

Perspectives on Organization

Corresponding course codes

Aalto BIZ: 21L11109 Perspectives on Organization

Aalto DIEM: TU-L0010 Advanced Organizational Theory

Hanken: 62241 Perspectives on Organization

Level of the Course

Doctoral studies

Practicalities

Time: Fridays 9.00-12.00 (see detailed schedule below)

Location: Online. The platform of choice is Zoom. (We may decide to have F2F sessions if Hanken regulations allow Aalto students and teachers to enter Hanken premises.)

File sharing: In order to facilitate file sharing (downloading readings, uploading assignments) we make use of a Dropbox folder that can be accessed with the following link:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dal4h0t8qtgs1rq/AAA3OY66lQYMp5s_Q8w_FyG6a?dl=0.

Grading

Pass/Fail

Faculty

Frank den Hond (Hanken), frank.denhond@hanken.fi (**coordinator & Hanken contact person**)

Nina Granqvist (Aalto BIZ), nina.granqvist@aalto.fi (**BIZ contact person**)

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xxxxx (**course assistant**)

Language of Instruction

English

Learning Outcomes

The course provides a selection of contemporary perspectives within and on the field of organization theory. It targets doctoral students interested in organizations and management studies. During the course, the students orient themselves on organization theory scholarship,

with some sessions focusing on theory by deepening specific theoretical perspectives and other sessions focusing on (your) scholarship in OT. Part of the in-class discussions is a reflection on underlying assumptions and other ‘meta-level’ aspects of OT scholarship.

Content and Schedule

The course consists of a series of sessions focusing on specific theories, approaches and themes. Please refer to the schedule. (All sessions are on Friday mornings, 9-12 am.)

Date	Topic	Faculty	Room
04.09.2020			
11.09.2020	Introduction	Frank den Hond, ...	
18.09.2020	Perspectives on agents in organization theory	Frank den Hond	
25.09.2020	Structure and design perspectives	Jens Schmidt	
02.10.2020	Environmental perspectives	Robin Gustafsson	
09.10.2020	Institutional perspectives	Nina Granqvist	
16.10.2020			
23.10.2020	Interpretative and sensemaking perspectives	Virpi Sorsa	
30.10.2020	Discursive and narrative perspectives	Janne Tienari	
06.11.2020	Change and historical perspectives	Nina Granqvist	
13.11.2020	<i>no session, overlap Kataja course</i>		
20.11.2020	Micro-level organizing	Robin Gustafsson	
27.11.2020	Future of organization theory	Frank den Hond	
04.12.2020	<i>no session, overlap with Hanken PhD progress seminar</i>		
11.12.2020	Conclusion	Frank den Hond, ...	
18.12.2020			

Assessment Methods and Criteria

Requirements for successful completion of the course:

- 1/ active and informed participation in all sessions;
- 2/ work on nine short papers and their presentation in class;
- 3/ a term paper on the theoretical foundations of your research project.

The *short papers* are reflections on the prescribed readings (appr. 3-4 pages each). They are not just summaries of the readings but should focus on the (dis)connections between the readings; they should synthesize and argue instead of repeating what the authors have already said. Please note that there will be little feedback on the short papers; we assume that you will be able to give an account of the readings that is correct and does justice to its author(s). The short papers serve the functions of 1/ advancing your critical writing skills, 2/ making it a habit to write regularly, 3/ helping you to prepare for in-class discussion.

The *term paper* (appr. 10 pages) should focus on the question: “What are the theoretical foundations of my research project?”

Passing the course in practice

The typical routine during sessions is that each of the readings is introduced by a student, in a presentation of about 10 minutes maximum. The introductions may be supported by visual materials, such as a Powerpoint presentation. So, if there are five readings, there will be five introductions, each delivered by another student. A roster will be made available when the reading list is finalized and the students have confirmed their participation. The introductions recapitulate the main point(s) that their author(s) seek(s) to make *and* open up for subsequent discussion. The last hour in the session is typically used for comparative discussion of the set of readings.

The teaching faculty may of course wish to divert from this scheme and give input for discussion.

