

**Research Issues PhD Seminar  
Organizational Theory  
Fall 2021 Course Outline  
TBA: meets once a week for three hours (1-4 pm)**

**Human Resources and Management Area  
DeGroot School of Business  
McMaster University**

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***COURSE OBJECTIVE***

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This seminar course provides an introduction to the core and emerging issues in organizational behaviour research. The objective of this course is to introduce graduate students to fundamental questions and theoretical approaches in the study of organizations. The readings are organized historically to capture the intellectual development of organizational theory and various shifts in emphasis: from workers to managers, from organizational processes to outputs, from studies of single organizations in their environments to studies of organizational populations and fields. The objectives of this course are to (1) provide students with an overview of selected theories in OB (focusing on Organization Theory), and (2) to develop students' abilities to critically assess and conduct research on OB and OT related topics.

This course will be conducted as a seminar. There will be six three-hour meetings. This format allows students to:

1. Test their understanding of theories and concepts presented in the readings.
2. Develop skills in communicating ideas, in developing and presenting arguments, in listening to and understanding others, and in challenging others' views in a way that advances everyone's understanding.
3. Learn to think independently and critically: you will need to be able to analyze the theoretical and methodological contributions and deficiencies of the articles that are being discussed. These skills will be useful to you when you conduct your own independent research.
4. Learn about scholarly ethics and field level expectations

In this course, the role of the professor will be to stimulate and guide student discussion. I will ask questions and encourage

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***INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION***

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**Dr. Benson Honig**

Professor  
bhonig@mcmaster.ca  
Office: DSB/407  
Office Hours: by appointment  
by appointment  
Tel: (905) 525-9140 x23943

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***COURSE DESCRIPTION***

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This half of the seminar focuses on the theoretical foundations necessary for advanced research in organizational theory (OT). Key theories and models will be discussed and contrasted, and empirical support examined. Students will undertake in-depth and critical analyses of the relevant literature, focusing in particular on recent reviews and primary studies published in the top journals in the fields. The overall objectives of this seminar are to provide a fundamental understanding of theoretical frameworks in the OT fields and to develop their abilities to critically assess and conduct research.

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***LEARNING OUTCOMES***

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1. Develop a clear and critical understanding of the core theories and concepts, and their empirical foundations, that are presented in the readings.
2. Develop skills in communicating ideas, in developing and presenting arguments, in listening to and understanding others, and in challenging others' views in a way that advances everyone's understanding.
3. Learn to think independently and critically: students will need to be able to analyze the theoretical and methodological contributions and deficiencies of the articles that are being discussed. These skills will be useful for conducting independent research.

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***COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS***

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***EVALUATION***

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## Components and Weights

There are three graded components to this part of the course. Students' grades will be calculated as follows:

Weekly Summaries	25%
Final Paper	50%
Class Participation including leading two individual class presentations	25%
Total	100%

### **Conversion**

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme.

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90 – 100
A	11	85 – 89
A-	10	80 – 84
B+	9	77 – 79
B	8	73 – 76
B-	7	70 – 72
F	0	69 and under

### ***Four One-Page Reports each week (4 articles x 6 weeks= 25%)***

Each week, there are various chapters and empirical articles. I would like you to summarize four articles each week, those with the asterisk (\*) indicating they are for summary (if there are 5, choose 4, but all five must be covered by one or another class student). In addition, you will be required to read the additional chapters and short articles assigned, but not to write summaries on them.

For the summaries, please write a one page (single spaced, 1" margins, 12-point Times New Roman font, name and student number can go in a header) summary of each article/chapter, where you answer the following questions: (1) what is the article saying? (2) what do I agree with? (3) what do I disagree with? (4) what else should the author(s) have included? (5) what is my overall assessment?

All work must be completed independently. Each week's article summaries should be submitted to me **via email on the Friday before our Monday class**, according to the order of the class schedule. Late

assignments will not be accepted.

