

Formal Organizations and Bureaucracy

MNGT/SOCI 410 | Fall 2020 | Syllabus updated August 21st, 2020

Instructor: Akram Al-Turk

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Time and Location: MWF 9:20 AM Eastern Standard Time; Online

Office Hours: By appointment. Schedule here: <https://alturkaa.youcanbook.me/>

Course Overview and Learning Objectives

Organizations are everywhere. Nearly all of us spend a considerable amount of time as part of an organization. Organizations provide most of our goods and services, influence our beliefs and values, and shape and are shaped by larger institutions in society. In this course, we will explore the interactions that go on inside organizations, and more importantly, how organizations interact with each other and with their environments.

I have three broad goals for this course, and I have tried to structure the course, including assignments, in a way that will allow each of you to achieve these goals. These goals are a reflection of what I find exciting and challenging about “doing” social science. In short, we observe the social world (through everyday experiences, data, historical cases, etc.), and we often have multiple ideas (theories) about how or why we observe these phenomena. The challenge, then, is figuring out how these multiple explanations complement or contradict each other, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, and *effectively* making an argument to others.

The three goals are to:

1. Understand the different theories that explain organizational behavior.
2. Find, collect, and analyze empirical evidence to help you assess the strength of these theories.
3. Write (and argue) effectively.

Requirements

Attendance and Lateness

Doing well in this class requires consistent daily attendance. I will not take attendance, but note that we will have a lot of in-class assignments. We will start and end class on time, so please don't be late. If you have to leave a little early, please let me know in advance.

Readings

Required texts:

1. Aldrich, Howard and Martin Ruef. 2006. *Organizations Evolving*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
2. Turco, Catherine. 2016. *The Conversational Firm: Rethinking Bureaucracy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.
3. Davis, Gerald. 2016. *The Vanishing American Corporation: Navigating the Hazards of a New Economy*. First edition. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Any other material will be available on Sakai or online.

Recommended text:

1. Strunk, William and E. B. White. 2009. *The Elements of Style*. 50th Anniversary ed. New York: Pearson Longman. Any edition will do. Copies are available through the UNC library.

Please read all assigned material *before* class. Our discussions and assignments in class will require you to have read and at least tried to process the readings. Some of the readings are pretty short, but even then, a lot of them are hard to process. You are expected not just to do the readings but to think about them before class.

Assignments Your grade will be based on four main components:

1. Paper - 25 percent
 - Paper Topic and Data Plan - 10 percent
 - Final Paper - 15 percent
2. In-class Writing - 50 percent
3. Multiple Choice Midterm - 10 percent
4. Short Essays Final Exam - 15 percent

Grading Scale You will be graded on a 100-point scale. A grade of 94.33 and above will qualify for an A, 90 and above A-, 86.67 and above B+, 84.33 and above B, 80 and above B-, and so on. I do, however, reserve the right to maintain some flexibility in this scale.

Important Dates and Assignments: (Subject to change. Check Calendar tab in Sakai for latest. Percent of final course grade in parentheses.)

- Friday, 9/18: Paper topic and data plan due (10%)
- Wednesday, 9/30: Midterm (10%)
- Friday, 10/23: Optional rough draft due (N/A)
- Friday, 11/13: Final paper due (15%)
- Thursday, 11/19: Final exam (15%)

Administrative Issues

Academic Honesty

All assignments are subject to the university's Honor Code. Do not claim other people's work as your own and give credit for words and ideas that you quote or paraphrase. UNC-Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the honor system. Information, including your responsibilities as a student, is outlined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance.

Student Accommodations

UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. Please visit their website, call them at 919-962-8300, or email them. A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time. The process can, however, take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to Finals and during Finals. Students submitting Self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have accommodations set until the following semester. Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

Office Hours

I have started using an online meeting scheduler. You can see times I'm available and book an appointment at <https://alturkaa.youcanbook.me/>. Please schedule the appointment at least 24 hours in advance.

Email Policy

I try to avoid checking emails after 6 pm and on weekends, and in that spirit, I will not email you (or reply to an email) during those times. My goal is to respond to all emails within one working day during the week or, if you email on Friday or the weekend, the following Monday. Please take this email policy into account when thinking about assignments. If you wait until the last minute and realize you have a question about an assignment, I may not get back to you in time.

Course Outline (Subject to change. Check Calendar tab in Sakai for chapters and page numbers and latest changes.)

Monday, 8/10: Introduction to the Course

Wednesday, 8/12: Overview of Organizational Theories

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 1 and 2

Friday, 8/14: Organizational Ecology

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 3

Monday, 8/17: Institutional Theory

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 3

Wednesday, 8/19: Methods Workshop

- Alford, Robert. 1998. *The Craft of Inquiry*. Excerpts.

Friday, 8/21: Resource Dependence

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 3

Monday, 8/24: No class.

Wednesday, 8/26: Organizational Learning

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 3

Friday, 8/28: Finding Data

Monday, 8/31: New Organizations

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 4

Wednesday, 9/2: New Organizations

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 4

Friday, 9/4: Organizational Boundaries

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 5

Monday, 9/7: No class. Labor Day.

Wednesday, 9/9: Finding Data

Friday, 9/11: Catch-up Day

Monday, 9/14: Organizational Forms

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 6

Wednesday, 9/16: Organizational Transformation

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 7

Friday, 9/18: Organizational Transformation / Paper Topic and Data Plan Due

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 7

Monday, 9/21: Organizational Populations

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 9

Wednesday, 9/23: Organizational Populations

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 9

Friday, 9/25: Foundings and Disbandings

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 10

Monday, 9/28: Foundings and Disbandings

- Aldrich and Ruef, ch. 10

Wednesday, 9/30: Midterm

Friday, 10/2: *The Conversational Firm*

- Turco book: Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1

Monday, 10/5: *The Conversational Firm*

- Turco book: Chapter 2

Wednesday, 10/7: *The Conversational Firm*

- Turco book: Chapters 3 and 5

Friday, 10/9: *The Conversational Firm*

- Turco book: Chapters 6 and 8

Monday, 10/12: No class. University Day.

Wednesday, 10/14: Analysis for Papers

Friday, 10/16: Analysis for Papers

Monday, 10/19: Corporations in the U.S.

- Davis book: Preface, Introduction, Part I intro, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2.

Wednesday, 10/21: The Rise and Fall of Corporations

- Davis book: Chapters 4-6.

Friday, 10/23: Consequences of Corporate Decline / Optional Rough Draft Due

- Davis book: Chapters 7-9.

Monday, 10/26: Consequences of Corporate Decline: Part II

- Davis book: Chapters 10-12.

Wednesday, 10/28: Catch-up Day

Friday, 10/30: The Future of Organizations

- Readings TBD

Monday, 11/2: The Future of Organizations

- Readings TBD

Wednesday, 11/4: Paper Workshops

Friday, 11/6: Paper Workshops

Monday, 11/9: Class Reflections from Papers on Education

Wednesday, 11/11: Class Reflections from Papers on Healthcare

Friday, 11/13: Class Reflections from Papers on Government / Final Paper Due

Monday, 11/16: Exam Review

Thursday, 11/19 at 8 am: Final Exam

Acknowledgments I've drawn on the syllabi of Kay Jowers's and Joseph Bongiovi's courses and suggestions from Nicholas Membrez-Weiler for help in creating the syllabus.