

Sylvia Flatt, Ph.D.

sjflatt2012@gmail.com

Office Hours: 3-5 PM, 474 Barrows

Class: Monday: 5-8 PM, 126 Barrows

Fall 2012

Sociology 119T
Organization Design: A Sociological Strategic Perspective
Department of Sociology, UC-Berkeley

Department description: This class surveys organization design issues through the lens of sociology, in a comparative manner--sociological perspectives are contrasted with economic, legal, anthropological and political views of organization design and strategy. We examine the comparative efficacy and recent rise in recognition of sociological factors in determining organizational performance (e.g., social media, social networks, among other areas). Internal as well as external influences on organization performances are examined via theory readings, cases, lectures, demonstrations/exercises, and in-class discussions. The course relentlessly returns to questions of practice, despite having a theoretical basis; the question "what should the be the action item(s)/strategy/implementation" is emphasized. Broadly speaking, this course addresses organizational strategy formulation and situational analysis (at the team- organization-, industry- and field-levels) for business-unit, corporate, entrepreneurial and not-for-profit organizational entities—this includes many small and medium-sized organizations as well as large firms, NGOs and charitable organizations. The course features a focus on international issues, key debates in org. design and their implications, as well as implications for strategy formulation and implementation in firms. The objective of the course is to enable a high degree of competency among students in the sociology of org. strategy-related areas in multiple (often internationally-operating) realms. Broadly, by the end of the course, students are expected to be able to detect, diagnose and recommend globally-savvy solutions for many types of org. design-related issues. More specifically, after this course, students should be able to apply any of a variety of (thoughtfully selected) analytical and prescriptive tools to answer the questions “What should the action going forward be?”

Why are some firms more successful than others? Why do some firms compete successfully and then lose their competitive edge? This course examines these questions by examining organizational design through organizational strategy. We begin with a brief history of strategy, its emergence and roots in sociology and business. Sociology and Business have each contributed towards strategy and organization design, but usually from different perspectives. Therefore, business strategy and sociology perspectives are juxtaposed throughout the course to deepen our analysis of the field. The course presents some of the ‘classic’ perspectives (e.g. Porter, Carroll, DiMaggio and Powell) and also includes more current perspectives (e.g. blue ocean strategy, ambidextrous organizations, organizational status and reputation).

Required Reading

- 1) Purchase chapters from the following text through Cengagebrain.com:
Charles W.L. Hill and Gareth R. Jones (2013), *Strategic Management Theory* (10th ed.),
South-Western Cengage Learning.
ISBN-13: 978-1-133-48570-4
ISBN-10: 1-133-48570-7

Go to Cengagebrain.com and enter one of the ISBN numbers above. Since there are similar titles available by the same authors, be sure you have selected the right text by using the ISBN number. Purchase the following chapters: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8. Each 'eChapter' is \$11.49. To ensure you have selected the right book and chapters, match your selected chapters with the titles for the chapters listed on the Class Schedule.

- 2) A Reader with all other readings/articles will be made available at *University Copy Service*, 2425 Channing Way (West of Telegraph, two blocks South of corner of Telegraph and Bancroft) during the second week of classes (week of September 3rd), phone: 510-549-2335. (Hours: 8:30 AM to 7:00 PM (M-F), 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM (Saturday), Closed on Sunday. If possible, I will also place a copy of the Reader on reserve at Moffitt Library.

Suggested Reading

Since this is a course on strategy and organization design, staying current with business practices and events through the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, SF Chronicle (Business Section), and other business periodicals (Fortune, Forbes, Businessweek, etc.), will facilitate your grasp of the material in this course. This will also make the material and course a lot more interesting.

Course Inquiries

If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please feel free to contact me during my office hours (Mondays, 3-5), send me an email (sjflatt2012@gmail.com), or phone if it is urgent (415-381-7217).

