

# **Sociology 632: Sociology of Organizations**

Spring 2002

Tuesday, Thursday 2:30-3:45

Prof. Michael J. Handel

3462 Social Science

phone 262-9510

mhandel@ssc.wisc.edu

This is a survey course in the sociology of organizations and is intended for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. The field of organizations has grown to be a large, multidisciplinary pursuit, drawing researchers from psychology, political science, and management schools, as well as sociology. A single course cannot hope to cover all of the important developments, but this course provides a solid introduction to most of the topics central to the sociological understanding of organizations. Students from other fields, such as economics, political science, and business may also find this course relevant.

The readings represent a wide range of topics and viewpoints. Some are related to management theory, others are critical of existing organizations and the power they wield, and many fit into neither of these categories. However, almost all the works included here are considered by most people to be central to the field of organization studies.

## **Assignments:**

To cover the breadth of material in this course requires a fair amount of reading, but most of the reading assignments are not difficult. The readings will be from a manuscript version of my forthcoming anthology, The Sociology of Organizations: Classic, Contemporary, and Critical Readings. Each topic in the course will include an introduction that provides background and primary source readings. The readings will be available on e-reserve at <http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/SocialSciRef/eres.htm>.

To keep readings as concise as possible, many are selections from larger works. This means that some of the readings might not have the kind of context you have when an entire work is assigned. Don't be overly concerned if you feel you've "landed in the middle" of the story in these cases. Just try to take in as much as you can. I will give a brief background to the

readings in the prior class, which hopefully will minimize this problem. Students are expected to complete the reading prior to the class in which it is discussed.

Study questions will be distributed prior to class to help guide your reading of the material for the next class. Students should be prepared to discuss their understanding of these concepts in class.

This class will have a mid-term and a final exam. The exams will be mostly short answer questions that should demonstrate understanding of the central points of the readings.

### **Course Requirements:**

Students are expected to have read all assigned materials before class. Attendance at lectures is mandatory. The lectures will not only explain the readings and clarify questions you may have but also place the works in context and offer additional observations and critiques of the assigned materials. **Attending the lectures will almost certainly help you understand the week's readings and do better on the exams.**

Grades will be based on the mid-term (30%), final (60%), and class participation (10%).

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Topic 1—Introduction, definitions, scope**

- The place of organizations in society
- Defining organizations and their purposes
- Overview of theories of organizations

#### **Topic 2—Rational theories of organization—Classic theories**

##### **A. Classic Statements on Organization and Management**

Max Weber, "Legitimate Authority and Bureaucracy" (1924)

##### **Critique**

Robert K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Personality and Structure" (1957)

**Study Questions:**

- What are three of the most significant characteristics of modern bureaucracy according to Weber?
- How does this differ from traditional and charismatic forms of authority?
- Why is bureaucracy efficient, according to Weber, and in some ways inefficient, according to Merton?

**B. Scientific Management and the Treatment of Labor**

Frederick W. Taylor, "The Principles of Scientific Management" (1916)

**Critique**

"The Lordstown Auto Workers"

Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (1974)

**Study Questions:**

- What are the main differences between Taylor's philosophy of Scientific Management and the system that was previously in place?
- What is time and motion study, restriction of output, and rate cutting?
- What are Braverman's criticisms of Scientific Management?

**Topic 3—Empirical research on bureaucracy: Contingency theories of organizational structure**

Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker, "Mechanistic and Organic Structures" (1963)

Joan Woodward, "Technology and Organization" (1965)

D.S. Pugh, "Does Context Determine Form?" (1973)

**Study Questions:**

- What are the main differences mechanistic and organic organizations and under what circumstances is each most efficient (Burns and Stalker)?

- What are the three main kinds of technological systems discussed by Woodward and what are their implications for organizational structure?
- What does Pugh believe is the most important condition affecting organizational structure?