### ***Final Project (50%)***

Your paper (double spaced, 1” margins, 12-point Times New Roman font, title page with name and student number, maximum 40 pages including references) will consist of a research proposal for an interesting topic focussing on organization theory. The paper will review the existing literature, provide theoretical justifications for the hypotheses, and describe how these hypotheses would be tested. That is, students will be writing a standard research article except that the data will not have yet been collected (therefore there will be no results or discussion section).

I am flexible about your choice of topics (e.g., you might like to choose something related to your dissertation), but you should discuss your choice with me before beginning your project. You are not required to choose a topic that we have discussed in class, although I expect you to choose a macro- or meso-level topic that incorporates at least one of the theoretical paradigms introduced in this course.

This paper is due exactly two weeks after our final class meeting. No extensions are available except under extraordinary circumstances.

### ***Participation (25%)***

Each week, one student will also be asked to present one of the empirical, methodological, or theoretical **non-asterisked** papers presented. Two different students will also lead a discussion of two different **asterisked articles** (so, each student will lead approximately two asterisked articles and one non asterisked article during the six week period).

All students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of the course material, verbally, in class. Generally, you should err on the side of participating more than you would ordinarily. Your comments and questions are welcome, will not be judged, and help to make the entire course more interesting and enjoyable for everyone. There is no penalty for being “wrong” but there is a (small) penalty for being silent.

Professional academic demeanour is mandatory at all times. Academic discourse requires that opinions be expressed honestly, but professionalism requires that these opinions also be expressed respectfully. Behaviours or comments that would be inappropriate in a conference or classroom setting are also inappropriate in our seminar.

If you are wondering if your participation is adequate, send me an email or come to my office and I will provide an estimate of your anticipated participation grade for the semester.

For each class, you should read all the assigned book chapters and articles. If you are not already familiar with the topics being covered, then you may find it useful to read an introductory textbook in organizational behaviour. I can lend you an OB textbook if you do not already have one.

Please review the Graduate Examinations Policy (if applicable):

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/GradExamsPolicy.pdf>

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## ***ACADEMIC INTEGRITY***

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You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at:

[www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

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## ***MISSED ACADEMIC WORK***

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Late assignments will not be accepted. No extensions are available except under extraordinary circumstances. Please discuss any extenuating situation with your instructor at the earliest possible opportunity.

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## ***STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES***

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Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca).

For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

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### ***ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)***

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Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request, including the dates/times needing to be accommodated and the courses which will be impacted, to their Program Office normally within 10 days of the beginning of term. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

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### ***POTENTIAL MODIFICATION TO THE COURSE***

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The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. There may be changes to the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

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### ***COURSE SCHEDULE***

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**READING LIST**

SESSION AND TOPIC	ARTICLES
<p><b>Week 7</b> <b>Classics in organization and management theory: Post 1950's</b></p> <p><b>Ethics in Management Scholarship (1) One student to lead the Honig et al discussion but all students must read the article</b></p>	<p>Chapters</p> <p>Luker, K. (2008). What's it all about? In Kristen Luker, <i>Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences, Research in an age of Info-Glut</i>. Boston, Harvard Univ. Press, pp22-39.</p> <p>Scott &amp; Davis (2007) <i>Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems?</i> Chapters. 1-5, pp. 1-123.</p> <p>*Steinbruner, J. 1974. <i>cybernetic theory of decision making</i>. Princeton Univ. Press. Chapter3 <i>The Cybernetic Paradigm</i>. Pp. 47-87</p> <p>*Cyert, R. M., &amp; March, J. G. 1992 (Originally published 1963). <i>A behavioural theory of the firm</i>. Oxford: Blackwell publishers. Chapters 2-3.</p> <p>*Sewell Jr., William H. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 98: 1-29.</p> <p>Cyert, R, Feigenbaum, E. March, J. 1959. <i>Models in a Behavioral Theory of the Firm</i>, <i>Behavioral Science</i>, vol. 4, no 2.</p> <p>*March, J. 1977. <i>Bounded rationality, ambiguity, and the engineering of choice</i>. <i>Bell Journal of Economics</i>, Vol. 9 no.2.</p> <p><b>Ethics in Management Scholarship</b></p> <p>*Honig,B; Lampel,J; Baum,J; Glynn,MA; Jing,R; Llounsbury,M; Schubler,E; Sirmon,D; Tsui,A; Walsh, J; Witteloostuijn,A. (2018). <i>Reflections on scientific misconduct in management. Academy of Management Perspectives</i>. Vol. 32, No. 4, 1–31.</p>
<p><b>Week 8</b> <b>Social construction and organizational change.</b></p>	<p><b>Chapters</b></p> <p>Weick (1995) <i>Sensemaking in Organizations</i>, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Chapters 1&amp;2, pp. 1-62</p> <p>*Weick (1993) "The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster," <i>ASQ</i>, 38: 628-652.</p> <p>*Barley (1986) <i>Technology as an occasion for structuring,</i>? <i>ASQ</i>, 31: 78-108.</p>

