

EDWARDS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

University of Saskatchewan
Masters of Business Administration Program

MBA 871.2: Organizational Dynamics

Course objectives: This course focuses on the social forces within organizations. In particular, this course will examine how such forces affect office politics, power in organizations, organizational culture, and organizational change.

Prerequisites: MBA 803.3 Business and Society
MBA 805.2 Managing Organizations – Value Through People

Evaluation: Paper # 1 1/3rd of course mark
Paper # 2 1/3rd of course mark
Final Exam 1/3rd of course mark

Schedule: To be offered on two consecutive weekends as follows:

Fridays 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Saturdays 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. with a one hour lunch break

Sundays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

1st Friday (3 hours): Topic: Organizational culture

Discussion -- Reading A
Short case for discussion or video
Discussion -- Reading B

1st Saturday (7 hours): Topic: Organizational change

Discussion – Reading A
In-class experiential exercise
Discussion – Reading B
Short case for discussion or video
Discussion – Reading C

1st Sunday (3 hours): Topic: Organizational restructuring

Discussion -- Reading A
Short case for discussion or video
Discussion -- Reading B

2nd Friday (3 hours): Topic: Power and Politics in Organizations
Paper # 1 Due

Discussion -- Reading A
Short case for discussion or video
Discussion -- Reading B

2nd Saturday (7 hours): Topic: Power and Politics in Organizations (continued)

Discussion – Reading A
In-class experiential exercise
Discussion – Reading B
Short case for discussion or video
Discussion – Reading C

2nd Sunday (3 hours): Final Exam

Paper # 2: The deadline for Paper # 2 would be at least one week beyond the last class, so that students are not unduly rushed.

Students are expected to have read and understood the rules regarding academic dishonesty which are posted on the University of Saskatchewan website at:

http://www.usask.ca/university_council/reports/09-27-99.shtml

*Please refer to the University council website above
as this provides the students with the full policy.*

Reading List

Not every item on this reading list would be assigned. It is anticipated that 12 to 15 of these items would constitute a reasonable workload for this two-credit course. The list that follows is a mixture of theoretically-oriented readings as well as short magazine articles that serve as examples.

Reading List: Organizational Culture

Berner, Robert (2007). "My Year at Wal-Mart," *Business Week*, February 12, pp. 70-74. This article is about a woman executive who joined Wal-Mart's headquarters and was fired after her first year. This illustrates what it is like to enter a strong, unusual corporate culture, and also provides an opportunity to discuss how gender affects an executive's success.

Bianco, Anthony (2006). "Wal-Mart's War Against the Unions" (pp. 109-134) and "Down and Out in Jonquière" (pp. 227-238), in *Wal-Mart: The Bully of Bentonville*, Currency-Doubleday, New York. A key component of Wal-Mart's corporate culture is its scorched-earth policy toward unions. These excerpts introduce us to the dark side of Wal-Mart's culture, and also illustrate how US-Canadian cultural differences overlay the functioning of Wal-Mart's corporate culture in the two countries.

Conlin, Michelle (2006). "Smashing the Clock," *Business Week*, December 11, pp. 60, 62, 63, 65, & 66. The retailing chain, Best Buy, is an example of a relaxed, nonbureaucratic corporate culture.

Daft, Richard (2001). "Organizational Culture and Ethical Values," in *Essentials of Organization Theory & Design* (2nd ed.), pp. 115-131, South-Western/Thomson Learning, Cincinnati. This is one of the best textbook treatments of organizational culture. The author explains how visible elements of culture (logos, ceremonies, legends, etc.) are rooted in the underlying values of the organization, and how organizational culture determines whether or not decisions will be made in an ethical manner.

Leung, Calvin (2006). "Culture Club," *Canadian Business*, October 9-22, pp. 115, 116, 118, & 120. This magazine article explains how organizational culture can affect morale and profitability.

Reading List: Organizational Change

Barrett, Amy (2006). "J & J: Reinventing How It Invents," *Business Week*, April 17, pp. 60-62. The drugmaker Johnson & Johnson changed its organizational structure to facilitate new product development.

