The course provides an overview of contemporary approaches to theorizing about organizations and their environments. Its objective is to introduce students to the main theoretical perspectives rather than to how certain issues or problems (e.g. organizational identity or innovation) are covered in current scholarship. It seeks to equip students with the tools to evaluate the perspectives and their application in contemporary organizational studies: their strengths and weaknesses, and their underlying assumptions. Students will learn to systematically describe, compare and constructively assess each OT perspective. Readings are selected to provide a snapshot of a school of thought: its origins, new directions and applications. Theoretical works will demonstrate the key ideas and development in the given school, while research papers will illustrate how underlying assumptions drive the research design.

**REQUIRED TEXT**

The required readings are kept to a minimum to allow ample time for evaluating each perspective and for establishing connections between schools of thought. Most readings are posted to Blackboard or put on reserve in Dewey Library. Select books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore or Mary Jane’s Books.

**COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS**

The course is designed as a seminar involving class discussion, student presentations and mini-lectures. You can most effectively contribute to our collective intellectual project if you assign ample time to reading and to formulating your assessment of the readings before you come to class. Expect to spend at least 6-8 hours a week on preparation (2 hours of preparation per 1 hour of class). Preparation means reading the required papers and completing the Theory Assessment Form.

**Participation and Attendance.** Active participation in class discussions is required. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Class discussion will be structured around key questions to assess and compare the theoretical perspectives. The Theory Assessment Form will guide your preparation for class discussion.

You should attend all classes, including the first class of the semester; regular attendance is necessary for your success in this course, since our in-class discussions will reference theories from previous weeks. If you cannot attend a class, you will be required to do extra work on the assigned material. You can miss one class without being penalized and without providing documentation. You can miss a second class without being penalized if you provide documentation for your absence (a doctor’s note or a letter from the Dean).
Absences will only be excused under certain circumstances such as religious observance or unplanned health emergencies. If you miss more than 2 classes, your default participation grade will be B (or less, depending on your performance). If you miss more than 3 classes, the instructor reserves the right to drop you from the course and a notation will be placed on the transcript indicating you stopped attending class.

**Theory Assessment Forms.** Each week of OT schools students are required to complete a Theory Assessment Form, due on Blackboard by 7 am on Tuesdays. These reports should follow the conventions of academic writing but need not to have an essay format.

**Leading Class Discussion.** Students need to take “ownership” of one discussion session on a theoretical perspective of their choice. Discussion leaders need to meet with me at least a week before their session to select and discuss supplementary readings, which they will summarize and evaluate for the rest of the course participants. Discussion leaders will have to prepare a handout and a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes their key arguments.

**Final paper.** You are required to write a 15-page final paper in which more than one perspective of organizational theory are applied to a research question or problem of your choice. Papers should incorporate organization theories covered in the course. The objective of the paper is to deepen your understanding of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of each school of thought and how each can contribute to the understanding of the organizational world. Further guidelines will be distributed mid-semester. You are asked to make a short presentation on your final paper during the last session. The final paper is due by 12 pm December 16 on Blackboard and a hard copy in my mailbox in the Milne mailroom. No submissions are accepted by email.

**GRADING**
Students’ final grades are determined by a weighted average of the grade points earned in four performance areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Theory Assessment Forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Leading class discussion (including handout and presentations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
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</table>

I do not grade on a curve. You will receive a letter grade that matches your performance throughout the course and is based on a scale of 10-point intervals (e.g. A = 90-100). A grade of A reflects mastery of the material, with a strong and successful effort to think creatively about and go beyond the assigned material. A grade of B reflects a good, comprehensive awareness of the assigned material. A grade of C reflects knowledge of much of the material, but relatively weak preparation of a substantial share of it, and/or deficient preparation of written work. A grade of less than C reflects major gaps in knowledge or persistent lack of performance in the various aspects of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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**POLICY ON GRADE APPEALS.** Students may appeal a grade on a specific assignment within two weeks of the assignment being returned. If a student has a grade dispute, they should return the original graded assignment and submit a one-page memo to the instructor presenting evidence for their case. In the appeal, you must identify 1) the specific issue you believe should be reconsidered, and 2) evidence from assignment
instructions, assigned readings, lectures, or other materials that would support why your assignment deserves a higher grade. The instructor will review and re-grade the original assignment. This review can create a grade increase, but may also create a grade decrease based on the new overall evaluation.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY. Late assignments will be penalized by being marked down one letter grade or equivalent point grade each day they are late, except under extraordinary circumstances when the instructor has given advance permission. You cannot take an incomplete for this course.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY
Any forms of academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions) will be penalized with a combination of the following: grade reduction or failing grade for the assignment, and revision and re-submission of the assignment; grade reduction or failing grade for the course, referral to the appropriate university judicial board, filing of a case with the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility, suspension, or expulsion. In all cases of academic dishonesty, a Violation of Academic Integrity Report will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be placed in your university file, with copies provided to you, the department head, and the Dean of Rockefeller College. You are required to be familiar with the university’s academic honesty policies; ignorance is not an excuse for dishonest behavior. Please review the University’s policy on violations of academic integrity at http://www.albany.edu/eas/104/penalty.htm regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty and the Plagiarism 101 tutorial at http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/. You are required to submit your assignments online via Blackboard’s SafeAssign, which detects and prevents incidents of online plagiarism.