Evaluation

	Pct	Points
Midterm Exam	20%	40
Final Exam	25%	50
Unannounced Quizzes	10%	20
Critical Essays (3, 10% each)	30%	60
Participation	10%	20
Attendance	5%	10
	100%	200 Points

Midterm and Final exams: Essay questions with the possibility of some T/F statements about the readings and class discussion. Be sure to bring a blue book for these exams. No make-up exams. An absence during either of these exams will be counted as a 0. If there is an emergent situation, you will need written documentation for your absence.

Unannounced Quizzes: There may be up to five unannounced quizzes through the course that may be T/F or short answer.

Critical Essays: A response to question or questions (to be distributed and posted at least one week before class) about the readings for that week. Higher scores will go to those who are able to incorporate prior readings as part of their essay. There will be four essays, the highest score of three will become part of your grade. Format for essays are 2-3 pages, double-spaced, one inch margins, Times New Roman and 12 font. Appropriate citations with references are expected; the list of references on the last page does not count towards your 2-3 pages. Exceeding the page limit may lead to point deductions. A thoughtful, well organized and written essay is expected. Critical Essays will be due at the beginning of the following sessions: 5 (September 24), 9 (October 22), 11 (November 5, 2012), and 14 (November 26, 2012). These essays are due at the beginning of the class. No essays will be accepted after the due date and after we have discussed the material.

Participation: Your class participation is important as contributions to class discussions. Come prepared to pose at least one provocative question about the reading to the class. You may be called upon to do so. Expect to be called on even if you do not raise your hand.

Attendance: Your presence in class reflects your commitment to the course and will facilitate your grasp of the course material. Missing more than two sessions (excused or unexcused) will negatively impact your overall grade.

Writing and Speaking Guidelines:

Very Effective (4): A clear message that weaves experience and practice with concepts and ideas to reach conclusions that are relevant and easily understandable. Key issues are identified, and references to readings, class lectures and other experiences are used appropriately. Examples are used to make abstractions and theoretical ideas clear. The communication stands by itself.

Effective (3): A mixed message. The person mixes thoughts and interpretations with irrelevant material. The ideas are there, but the integration is uneven. The person has not gone into sufficient depth to make the message clear to the recipient.

Non-effective (2): A message that is too simple. Facts and ideas are sparse and obvious. Conclusions are too brief and, while basically correct, are either 1) too general and broad, or 2) simple truths that really cannot be debated.

Irresponsible (1): A communication that could have been written or spoken without having taken the course – a communication that is incomplete in scope.

Non-responsive (0): Does not contribute to class discussions.

Your written and oral effectiveness hinges on the quality of what is being conveyed, not on mere quantity or “air time”. Be concise and succinct.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Session 1: August 27, 2012

Topics: Introduction to course, review syllabus, overview on the history of strategy

Session 2: September 3, 2012

Labor Day: Academic and Administrative Holiday

Session 3: September 10, 2012

Topic: Brief History and Beginnings of Organizational Strategy and Design

- 1) Dobbin & Baum (2000), Introduction: Economics meets sociology in strategic management, *Advances in Strategic Management*, vol. 17, pp 1-26.
- 2) Kiechel (2010), *The Lords of Strategy*, ch 1, Strategy as a case to be cracked, pp. 1-12, Harvard Business Press.
- 3) Kiechel (2010), *The Lords of Strategy*, ch 2, Bruce Henderson defines the subject, pp. 13-30, Harvard Business Press.
- 4) Kiechel (2010), *The Lords of Strategy*, ch 3, The experience curve delivers a shock, pp. 31-45, Harvard Business Press.

Session 4: September 17, 2012

Topic: Organizational Context for Strategic Design: External

- 1) Hill & Jones* (2013), ch. 2, External analysis: the identification of opportunities and threats, pp. 45-80.
- 2) Porter (2008), *The Five Competitive Forces That Shape Strategy*, Harvard Business Review, 78-93.