	<p>Weick, Sutcliffe &amp; Obstfeld (2005) Organizing and the Process of Sensemaking. <i>Org. Sci.</i> 16, 4: 409-421.</p> <p><b>Podcast</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/484359511/frame-of-reference">http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/484359511/frame-of-reference</a></p> <p><b>Organizational Change</b></p> <p>*Powell, Walter W. 1990. Neither Market Nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization.” <i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i> 12: 295-336.</p> <p>*Hargadon, A., &amp; Douglass, Y. 2001. When innovations meet institutions: Edison and the design of the electric light. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 46 (3): 476-501.</p>
<p><b>Week 9</b> <b>Institutional Theory</b></p>	<p>Battilana, J., &amp; Dorado, S. 2010 Building sustainable hybrid organizations: The case of commercial microfinance organizations. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 53(6), 1419-1440</p> <p>Greenwood, R., Raynard, M., Kodieh, F., Micelotta, E.R. &amp; Lounsbury, M. 2011. Institutional Complexity and Organizational Responses. <i>Academy of Management Annals</i>, 5: 317-371.(40 pp)</p> <p>Mizruchi, M.S., Fein, L.C., 1999. The social construction of organizational knowledge: a study of the uses of coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>. 44, 653-683.</p> <p>*DiMaggio, P., &amp; Powell, W. 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 48, April: 147-160.</p> <p>*Meyer, J., &amp; Rowan, B. 1977. Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 83: 340-363.</p> <p>*Oliver, C. 1991. Strategic responses to institutional processes. <i>Academy of Management Review</i> 16 (1), 145-179.</p> <p>*Honig, B, Karlsson, T. (2004). Institutional forces and the written business plan. <i>Journal of Management</i> 30(1) 29-48</p>

<p><b>Week 10</b> <b>Contingency theory and Legitimacy.</b></p>	<p><b>Chapters</b> Scott, Organizations as open systems. Chapter 4</p> <p>*Steinbach, A. L., Holcomb, T. R., Holmes Jr, R. M., Devers, C. E., &amp; Cannella Jr, A. A. (2017). Top management team incentive heterogeneity, strategic investment behavior, and performance: A contingency theory of incentive alignment. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i>, 38(8), 1701-1720.</p> <p>Schoonhoven, C.B. 1981. Problems with contingency theory: Testing assumptions hidden within the language of contingency theory. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 349-377.</p> <p><b>LEGITIMACY</b></p> <p>*Abrahamson, E, Fairchild, G. 1999. Management fashion: Lifecycles triggers and collective learning processes. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, vol44:no4pp 708-740.</p> <p>Bolazni, D; Marabello, S.,Honig, B. (2020). Exploring the multi-level processes of legitimacy in transnational social enterprises. <i>Journal of Business Venturing</i> 35 (3)</p> <p>Suchman, M.C. 1995. Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 20:571-610.</p> <p>Suddaby, R. and R. Greenwood. 2005. Rhetorical strategies of legitimacy. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>. 50 (March):35-67</p> <p>*Drori, I and Honig, B (2013) A Process Model of Internal and External Legitimacy. <i>Organization Studies</i>. 34: 345-376</p> <p>*Aldrich, H &amp; Fiol, M .1994. Fools rush in? The institutional context of industry creation. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 19:645-670</p> <p>*Zimmerman, M.A., Zeitz, G.J., 2002. Beyond Survival: Achieving New Venture Growth by Building Legitimacy. <i>Academy of Management Review</i> 27 (3), 414-431.</p>
<p><b>Week 11</b> <b>Population Ecology</b></p> <p><b>Ethics in Management Scholarship (2) One student to lead the</b></p>	<p><b>Chapters</b></p> <p>Aldrich &amp; Ruef (2006) "Organizations Evolving," Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, chapters 2-3, pp 200</p> <p>Baum &amp; Shipilov (2006) Ecological Approaches to Organizations in Clegg et al (eds) <i>Handbook of Org Studies</i>. Sage: 55-109.</p>

