Instructors

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Location: Carrington Hall Room 2100
Time: Tuesday 1:15 – 4:00 pm
Office hours: By appointment

Course Objectives

With few exceptions, all health care is provided by or through health care organizations. The structure, behavior and performance of these organizations, therefore, demand a close examination by anyone interested in accessibility, quality, safety and cost of health care, and allocation of health resources. Increasingly, health care organizations are being subjected to fundamental changes in organizational structure, financial arrangements, and interorganizational relationships. The growing organizational complexity of care and the continuation of regulatory pressures and economic competition have dramatically changed the structure and behavior of health care organizations, making these organizations particularly interesting and dynamic subjects for research.

The objective of this course is to review and apply various theoretical perspectives to research on health care organizations. Health service organizations, interorganizational configurations, and populations of organizations are the units of analysis, and attention is given to research issues and theoretical perspectives in relation to selected aspects of organizational performance, structure, process, and environment. Throughout the course, special emphasis is placed on comparing alternative theoretical perspectives and research strategies, and on identifying issues for organizational research in the health care sector.

After taking this course, students are expected to: (1) understand the purpose and components of scientific theory as used in health services research; (2) become familiar with several major theoretical perspectives underlying research on health services organizations and systems; (3) be able to analyze the environments, strategies, technologies, structures and effectiveness of health services organizations; and (4) understand the process through which knowledge about health services organizations develops and cumulates.

Course Structure and Assignments

To meet the course objective, each session of the course will address a central issue or perspective in organization research. The first part of the course (sessions 1 and 2) provides an overview of
organizations (e.g., Why study them?) and organizational theory (e.g., What theory is and what theory is not). The second part (sessions 3 through 6) focuses on some “fundamentals” of organization research to build your vocabulary for an informed discussion of different theoretical perspectives. The last part (sessions 7 to 13) reviews several of the major organizational theories and perspectives that you will often encounter in organization and health services research. Each session of the course includes readings that illustrate the conceptual, pragmatic, and empirical aspects of the issue or perspective being discussed. The readings serve as the basis for class discussion. To make the discussion effective and stimulating, you must come to the class prepared by completing all the readings and forming your own interpretations and questions about the readings.

The course is in seminar format. Part of the learning at the doctoral level is to develop the ability to conduct a seminar. For this reason, each of you will be assigned to moderate several class sessions during the semester (the number of sessions you moderate will be determined based on the class size). As a moderator, you are expected to make a presentation at the beginning of the seminar and to facilitate class discussion. As appropriate, you should facilitate your presentation with visual aids, handouts, or any other media you think will make your points effectively. The following guides may help you prepare for moderating your session.

1. Review the assigned readings (particularly conceptual articles) collectively, identifying key premises, assumptions, theoretical arguments, research questions, and methods.

2. Constructively critique the material you read (on both sides of the issue, as appropriate) by considering what the material tells you, when and where the theory predicts and explains, what questions remain unanswered, and where the particular study/theory might be modified or expanded (particularly for examining health care organizations).

3. When reviewing theoretical work, you may want to consider the following as you evaluate the material and prepare your presentation and discussion:
   
   (a) Describe the theory—What is the theory supposed to explain? What are the key concepts (antecedents, consequences, mediators, moderators, etc.)? What is the scope of the theory? What are the appropriate units and levels of the theory?
   
   (b) Is the theory logically consistent? Can it be empirically tested? If so, how might this be done?
   
   (c) What are the predictions made by the theory? Are any of the predictions non-obvious or surprising? How or why might these be of interest to academicians and to practitioners?
   
   (d) How is the theory related to those that we have discussed in the class? Are there any contradictions? How could we reconcile or integrate the differences?
   
   (e) In what ways do you think this theory could/should be extended, if at all?

4. When reviewing empirical work assigned for the session, consider the following as you evaluate the material and prepare your presentation and discussion:

   (a) What are the research questions examined in the study? Is the significance of the research problem clearly justified?
   
   (b) Is the theoretical perspective or framework clearly explained? Is it appropriate for addressing the research problem?
(c) Are there specific hypotheses? Are they clearly justified according to the theoretical perspective or framework?
(d) How are the theoretical constructs operationalized? To what extent do you agree that the operationalizations are appropriate?
(e) What is the research design? Is it appropriate? What are the target population and the sample? Is the sample properly selected? Is the sample large enough for the analysis?
(f) What is the statistical analysis? Is it appropriate for the purpose of the study?
(g) What are the conclusions of the study? Do you agree with the authors’ interpretation? Are there alternative explanations? What might be an appropriate follow-up or extension for the work reported?

Non-moderators are encouraged to consider the above questions in preparation for the class. Each of you is expected to raise 2 questions from the readings for class discussion. The questions should be posted to the Blackboard site by 6 PM the evening before the session, so that everyone can review the questions before class. Please also bring the questions to the class.

There are three exercises, all of which are for you to practice reviewing articles for journals. The manuscripts to be reviewed can be found on Blackboard under “Course Assignments.” A copy of the HSR Guidelines for Reviewers and an article, “Balls, Strikes, and Collisions on the Basepath: Ruminations of a Veteran Reviewer,” written by Alan Meyer are also available on Blackboard to help you prepare constructive, high quality reviews. All the exercises will be evaluated as part of your final grade and their due dates are listed on the class schedule below (page 5).