Session 5: September 24, 2012

Topic: Organizational Context for Strategic Design: Internal

Critical Essay 1 DUE

- 1) Hill & Jones* (2013), ch. 3, Internal analysis: distinctive competencies, competitive advantage, and profitability, pp. 81-116.
- 2) Thinking strategically: SWOT/TOWS framework (distributed/posted)

Session 6: October 1, 2012

Topic: Where all the Firms are Above Average (from special edition of *Advances in Strategic Management*)

- 1) Barney (2000), Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage, *Advances in Strategic Management*, 17, 203-227.
- 2) Stinchcombe (2000), Social structure and organizations, *Advances in Strategic Management*, 17, 229-259.
- 3) Barney (2000), Context is crucial: commonalities, differences, and subtle differences, *Advances in Strategic Management*, 17, 261-269.
- 4) Stinchcombe (2000), On equilibrium, organizational form, and competitive strategy, *Advances in Strategic Management*, 17, 271-284.

Session 7: October 8, 2012

Topic: Developing Competitive Advantage

- 1) Hill & Jones* (2013), ch. 4: Building competitive advantage through functional-level strategy, pp. 117-154.
- 2) Hill & Jones* (2013), ch. 5: Building competitive advantage through business-level strategy, pp. 155-190.

Session 8: October 15, 2012: MIDTERM (1 Hour)

Topic: Competitive Advantage through Difference

- 1) Porter (1996), What is strategy?, Harvard Business Review, 61-78.
- 2) Carroll (1993). A sociological view of why firms differ, Strategic Management Journal, 14, 237-49.

Session 9: October 22, 2012

Critical Essay 2 DUE

Topic: Competitive Advantage: Difference vs. Similarity

- 1) Deephouse (1999), To be different, or the same? It's a question (and theory) of strategic balance, Strategic Management Journal, 20 (2), 147-166.
- 2) DiMaggio & Powell (1983), The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields, American Sociological Review, 48(2), 147-160.

Session 10: October 29, 2012

Topic: Competing in New Environments and Designing for Strategy

- 1) Hill & Jones* (2013), ch. 6, Business level strategy and the industry environment, pp 191-226.
- 2) Hill & Jones* (2013), ch. 8, Strategy in the global environment, pp. 263-305.
- 3) Organization Design and Strategy: Reading will be in 'Reader'

Session 11: November 5, 2012

Critical Essay 3 DUE

Topic: Designing Firms to be Efficient and Innovative: The Ambidextrous Firm

- 1) Miles, Snow, Meyer, & Coleman, Organizational strategy, structure, and process, Academy of Management Review, 3(3), 546-562.
- 2) O'Reilly & Tushman (2004), The ambidextrous organization, Harvard Business Review, 74-81.
- 3) Raisch & Birkenshaw (2008), Organizational ambidexterity: antecedents, outcomes, and moderators, Journal of Management, 34(3), 375-409.

Session 12: November 12, 2012

Veteran's Day: Academic and Administrative Holiday

Session 13: November 19, 2012

Topic: A New Perspective: Blue Ocean Strategy

- 1) Kim & Mauborgne (2004), Blue ocean strategy, Harvard Business Review, 2-10.
- 2) Kim & Mauborgne (2005), Blue ocean strategy: From theory to practice, California Management Review, 47(3), 105-121.
- 3) Kim and Mauborgne (2009), How strategy shapes structure, Harvard Business Review, 2-10.

Session 14: November 26, 2012

Critical Essay 4 Due

Topic: Status, Reputation, and Strategy

- 1) Podolny (1993), Status based models of market competition, American Journal of Sociology, 98, 829-872.
- 2) Fombrun & Shanley (1996), What's in a name? Reputation building and corporate strategy, Academy of Management Journal, 33(20), 233-258.
- 3) Review

Session 15: December 3, 2012

Reading, Review, Recitation Week

Session 16: December 10, 2012

Final Exam