## **Topic 4—Organizations as human and social systems**

### **A. Human Relations**

George C. Homans, “The Western Electric Researches” (1941)

Dana Bramel and Ronald Friend, "Hawthorne, the Myth of the Docile Worker, and Class Bias in Psychology" (1981)

### **B. Humanistic Management**

Douglas McGregor, “The Human Side of Enterprise” (1957)

Richard Walton, “From Control to Commitment in the Workplace” (1985)

Laurie Graham, “Inside a Japanese Transplant: A Critical Perspective” (1993)

### **C. Informal Organization**

Melville Dalton, “Conflicts Between Staff and Line Managerial Officers” (1950)

Robert Jackall, “The Social Structure of Managerial Work” (from Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers, 1989)

## **Topic 5—Decision Making Theory**

Henry Mintzberg, “The Manager’s Job: Folklore and Fact” (1975)

Barry M. Staw and Jerry Ross, “Understanding Behavior in Escalation Situations” (1989)

Craig S. Galbraith, "The Politics of Forecasting: Managing the Truth," California Management Review, (1996)

## **Topic 6—Organizations and Power**

Robert Michels, "Oligarchy" (1915)

Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik, The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective (selections, 1978)

## **Topic 7—Organizations and their Environments—Institutional Theory**

Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields" (1983)

Barry M. Staw and Lisa D. Epstein, "What Bandwagons Bring: Effects of Popular Management Techniques on Corporate Performance, Reputation, and CEO Pay" (2000)

## **Topic 8—Organizations and their Environments—Population Ecology**

Glenn R. Carroll and Michael T. Hannan, The Demography of Corporations and Industries (selections) (2000)

## **Topic 9—Economic Theories of Organizations**

Oliver Williamson, "The Economics of Organization: The Transaction Cost Approach" (1981)

Charles Perrow, "Markets, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (1981)

## **Topic 10—Modern Business Organizations: From Big Business to Post-Fordism**

### **A. Alfred Chandler's Account of the Rise of Big Business**

Alfred D. Chandler, "The Emergence of Managerial Capitalism" (1984)

**B. Theories of Post-Bureaucratic and Post-fordist Alternatives to Big Business**

Michael Storper, The Regional World (1997) (selections)

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “The Future of Bureaucracy and Hierarchy in Organizational Theory: A Report from the Field” (1991)

**Critique**

Bennett Harrison, Lean and Mean (Chapter 1 and 5, 1994)

**Topic 11—Organizational Culture**

Gideon Kunda, Engineering Culture (selections) (1992)

**Topic 12—Gender and Race in Organizations**

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “Numbers: Minorities and Majorities” (from Men and Women of the Corporation, 1977)

Sharon Collins, “Black Mobility in White Corporations” (1997)

**Topic 13—Emotions in Organizations—The Case of Women and Gays in the Military**

Carol Burke, “Military Folk Culture” (1999)

New York Times articles (1999, 2000)

Charles Moskos Jr. “From Citizen’s Army to Social Laboratory” (1993)

Laura Miller, “Fighting for a Just Cause: Soldier’s Views on Gays in the Military” (1993)

Lawrence Korb, “Evolving Perspectives on the Military’s Policy on Homosexuals: A Personal Note” (1993)

**Topic 14—The Impact of Organizations on the Structure of Society**

### **A. Social Class and Stratification**

Richard Edwards “Preface,” “Three Faces from the Hidden Abode,” and “Labor Redivided, Part I: Segmented Labor Markets” (from Contested Terrain, 1979)

### **B. Organizational Power and Politics**

David Vogel, Fluctuating Fortune: The Political Power of Business in America (1989)  
(selections)

Aldon Morris, "Black Southern Student Sit-in Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization,"  
American Sociological Review (1981)

### **C. Organizational Deviance**

Kermit Vandivier, "Why Should My Conscience Bother Me?"

Joseph L Badaracco, Jr., "Business Ethics: A View From the Trenches," California Management Review (1995)

## **Topic 15—Alternatives to Capitalist Bureaucracy**

### **A. Cooperatives and Employee Ownership**

Joyce Rothschild-Whitt, “The Collectivist Organization: An Alternative to Rational-Bureaucratic Models” (1979)

Lue Allen, “WORT at Peace” (2000)

William Foote Whyte, Joseph Blasi, and Douglas Kruse, “Worker Ownership, Participation, and Control: Toward a Theoretical Model” (2001)

“Divided, an Airline Stumbles” (2001)

Edward Greenberg, “The Plywood Cooperatives” (1986)

### **B. Non-profits and Government Human Services**

Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy (1980) (selections)

