

Soc110 Organizations & Institutions

Fall 2012 | UC Berkeley

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Final Exam: Exam Group 15 | Thursday, December 13, 2012 3-6 PM

Course Overview

Organizational theory is a vibrant subfield of sociology that seeks to understand how and why organizations behave (which doesn't necessarily correspond to how people think they *should* behave). Although organizational theory has roots in Max Weber's theory of organizations, the theoretical tools that sociologists have developed to understand organizational behavior have extended well beyond Weber's ideal-typical bureaucracy. We will wrestle with the key theoretical statements in this field and then make them concrete in specific case studies.

Conceptually, the course is organized along two dimensions. First, as mentioned above, it will be organized along the lines of theory and practice. We will begin the course looking at some key theoretical statements, most of which date to the 1970s and 1980s. These will likely be the most difficult readings of the course. However, we will make the ideas contained within them concrete through a series of case studies involving organizations in practice, including the fast food industry, the shareholder value corporation, the federal government, and our own U.C. Berkeley.

The second conceptual dimension of the course is macro vs. micro. Macro-organizational sociology seeks to understand the relationship organizations and their external world. Micro-organizational sociology seeks to understand what happens inside organizations—their “internal design”. We will consider each separately, along with an eye toward understanding what the relationship is between the two—how what happens outside of the organization affects what happens inside it, but also vice-versa.

Required Readings

There are two required texts plus a course reader. The two texts are:

- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*
- Bethany McLean & Peter Elkind, *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron*

Both of these texts are available at the ASUC Bookstore. If you have an earlier edition of *Fast Food Nation*, that will be fine.

We will spend about four total weeks on these two texts. The balance of the course's readings will come from a course reader, soon to be available at **University Copy Services** at **2425 Channing Way**, two blocks south of campus in the arcade under the Durant-Channing garage.

Grading

Course grades will be determined by three components: two midterms and a final exam.

- **Two midterms** (30% each): Both midterm exams will be administered in-class. They will be short answer (e.g., one or two paragraphs per question) in format. The first will be given on **Monday, October 1st**, and the second will be on **Friday, November 2nd**. Both will occupy the full hour of class.

The first midterm will cover the first 5 weeks of course material—through *Fast Food Nation*. The second midterm will not be cumulative, but will cover the next 4+ weeks of material through our section on shareholder value. However, you will still be broadly responsible for the theoretical material from the first 3 weeks of the course on the second midterm.

- **Final exam** (35%). The final exam will be cumulative. It will be administered during the university-designated final exam group period. Soc110 is in Exam Group 15, which goes on **Thursday, December 13th**, from **3-6 PM**.

For all exams, you will be responsible for the corresponding readings, material from lecture, and appropriate class discussion. I will expect you to have completed readings prior to class and to come to class prepared to talk about them. Lectures will include some review of the readings where appropriate but will also significantly expand upon them.

The grading scale is as follows. ‘[’ means including, and ‘)’ means excluding, so ‘[83-87)’ for example means everything including 83 up to but **NOT** including 87.

A+	[97+	A	[93-97)	A-	[90-93)
B+	[87-90)	B	[83-87)	B-	[80-83)
C+	[77-80)	C	[73-77)	C-	[70-73)
D+	[67-70)	D	[63-67)	D-	[60-63)
		F	[0-60)		

I will use the “Assignments” tool/tab on the course bspace site to keep a record of your scores, so as midterm scores are released, make sure that what is on bspace matches what is on your actual returned paper exam. If there is a problem, report it immediately. Do not wait until the end of the semester to report an issue with either of the midterms.

There are no other discretionary considerations that factor in to the calculation of your final grade. As the course progresses, you can calculate your performance and what you need to do on subsequent graded assignments to get X grade exactly.

Lecture, Reading, and Assignment/Exam Schedule

The following schedule is based on the plan of covering two readings per week. Since we’re on a MWF schedule, the idea is to spend M and half of W on the first piece, and then the second half of W and all of F on the second. Occasionally we’ll spend only one day on a reading, and

occasionally we'll spend two whole days on a reading instead of only one-and-a-half. **You must have the indicated readings completed prior to the class they are listed.**

All readings except Schlosser and McLean & Elkind are in the course reader.