There is also a final research paper, due December 11, Thursday, by 5pm. The purpose of the paper is to explicate and apply a selected aspect of organizational theory (i.e., one of the theories or theoretical perspectives covered in this course) to a current phenomenon or issue in the health care sector, and to develop hypotheses or research propositions based on the particular theory. We will be available to review and provide feedback on a draft of the paper before the final due date so as to give you the opportunity to improve it. The final paper should be 15-20 pages in length (excluding references), double-spaced, and use a 12-point font.

**Grading**

Although grades in the course will be unavoidably subjective, they will be determined on both the quantity and quality of your effort as well as the level of your understanding of the course material. Specifically, the final grade will be determined in the following manner:

- Class moderation:  20%
- Class participation:  20%
- Exercises: 30%
- Final paper: 30%

**Required Texts**


The 9th edition is the most current edition and is VERY expensive. We suggest that you purchase the

We have ordered the Scott & Davis book. It is available for purchase at the Health Affairs Bookstore.

Accessible on the Blackboard (https://blackboard.unc.edu/webapps/login) are required and optional readings. You are expected to read all those that are required (see the Reading List on pages 6-12) in preparation of the class. You are encouraged, but not required, to browse optional readings, which are meant to provide a broader treatment of the topic or to offer examples of how a theory is applied in empirical research.

Honor Code

The principles of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship govern the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University as they have during the long life of this institution. Your acceptance of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in the Code of Student Conduct and a respect for this most significant Carolina tradition. Your reward is in the practice of these principles. Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity, however small, strikes destructively at the University’s life and work. If you have any questions about your responsibility or the responsibility of faculty members under the Honor Code, please consult with someone in either the Office of the Student Attorney General (966-4084) or the Office of the Dean of Students (966-4042).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course introduction &amp; Overview of organizations</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Development of Organizational Studies and Theory</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Sept 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fundamental I: Organizational Purpose, Design, and Effectiveness</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Sept 9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fundamental II: Organizational Technology and Structure</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fundamental III: External Environments</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td><strong>Exercise I:</strong> Review “The Regulatory Environment and Rural Hospital Long Term Care Strategies from 1997-2003: The Seven-Year Rollercoaster Ride” (due in the September 23 class)</td>
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<td>Sept 23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fundamental IV: Autonomy, Power, and Control</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Oct 7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Contingency Theory</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Resource Dependency Theory</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td><strong>Exercise II:</strong> Review “Resource Dependency and Autonomy in Hospital Diversification” (due in the October 21 class)</td>
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<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Economic Theories of Organizations</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Organizational Learning Perspective</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Nov 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Population Ecology and Evolution Theory</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Institutional Theory</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<td><strong>Exercise III:</strong> Review “Institutional Environments and Organizational Responses to AIDS” (due in the November 18 class)</td>
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<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Interorganizational Relations and the Network Perspective</td>
<td>Lee/Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No class (HAPPY THANKSGIVING!)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Wrap up</td>
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**Final paper** *(due December 11, Thursday, by 5pm)*
Reading List

Session #1: Course Introduction and Overview of Organizations

What are organizations? How do they differ from other forms of social organization (e.g., communities, primary groups)? Why do they exist? Why do they matter? What is unique about health care organizations? What are the social conditions that differentiate health care organizations from organizations in other societal sectors? Do these conditions limit the application of organization theory to health care organizations? Alternatively, how may studies health care organizations inform theory development?

Required:

Daft. Chapter 1, pp. 2-23.

Scott. Chapter 1.


Optional:


Session #2: Development of Organizational Studies and Theory

How has the focus of organizational studies changed over time? What is theory? What theory is not? What is a good or bad theory? What constitutes a research contribution?

Required:


Optional:


**Session #3: Fundamental I—Organizational Purpose, Design, and Effectiveness**

What do we mean by organizational goals? What are the differences between individual goals and organizational goals? What are the differences between the effectiveness model and the survival (maintenance) model? What are the approaches to organizational design? How do we define, assess, and explain organizational effectiveness?

Required:

Daft. Chapters 2 & 3.

Scott & Davis. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 (skim to gain an overview of how “organizational goals” are conceived within the national, natural, and open systems frameworks)

Optional:


**Session #4: Fundamental II—Organizational Technology and Structure**

How do we define organizational technology? What is the core technology of health care organizations, such as hospitals? How does technology constrain organizational structure? Is technology easily changeable? Why not? How does technology affect the social fabric of an organization and vice versa?

Required:

Daft. Chapter 7.

Scott & Davis. Chapter 6.
Optional:


**Session #5: Fundamental III—External Environments**

How do we define organizational environment? What are the different dimensions of organizational environment? Why does the environment matter to the operation and survival of organizations?

Required:

Daft. Chapter 4.

Scott & Davis. Chapter 9.

Optional:


**Session #6: Fundamental IV—Autonomy, Power, and Control**

How do we define autonomy? Power? What are the bases of autonomy and power in health care organizations? How have the bases of autonomy and power changed over time and what are the consequences of these changes for the role of managers and health professions? What is the “stakeholder” perspective? Why does it matter?

Required:


Scott & Davis. Chapter 8.
Optional:


**Session #7: Contingency Theory**

**Required:**


Optional:


**Session #8: Resource Dependency Theory**

**Required:**


Optional:


**Session #9: Economic Theories of Organizations**

Required:


Optional:


**Session #10: The Learning Perspective**

Required:


Optional:


**Session #11: Population Ecology and Evolution Theory**

Required:


Optional:


**Session #12: Institutional Theory**

Required:


Optional:


Session #13: Interorganizational Relations and the Network Perspective

Required:


Optional:

