Simonton, “Creativity as Heroic”
- Hargadon & Sutton, “Building an Innovation Factory”
- Amabile, “How to Kill Creativity”

Assignment due: Describe an organizational setting that you have been in that either encouraged or discouraged creativity, the factors that contributed to this, and how being in this setting felt. Explain how this affected organizational or individual outcomes.
Monday, Feb 6th: The Individual and Groups in Organizational Settings

Group Status Reports

Assigned readings:
- Snyder, "Self-fulfilling Stereotypes"
- Hill, "Managing Your Team"
- Janis, "Groupthink"
- Case: "The Team that Wasn’t"

Assignment due: Describe why you believe the team in “The team that wasn’t” does or does not work. As Eric, what would you do next?

Monday, Feb 13th: Culture: Selection, Socialization, and Rewards

Assigned readings:
- Bowen et al., Hiring for the organization, not the job
- O’Reilly, “Corporations, culture, and commitment”
- Case: Insanity, Inc.

Assignment due: Describe how Trilogy elicits commitment from its employees. Do you believe this approach is sustainable in the long run?

Monday, Feb 27th: Diversity in Organizations

Assigned readings:
- Thomas and Ely, “Making differences matter”
- Case: Karen Leary

Assignment due: Describe how the problematic situation in “Karen Leary” came to happen and how Karen should now respond to Ted’s request for an office.

Monday, Mar 6th: Power and Politics

Assigned readings:
- Pfeffer, “Understanding power in organizations”
- Krackhardt and Hanson, “Informal networks”

Assignment due 5/26: Identify a powerful group on campus. Using the readings (as well as the concepts you learned from the section on influence), explain how it maintains its power.

Monday, Mar 13th: Final Presentations and Group papers due!