Aug 24 Fri Introduction: "Managerialism" and the Sociological Critique
Readings: none

The Organization and its Environment

Aug 27 Mon Introduction (cont'd)
Readings: none

29 Wed Population ecology
Reading: Hannan & Freeman, "The Population Ecology of Organizations". Focus on pp. 929-940, 946-949, 956-962.

31 Fri Population ecology & U.C. Berkeley
Reading: Birgeneau, "Access and Excellence" (reader). Focus on pp. 1-21, 30-34.

Sep 3 Mon ***** **LABOR DAY: NO CLASS** *****

5 Wed Resource dependence
Reading: Pfeffer & Salancik, "The External Control of Organizations" ch 3, 10

7 Fri (cont'd)

10 Mon The political-cultural approach and U.C. Berkeley
Readings:

- Fligstein, "Markets as Politics"
- Douglass, "From Chaos to Order and Back?"

12 Wed The institutionalist perspective
Reading: DiMaggio & Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited"

14 Fri (cont'd)

Case Study: The Fast Food Industry

Sep 17 Mon The emergence of the fast food industry
Reading: Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* ch 1, 2

19 Wed Expansion of the industry
Reading: Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* ch 4, 5

Sep	21	Fri	(cont'd)
	24	Mon	The reorganization of American agriculture I <i>Reading: Schlosser, Fast Food Nation ch 6</i>
	26	Wed	The reorganization of American agriculture II <i>Reading: Schlosser, Fast Food Nation ch 7</i>
	28	Fri	(cont'd)
Oct	1	Mon	MIDTERM #1, IN-CLASS

Internal Organizational Design

Oct	3	Wed	Managerialism and the Resource Dependence critique <i>Reading: Pfeffer, Power in Organizations ch 4</i>
	5	Fri	(cont'd)
	8	Mon	Institutionalist approach to internal design <i>Reading: Fligstein, "The Intraorganizational Power Struggle". Focus on pp. 44-50, 53-57.</i>
	10	Wed	Social movements from an organizational theory perspective <i>Reading: Voss & Sherman, "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy"</i>
	12	Fri	(cont'd)

Case Study: Shareholder Value and the Enron Corporation

Oct	15	Mon	The shareholder value conception of the firm <i>Reading: Useem, Executive Defense ch 1, 2</i>
	17	Wed	The rise of Enron <i>Reading: McLean & Elkind, The Smartest Guys in the Room ch 1-3</i>
	19	Fri	(cont'd)
Oct	22	Mon	The Enron model of making money <i>Reading: McLean & Elkind, The Smartest Guys in the Room 4-7, 15</i>
	24	Wed	The flaws in the Enron model <i>Reading: McLean & Elkind, The Smartest Guys in the Room 8-11</i>
	26	Fri	(cont'd)

Oct	29	Mon	What effect did shareholder value have on employment? <i>Reading:</i> Kalleberg, “Economic Transformation and the Decline of Institutional Protections”
	31	Wed	(cont’d)
Nov	2	Fri	MIDTERM #2, IN-CLASS

Why It’s So Hard to Eliminate Organizational Inequality

Nov	5	Mon	Cognitive obstacles to implementing meritocratic policies <i>Reading:</i> Castilla & Benard, “The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations”
	7	Wed	When do firms implement diversity programs? <i>Reading:</i> Dobbin, Kim & Kalev, “You Can’t Always Get What You Need”
	9	Fri	(cont’d)

Social Network Forms of Organization

Nov	12	Mon	***** VETERAN’S DAY: NO CLASS *****
	14	Wed	Organizations embedded within social networks <i>Readings:</i> none
	16	Fri	Social networks embedded within organizations <i>Reading:</i> Small, <i>Unanticipated Gains</i> ch 1, 2

The State

Nov	19	Mon	The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and its organizational environment <i>Reading:</i> Cooper & Block, <i>Disaster</i> ch 3, 4
	21	Wed	(cont’d)
Nov	23	Fri	***** THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS *****
	26	Mon	The organizational response to Hurricane Katrina’s arrival <i>Reading:</i> Cooper & Block, <i>Disaster</i> ch 5, 6, 8
	28	Wed	(cont’d)

	30	Fri	Course wrap-up and evaluations
Dec	3-7		***** RRR Week *****
	13	Thu	FINAL EXAM 3-6 P.M.