Elgin, Ben (2006). "Yahoo's Boulevard of Broken Dreams," *Business Week*, March 13, pp. 76-77. This discusses how Yahoo, once on the forefront of innovation, has stalled in its new product development. This article would serve as an excellent counterpoint to the article explaining how Google's laid-back culture has encouraged creativity. (See "Lashinsky, Adam," below.)

Goodman, Paul S., & Rousseau, Denise M. (2004). "Organizational Change that Produces Results: The Linkage Approach," *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (August), pp. 7-19. This presents a theoretical model of change and applies it to two companies.

Hindo, Brian (2007). "At 3M, a Struggle Between Efficiency and Creativity," *Business Week*, June 8, pp. 8, 10, 11, 12, & 14. A new CEO at 3M, the adhesives manufacturer, has tried to improve innovation by rolling back his predecessor's emphasis on cost-cutting.

Lashinsky, Adam (2006). "Chaos by Design," *Fortune*, Vol. 154, No. 7, pp. 88, 90, 93, 94, 96, & 98. Google's chaotic, laid-back structure and culture have led to a high level of innovation.

Weber, Joseph *et al.* (2005). "'Mosh Pits' of Creativity," *Business Week*, November 7, pp. 98-100. Many companies are using "innovation labs" to encourage new product development.

Reading List: Organizational Restructuring

Jones, Gareth R., *et al.* (2006). "Organizational Transformations: Birth, Growth, Decline, and Death," in *Organizational Theory, Design, and Change* (Canadian ed.), pp. 372-401, Pearson Prentice Hall, Toronto. This chapter from a Canadianized textbook is an excellent treatment of the organizational life cycle, organizational isomorphism, and institutional theory.

Mentzer, Marc S. (1997). "Assumptions and Realities of Corporate Downsizing," *Human Resources Management in Canada*, March issue, pp. 755559-75563 [loose-leaf service]. This is written in a style directed to practitioners, and is a summary of the author's statistical study of downsizing in Canada, which was published in the *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*.

Uchitelle, Louis (2006). "The Shock, Part II," in *The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences*, pp. 98-123, Knopf, New York. This excerpt communicates the personal anguish associated with corporate layoffs. Among other examples, we are told of a 46-year-old bank vice president who is reduced to pumping gas and whose wife leaves him. Particularly poignant is a description how an outplacement service provides office space for its clients, where laid-off people can go through the motions of pretending they still have a job.

Reading List: Power and Politics in Organizations

Gemmill, Gary, & Oakley, Judith (1992). "Leadership: An Alienating Social Myth?," *Human Relations*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 113-129. This is a theoretical article in the tradition of critical scholarship, arguing that the concept of leadership is a myth used to exploit people, and that it is in the self-interest of "leaders" to persuade people of their own helplessness.

Khurana, Rakesh (2002). "Crowning Napoleon: The Making of the Charismatic Candidate," in *Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs*, pp. 151-185, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. Whereas most management writers regard charismatic leaders as a positive thing, this author takes the opposite approach. He argues that behind the facade of forceful personalities and superb communication skills, charismatic leaders often lack the practical skills to run their organizations. In short, actual expertise is trumped by impression management.

Lipman-Blumen, Jean (2005). "Within Ourselves: Psychological Needs that Make Us Seek Leaders," in *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, pp. 29-48, Oxford University Press, New York. This is from an insightful book about how abusive leaders gain power and maintain power.

Palmeri, Christopher (2005). "Living on the Edge at American Apparel," *Business Week*, June 27, pp. 88-90. Because some of the chosen readings deal with abusive leaders, it would be helpful to have a real-life example. This CEO has contrived a bizarre company culture that enables him to pressure women employees into sleeping with him. For example, he has instructed his recruiters to find "directionless" young women who are recent immigrants. Oddly, the company's advertising trumpets its commitment to social responsibility. This article brings together a number of topics in this course – misuse of corporate culture, ethical hypocrisy, and the dark side of charismatic leadership. This article also provides an opportunity to discuss sexual harassment.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey (1992). "The Politics of Information and Analysis," in *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations*, pp. 247-265, Harvard Business School Press, Boston. Although this is not recent, it is an excellent treatment of how bureaucratic processes can be twisted to fulfill a Machiavellian agenda. The chosen chapter is the central, pivotal chapter of the book.