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)
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Virpi Sorsa (Hanken), virpi.sorsa@hanken.fi
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.)

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<td>Conclusion</td>
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**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:*

*Perspectives on OT:*

**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.


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.

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.


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.


**23.10.2020 Interpretative and Sensemaking Perspectives**

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


**30.10.2020 Discursive and Narrative Perspectives**

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


**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.


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)


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?


11.12.2020 Conclusion
We will round off and spend some time to discuss ‘contribution’.
  o …