<p><b>Schminke Discussion but all students must read these short articles.</b></p>	<p>Dobrev, S.D., Kim, T.Y., &amp; Carroll, G.R. 2003. Shifting gears, shifting niches: Organizational inertia and change in the evolution of the U.S. automobile industry, 1885-1981. <i>Organization Science</i>, 14: 264-282.</p> <p>*Hannan &amp; Freeman (1977) "The Population Ecology of Organizations," <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 82, 5: 929-964.</p> <p>*Mezias, S.J. &amp; Boyle, E. 2005. Blind Trust: Market Control, Legal Environments, and the Dynamics of Competitive Intensity in the Early American Film Industry, 1893–1920. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 50(1): 1-34.</p> <p>* Morin, J. F. (2020). Concentration despite competition: The organizational ecology of technical assistance providers. <i>The Review of International Organizations</i>, 15(1), 75-107.</p> <p>*Carroll, G. and Swaminathan, A. 2000. “Why the Microbrewery Movement? Organizational Dynamics of Resource Partitioning in the US Brewing Industry.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 106:715-762</p> <p>Sorensen, J. "The Ecology of Organizational Demography: Managerial Tenure Distributions and Organizational Competition." <i>Industrial and Corporate Change</i> 8 (1999): 713-744.</p> <p>Schminke, M., &amp; Ambrose, M. (2014). Retraction statement for ‘Ethics and Integrity of the Publishing Process: Myths, Facts, and a Roadmap’ by Marshall Schminke and Maureen L. Ambrose. <i>Management and Organization Review</i>, 10(1), 157-162.</p> <p>Schminke, M. 2009. Editor’s comments: The better angels of our nature – Ethics and integrity in publishing process. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 34(4): 586–591.</p> <p>Schminke, M., &amp; Ambrose, M. L. 2011. Ethics and integrity in the publishing process: Myths, facts, and a roadmap. <i>Management and Organization Review</i>, 7(3): 397–406. (Retracted) (above two articles can be found here): <a href="http://www.iacmr.org/v2en/Publications/MOR/Schminke_AMR_2009.pdf">www.iacmr.org/v2en/Publications/MOR/Schminke_AMR_2009.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.iacmr.org/v2en/Publications/MOR/SchminkeAmbrose_MOR_2011.pdf">www.iacmr.org/v2en/Publications/MOR/SchminkeAmbrose_MOR_2011.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Week 12 Trust, Social Capital,</b></p>	<p>Burt, Ronald S. 1992. <i>Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition</i>. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. Pages 1-49</p> <p>Gulati, Ranjay and Martin Gargiulo. 1999. "Where Do Interorganizational Networks Come From?" <i>The American Journal of Sociology</i> 104:1439 - 1493.</p>

	<p>*Granovetter , M. 1973. . The Strength of Weak Ties The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78, No. 6. pp. 1360-1380</p> <p>*Nahapiet, J., Ghoshal, S., 1998. Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. <i>Academy of Management Review</i> 23(2):242-266.</p> <p>*Coleman, J., 1988. Social capital in the creation of human capital. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 94(S):S95-S120.</p> <p>*Davidsson, P, Honig, B. (2003) The role of social and human capital among nascent entrepreneurs, <i>Journal of Business Venturing</i> 18(3): 301-331</p>
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