Organizations in Politics & Society
Sociology 950
(Section 3)
Fall 2008

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Purpose of the Course
In this course we will examine major theories of organizations asking how well they help us explain the characteristics and dynamics of social and political organizations like nonprofits, civic associations, interest groups, congregations, and social movement organizations. Implicitly most organizational sociologists examine market-based organizations, but formal organizations constitute many other areas of social life from local neighborhood associations and congregation to transnational advocacy groups and social movement organizations. Because this is a kind of hybrid course, we will draw from multiple sub-fields and disciplines beyond organizational sociology including political science, nonprofit studies, social movements, political sociology, and sociology of religion. This course will also introduce students to major strategies for studying organizations including historical, fieldwork and case studies, surveys, event history, and network analysis.

Class Format
This course will be organized as a seminar – meaning that we will use our meetings to collaboratively evaluate, apply, and critique work on political and social organizations. Each Tuesday I will post or email observations about the reading and its place in the broader field and pose several discussion questions for the following meeting. I will also meet with two students who will be responsible for preparing a brief response to those questions to launch our weekly meetings the following Monday. Your response should focus attention on key analytic issues and help set the stage for broader discussion and debate. You should not summarize the readings. Everyone will have read the readings beforehand, and we can address any questions about what the readings mean through our discussion of them.

In addition to engaging discussion questions at two meetings, the other major requirement is a research proposal. Your proposed research must be conversant with major themes and scholarship addressed in this course. Your proposal will be developed through two initial drafts and a final version. If appropriate, this paper should include the findings of preliminary research. The goal for this assignment is a proposal suitable for a master’s paper, grant/fellowship application, or dissertation. You may propose an alternative writing format if it would be more appropriate for you at this stage of your graduate career or program – such as a literature review. I will circulate a detailed handout on the paper assignment at our September 8th meeting.

Course grades will be based on class participation throughout the semester (25%), discussion questions/presentation (25%), and the research proposal (50%).
Readings
The majority of our readings for this course come from journals or sections of books. These materials will be available through the course webpage. Our readings combine “classics” in the field and recent work at the forefront of current scholarship. Given the breadth of the course, our readings are selective and should be seen as a starting point – especially if you plan to do further research in this area.


All articles listed will be available either through UNC’s E-Journals or as a PDF on the course webpage.
Schedule

August 25 – Introduction
Review the syllabus; discuss course goals, format and content; introduce ourselves to one another.

September 8 – Organizations – Definitions, Concepts, and Debates

Recommended

September 15 – Organizations, Conflict and Power
Tilly, Charles. 1978. From Mobilization to Revolution. Englewood, California: Prentice-Hall. (pp. 52-84)

Recommended:
**September 22 – Rationalist Theories of Organization and Collective Action**


Recommended:


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**September 29 – Institutions and Institutionalization**


Recommended:


October 6 – Explaining Organizational Change: Founding and Growth

Recommended:

October 13 – Inter-organizational Dynamics: Networks and Competition
Wilson – Chapter 13 (Competition and Coalitions)

Recommended
October 20 – Leadership, Authority and Governance
Wilson – Chapters 11 (Authority and Leadership) and 12 (Organizational Democracy)

Recommended:


October 27 - Social Capital and American Democracy: Decline or Change?

Recommended:

November 3 – Discussion and Feedback on Projects
November 10 – Civil Society and Democracy: Theoretical and Cross-National Approaches
Craig Calhoun, “Civil Society and the Public Sphere,” *Public Culture* 5:2, 267-80.

November 17 – Interests and Representation

November 24 – Organizations, Policy, and Social Change

Recommended:

December 1 – Presentation and Discussion of Projects