The implications for student activity are as follows:

- *Before* each session (excluding the first and last sessions)
 - Read (study) all the readings of the session carefully and critically (available in Dropbox)
 - Based on the readings, write a short reflection paper of about 3-4 pages (but feel free to write more if you have a lot to say, or less if you have nothing to say; the point is not to fill pages)
 - Upload it to Dropbox no later than Wednesday before the session
 - In case of late submission, notify the teacher by email (cc course assistant)
 - Prepare to discuss your ideas during the session
 - If you are presenting one of the readings in the session, prepare a short presentation of about 10 minutes (powerpoint can be used, but not necessary: upload .ppt to Dropbox)
- *During* each session (excluding the first and last sessions)
 - Each reading is presented by a student (~10 minutes) and then discussed together. Active participation in discussions is required.
- *During/after* the course
 - Write your term paper (~10 pages), focusing on the theoretical foundations of your own research
 - Upload it to Dropbox (and send it to your PhD supervisor) preferably before the end of December

All this may look like being overly structured and formalized, which it is, in a way. But not for the purposes of structure and formality. On the contrary, it is meant to support you in your PhD studies. This could be a motto for both the course and PhD studies: “Learning isn’t something you do at the behest of someone else. You’re responsible for it. All education is self-education. If you don’t take charge of your learning, no one else will. It’s up to you to build the habit of lifelong learning” (<https://fs.blog/learning/>).

Critical reading, critical writing

A productive in-class discussion starts with preparation, that is with reading (the course literature) and writing (the short papers). Reading and writing are critical skills that oftentimes need to be developed. Part of the course objective is to hone your reading and writing skills. Several resources that may help you to figure out how to improve your critical reading and writing skills are made available through Dropbox. It is advisable to familiarize yourself with

some of these, e.g. Booth et al. (2008) and Wallace and Wray (2016); the strengths of these two books is that they connect reading and writing to making an argument and convincing readers. The Farnham Street blog (<https://fs.blog/reading/>) offers short cuts to a range of other sources and ideas about reading.

Zoom as platform for online sessions

Please download and install Zoom from <https://zoom.us/>. Information on the

Readings

Below is a listing of the readings per session. They include required readings and some suggestions for further reading and reference.

Please, note that required readings are indicated below with a black bullet, while additional, recommended readings are indicated with a white circle.

11.09.2020 Introduction

In addition to introducing the course, we will discuss reading and writing, which are essential skills for any academic in whatever stage of their career, and how to approach the assignments. We may additionally spend some time on discussing organization theory as a field of study.

Please note that there are no required readings for the first session. The readings under ‘Perspectives on OT’ include the inaugural editorial essays of three journals (ASQ, OS, Org) as well as Max Weber’s and Cecil Wright Mills’ views on (social) science; they represent a range of views, and form a background to the session on the future of OT.

Perspectives on reading and writing:

- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. 2008. *The Craft of Research* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Wallace, M., & Wray, A. 2016. *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Perspectives on OT:

- Weber, M. 1946 [1922]. Science as a vocation. In H. H. Gerth & C. W. Mills (Eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (pp. 129-156). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mills, C. W. 2000 [1959]. *The Sociological Imagination* (40th anniversary ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, J. D. 1956. On building an administrative science. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1(1): 102-111.
- Hickson, D. J., Agersnap, F., Ferraresi, F., Hofstede, G., Kieser, A., Lammers, C. J., & Thoenig, J.-C. 1980. Editorial. *Organization Studies*, 1(1), 1-2.
- Mike, G., & Mats, M. L. 1994. Why Organization? Why now? *Organization*, 1(1), 5-17.

18.09.2020 Perspectives on agents in OT

Organization theory is populated with agents (actors), whether people, organizations, or other entities. Theorizing in our field builds on assumptions about the nature of these agents (cf. Alvesson & Sandberg 2011), as much as it informs how we understand agents: it is performative. The readings for this session seek to stimulate you to think about your assumptions regarding the agents that populate your study. You may thus focus your short essay on comparing, contrasting and appraising the various (sets of) assumptions about the nature of these agents that populate organization theory.

- Cohen, M. D. 2007. Administrative Behavior: Laying the foundations for Cyert and March. *Organization Science*, 18(3): 503-506.
- Farjoun, M., Ansell, C., & Boin, A. (2015). Pragmatism in organization studies: Meeting the challenges of a dynamic and complex world. *Organization Science*, 26(6), 1787-1804.
- Gavetti, G., Greve, H. R., Levinthal, D. A., & Ocasio, W. 2012. The behavioral theory of the firm: Assessment and prospects. *Academy of Management Annals*, 6: 1-40.
- Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. 1994. The nature of man. *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, 7(2): 4-19.
- King, B. G., Felin, T., & Whetten, D. A. (2010). Finding the organization in organizational theory: A meta-theory of the organization as a social actor. *Organization Science*, 21(1), 290-305.
- Lindebaum, D., Vesa, M., & den Hond, F. (2020). Insights from ‘The Machine Stops’ to better understand rational assumptions in algorithmic decision-making and its implications for organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 45(1), 247-263.
- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 247-271.

25.09.2020 Structure and design perspectives

This session is about organizational structure and the role of individuals as leaders and entrepreneurs in making strategic decisions, designing organizational structure and enabling organizations to be successful and to adapt.

- Hambrick, D. C, & Mason, P. A. 1984. Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. *Academy of Management Review*, 9(2): 193-206.
- Miles, R. E, Snow, C.C, Meyer, A. D, & Coleman, H. J. 1978. Organizational strategy, structure, and process. *Academy of Management Review*, 3(3): 546-562.
- Williamson, O. E. 1991. Comparative economic organization: The analysis of discrete structural alternatives. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(2): 269-296.
- Rivkin, J. W., & Siggelkow, N. 2003. Balancing search and stability: Interdependencies among elements of organizational design. *Management Science*, 49(3): 290-311.
- Foss, N. J. 2003. Selective intervention and internal hybrids: Interpreting and learning from the rise and decline of the Oticon Spaghetti organization. *Organization Science*, 14(3): 331-349.

02.10.2020 Environmental Perspectives

In this session, we take a look at how various perspectives conceptualize the environment and the relationship between the environment and the actor. Thus, while reading the articles, if applicable, try to focus also on how the environment is defined and the environment-actor relationship.

- Castrogiovanni, G. J. 1991. Environmental munificence: A theoretical assessment. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(3): 542-565.
- Funk, R. J., & Hirschman, D. 2017. Beyond nonmarket strategy: Market actions as corporate political activity. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(1): 32-52.
- Hannan, M. T., & Freeman, J. 1977. The population ecology of organizations. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5): 929-964.
- Lewin, A. Y., & Volberda, H. W. 1999. Prolegomena on coevolution: A framework for research on strategy and new organizational forms. *Organization Science*, 10: 519-534.
- Marquis, C., & Qiao, K. 2020. Waking from Mao's dream: Communist ideological imprinting and the internationalization of entrepreneurial ventures in China. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(3):795-830, with corrigendum in *ASQ*, 65(3): 831-833.
- Van de Ven, A. H., Ganco, M., & Hinings, C. R. 2013. Returning to the frontier of contingency theory of organizational and institutional designs. *Academy of Management Annals*, 7(1): 393-440.

09.10.2020 Institutional Perspectives

Institutional approaches to studying organizations and organizing have become much adopted. The session revisits two classical articles and explores various directions into which institutional perspectives have developed.

- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48: 147-160.
- Granqvist, N., & Gustafsson, R. 2016. Temporal institutional work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(3): 1009-1035.
- Lounsbury, M. 2007. A tale of two cities: Competing logics and practice variation in the professionalizing of mutual funds. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2): 289-307.
- Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. 1977. Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2): 340-363.
- Zietsma, C., & Lawrence, T. B. 2010. Institutional work in the transformation of an organizational field: The interplay of boundary work and practice work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55(2): 189-221.
- Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Sahlin-Andersson, K., & Suddaby, R. (Eds.). (2008). *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. London, UK: Sage.

- Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. (2019). *Constructing Organizational Life: How Social-Symbolic Work Shapes Selves, Organizations, and Institutions*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Thornton, P. H., Ocasio, W., & Lounsbury, M. (2012). *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

23.10.2020 Interpretative and Sensemaking Perspectives

[... PM: short text to introduce the topic and set the scene ...]

- Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. 2014. Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1): 57-125.
- Weick, K. E. 1993. The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(4): 628-652.
- Cornelissen, J., Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. 2014. The contraction of meaning: The combined effect of communication, emotions and materiality on sensemaking in the Stockwell shooting. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51(5): 699-736.
- Whittle, A., Housley, W., Gilchrist, A., Mueller, F., & Lenney, P. 2015. Category predication work, discursive leadership and strategic sensemaking. *Human Relations*, 68(3): 377-407.
- Child, C. 2020. Whence paradox? Framing away the potential challenges of doing well by doing good in social enterprise organizations. *Organization Studies*, 41(8): 1147-1168.

30.10.2020 Discursive and Narrative Perspectives

[... PM: short text to introduce the topic and set the scene ...]

- Alvesson, M. & Kärreman, D. 2000. Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis. *Human Relations*, 53(9): 1125-1149.
- Boje, D. M. 1995. Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as "Tamara-land". *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(4): 997-1035.
- Rhodes, C. & Brown, A. D. 2005. Narrative, organizations and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 7(3): 167-188.
- Vaara, E. & Tienari, J. 2008. A discursive perspective on legitimation strategies in multinational corporations. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(4): 985-993.
- Vaara, E., & Tienari, J. 2011. On the narrative construction of MNCs: An antenarrative analysis of legitimation and resistance in a cross-border merger. *Organization Science*, 22(2): 370-390.

06.11.2020 Change and Historical Perspectives

Much organization theory is *ahistorical* in its treatment of organizations and organizing. Yet, many argue that history matters. The session explores the arguments for why and how history matters.

- Kipping, M., & Üsdiken, B. 2014. History in organization and management theory: More than meets the eye. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1): 535-588.
- Knights, D., & Morgan, G. 1991. Corporate strategy, organizations, and subjectivity: A critique. *Organization Studies*, 12(2): 251-273.
- Rowlinson, M., Hassard, J., & Decker, S. 2014. Strategies for organizational history: A dialogue between historical theory and organization theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(3): 250-274.
- Vaara, E. & Lamberg, J.-A. 2016. Taking historical embeddedness seriously: Three approaches to advance strategy process and practice research. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(4): 633-657.

20.11.2020 Micro-Level Organization

Many organizational phenomena pin down to how individuals engage, interpret, act, and shape their social environment. In this session we will explore jointly recent advances and insights within and across organization studies, neuroscience, and psychology on the phenomena of micro-level organization, and discuss avenues for advancing research on micro level organization.

- De Silva, M. & Gustafsson, R. 2020. A theory of institutional entrepreneurial opportunities as configurations. Working paper (under review)
- Cikara, M., & Van Bavel, J. J. 2014. The neuroscience of intergroup relations. An integrative review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 9(3), 245-274.
- Petelczyc, C. A., Capezio, A., Wang, L., Restubog, S. L. D., & Aquino, K. 2018. Play at work: An integrative review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management*, 44(1), 161-190.
- Saebi, T., Foss, N. J., & Linder, S. 2019. Social entrepreneurship research: Past achievements and future promises. *Journal of Management*, 45(1), 70-95.
- Selander, L., & Jarvenpaa, S. L. 2016. Digital action repertoires and transforming a social movement organization. *MIS Quarterly*, 40(2), 331-352.
- Tobey, D. H., & Manning, M. R. 2009. Melting the glacier: Activating neural mechanisms to create rapid large-scale organizational change. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*. Emerald.

27.11.2020 Future of Organization Studies

The editorials and essays below are relatively recent reflections on the state of the organization and management theory and proposals for may be needed to advance this field of study. What is the kind of organization and management studies that you aim or hope to help shape?

- Lounsbury, M., & Beckman, C. M. 2015. Celebrating organization theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, 52(2): 288-308.
- Davis, G. F. 2015. Celebrating organization theory: The after-party. *Journal of Management Studies*, 52(2): 309-319.

- Holt, R., & den Hond, F. 2013. Sapere aude. *Organization Studies*, 34(11): 1587-1600.
- Suddaby, R., Hardy, C., & Huy, Q. N. 2011. Where are the new theories of organization? Introduction. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2): 236-246.
- Van de Ven, A. H. 2015. Welcome to the Academy of Management Discoveries (AMD). *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 1(1): 1-4.
- Baum, J. A. C., & Haveman, H. A. 2020. Editors' comments: The future of organizational theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 45(2): 268-272.
- Cornelissen, J. P., & Höllerer, M. A. (2020). An open and inclusive space for theorizing: Introducing Organization Theory. *Organization Theory*, 1(1), 1-5

11.12.2020 Conclusion

We will round off and spend some time to discuss 'contribution'.

- Abbott, A. (2004). *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 247-271.
- Locke, K., & Golden-Biddle, K. A. (1997). Constructing opportunities for contribution: Structuring intertextual coherence and "problematizing" in organizational studies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(5), 1023-1062.
- ...