COMMUNICATION
I aspire to create a welcoming, non-threatening and mutually respectful classroom environment. I encourage all students to form and express their own views openly and to listen to other students’ views with respect. Communication outside classes and office hours will occur primarily over email. Use regular email, and not Blackboard’s email function, to communicate with me electronically. To ensure timely response, put PAD 737 in the subject line and sign your letters. I will strive to respond to your emails within 24 hours. I will use Blackboard email to send out announcements so log on regularly.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students with needs consistent with the Americans with Disability Act should inform the instructor during the first week of class so that reasonable accommodations can be made.

POLICY ON GREEN CLASSROOM
I encourage the reduction of paper waste and the electronic submission of assignments via Blackboard. If you prefer a hard-copy submission, I encourage two-sided printing and the recycling of used paper.

POLICY ON THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS
Switch off your cell phones, iPods, MP3 players and PDAs in class. If your phone rings or you text during class, you will be asked to leave and incur an absence. Notify the instructor before class begins if there is an emergency that requires you to leave your electric devices on. Note that using your computer nonstop during class may isolate you from class discussions and may affect your participation grade.

SYLLABUS
This syllabus serves as a general outline. The instructor reserves the right to deviate from the plan if necessary. Students will be notified promptly of any modifications via Blackboard or in class. This syllabus also serves as a contract between students and the instructor on requirements and policies pertaining to grades. By enrolling in this course, you agree to accept requirements and policies outlined in this syllabus.
# COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/27</td>
<td>Course Overview and Introduction to OT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/3</td>
<td>(Organization) Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>Transaction Cost Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/17</td>
<td>Agency Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/24</td>
<td>Organizational Ecology</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>Resource Dependence Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>Networks and Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/15</td>
<td>Individual Consultations</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/22</td>
<td>Institutional Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/29</td>
<td>Institutional Entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>Meaning and Sensemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/19</td>
<td>Actor-Network Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11/26</td>
<td>Evaluating Contemporary OT Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12/3</td>
<td>Integrating OT Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>Student Projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**August 27. Course Overview and Introduction**

*Introduction to participants, organization theory, assignments, expectations and procedures.*

**September 3. (Organization) Theory: Definition, Evaluation and Field Overview**


**September 10. Organizational Economics I: Transaction Cost Economics and New Institutional Economics**


**Empirical application:**

September 17. Organizational Economics II: Agency Theory


**Empirical application:**

September 24. Organizational Ecology


**Empirical application:**

October 1. Resource Dependence Theory: Dependence and Power


**Empirical application:**

October 8. Networks and Organizations: Network Theory?


Empirical application:

October 22. Institutional Theory


Empirical application:

October 29. Institutional Entrepreneurship


Empirical application:

November 5. Meaning and Sensemaking in Organizations


Empirical application:


**November 12. Organizational Culture**


Empirical application:


**November 19. Actor-Network Theory**


Empirical application:

November 26. Evaluating Contemporary OT Perspectives

This session will equip students with the tools to comparatively evaluate OT perspectives: their strengths and weaknesses, their underlying assumptions about human action and behavior, and how their conceptualization of organizations and their environments are motivated by different ontological and epistemological persuasions. We will integrate constructive and systematic assessments of each OT perspective into a comprehensive analytical framework, and identify (dis)similarities and (non)reconcilable separations.

No required readings. Homework: to review all TAFs and participate in Blackboard discussion. Details to be announced mid-semester.

December 3. Integrating and Contrasting OT Perspectives: Empirical Applications

The session is dedicated to empirical studies that integrate several OT perspectives. This preliminary list of readings will be finalized with student contribution by mid-semester.


