BUS 733: Organizational Theory
Goizueta Business School
Emory University
Spring 2010

Chris Rider
Assistant Professor of Organization & Management
GBS 557
Chris_Rider@bus.emory.edu

Class Meeting Times: Tuesday @ 9:30am-12:30pm in W523
Office Hours: by appointment

OVERVIEW

This course is a research seminar in organizational theory. The course objective is to introduce students to the sociological study of organizations, with a particular emphasis on market-based settings. Readings will be drawn primarily from sociology but will also draw from other disciplinary journals. To appreciate the objectives and contributions of organizational research one must develop familiarity with how organizational theory – and its various constituent theories and paradigms – evolved over time. Therefore, we will read and discuss both classic and contemporary work on organizations, their individual members, and the markets in which organizations participate. Seminar discussions will focus on core theoretical propositions, logical reasoning, research design, standards of evidence, and the interpretation of empirical analyses. Students will develop an understanding of how organization theory developed as a series of scholarly responses to previous organizational research and an appreciation for how the problems that interested early organizational scholars continue to challenge present-day researchers. Much like the field itself, the course will increasingly focus on empirical research (both qualitative and quantitative) over time. Students should complete the course with an understanding of how to identify empirical settings and formulate research designs that lead to credible inferences about organizational theories.

FORMAT

Because this is a seminar course, there will be no lectures and each session will focus on discussion of assigned readings. Students will read all required readings prior to class so that our discussion may focus on the main ideas of readings and a critical evaluation of their contributions to organization theory. I will occasionally assign individuals specific responsibilities for leading our in-class discussion of certain articles or topics.
REQUIREMENTS

Students will be expected to attend and participate in each session by reading all assigned materials and actively engaging in our discussions. In addition, graded assignments will require students to develop theoretical arguments and research designs for testing those arguments in the form of two short (3-5 pages) research idea papers. The goal is to identify research ideas that, with refinement and substantial effort, may one day become research papers, dissertation chapters, and, hopefully, published articles. Consistent with this goal, the final assignment for this course will be a paper that (i) develops a theoretical argument with testable hypotheses, (ii) identifies a setting in which those arguments may be tested, and (iii) outlines a research design that is likely to produce credible inferences related to the theory. This paper may be thought of as the first half of a journal article (i.e., 20-30 pages in length and covering all but empirical analyses and results).

GRADES

30% class participation
30% research idea papers (2 @ 15% each)
40% final paper

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Research idea papers (2)
   
   - The first paper is due on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 and the second is due on Tuesday, April 13, 2010. Papers should be 3 to 5 pages in length.
   
   - These papers should specify a research question that is motivated by identification of a gap in the existing organizational literature and/or tension between prevailing theories. A brief theory should lead to at least one formal hypothesis that could be tested to “fill the gap” or “ease the tension.” A brief discussion of ways to test the hypothesis should also be included.

2. Final paper
   
   - All students must submit a 1-page description of the paper they intend to write by Tuesday February 23, 2010. This document should specify a research question that is motivated by organizational theory and situated in a relevant literature. It should also be possible for a doctoral student to conduct an empirical study (qualitative or quantitative) to test the theory and hypotheses the student expects to develop in the final version of the paper. We will then schedule individual appointments to discuss.
   
   - This assignment may take two forms: (i) the front end of a research paper or dissertation proposal or (ii) a full research paper with data and analyses. All papers should contain a title page, introduction, a theory development section, formal
hypotheses, a discussion of an appropriate setting for testing the hypotheses, and references. The difference between (i) and (ii) is that (ii) will also include empirical analyses section, results, and a concluding discussion section. I expect documents of 20 to 50 pages.

- The final paper is due **Monday, May 3, 2010**.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Students are expected to read each assigned reading for every session. Readings marked with bullet points (*) below will receive primary emphasis in class discussions; readings marked with check marks (✓) will also be discussed in class but their emphasis is secondary. All assigned readings should be read; primary readings should be read more thoroughly than secondary readings. Generally, primary readings cover the foundational theoretical basis for each session while secondary readings offer empirical examples or theoretical extensions of research in the area.

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*more details on the pages that follow*
Foundations of Organizational Theory

Session 1: Introduction


Session 2: Formal Organization

Session 3: Informal Organization


Contemporary Theories

Session 4: Economic Theories of Organizations


Session 5: Resource Dependence


Session 6: Ecology

Session 7: Institutional Theory


Session 8: Embeddedness

Individuals in Organizations

Session 9: Intra-organizational Power and Influence


Session 10: Work and Careers

Organizations in Markets

Session 11: Labor Markets


Session 12: Organizational Misconduct

Session 13: Entrepreneurship


Studying Organizations

Session 14: Appropriate Research Designs

AN *INCOMPLETE* LIST OF ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR ENTHUSIASTS

Organized Loosely By Topic and Alphabetically by Author

**Sociology of Markets**


**Economic Theories of Organizations**


**Power & Influence**


**Embeddedness & Networks**


**Status**


Entrepreneurship


**Work, Careers & Labor Markets**


Ecology


