CR 505: ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT

COURSE MATERIALS:


ISBN 978-1-4129-3979-9 (pbk). Readings from this book will be identified as “Images” in the course schedule.

Journal Articles and cases will be provided either in print or via Blackboard. Those articles that come from McKinsey will be identified as “M”, and those from the Conference Board as “C” in the course schedule. Articles from other journals will be provided.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An examination of the concepts of organizational efficiency and effectiveness, which introduces non-economic variables into the total management equation. This course will stress organization structure and process as key determinants of organizational survival and success. Emphasis will be on affective dimensions, which view the organization as an economic-socio-technical system. The roles, responsibilities, and contributions of the general manager will be emphasized.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course has two objectives. First, to provide you with a systematic and critical understanding of organizational theory and research and the factors involved in the functioning and analysis of complex organizations. Second, to show how these ideas can serve as practical tools for the analysis and management of organizational situations. The topics covered in the course have been chosen to allow you to analyze the organizational context in which you find yourself, both to aid understanding and to provide an improved basis for action.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Understand the complexity of real life organization and management.
2. Develop and refine students’ capacities for integrating multiple points of view.
3. Become independent and critical thinkers.
4. Achieve new insights and refine skills of interpretation.
5. Understand organization and management so that students can use this understanding as individuals in everyday organizational life.
6. Be able to apply theories to improve the practice of management.
7. To explore the practice of management across our cultural and geographic boundaries.
8. To understand the new roles emerging in organizations as a result of innovations in technology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires a good deal of reading, reflection, writing and virtual participation! You are expected to prepare prior to each meeting, to raise issues for thought and discussion, and to engage your fellow students in meaningful dialogue. Your willingness to explore, as well as contribute ideas that facilitate learning and personal development is essential.
FORMAL REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCHEME

1. A PRELIMINARY CASE STUDY REPORT (15%)

The aim of this report is to get you started on the case study at an early stage, and to get you into a frame of mind which is analytical in the sense that it is constantly attempting to create a diagnostic reading relating theory and practice, taking the ideas discussed in the class and applying them to the situation being studied. This report should be no more than 10 double-spaced typewritten pages and include the following:

(a) A brief account of the situation being investigated, providing sufficient information for the reader to understand the nature of the organization and its context. This section should include relevant background information as well as a clear statement of the focus of your case study. For example, it is appropriate to provide information on the age, size, and history of the organization, the product or services it provides, and the general nature of its environment. The purpose of this is to orient the reader, so that he or she can acquire an understanding of the industry or sector with which you are dealing, and the general trends it is facing. It is a good idea to do this as soon as you have selected a situation for analysis, preferably after the first week of class.

The account should also offer a clear, concise statement of the problem, issue, or situation you will be examining as a focus for your case study. This is a critical dimension of your paper that cannot be overemphasized. Recall that our objective in this course is always to demonstrate the relevance of sound theory to practical organizational issues. In order to assure that both your initial and final case analyses are firmly rooted in a specific situation or series of events, it is essential for you to explicitly identify this at the onset of your analysis. This will enable your reader to distinguish the direction and purpose of your analysis. In addition, it will provide you with a useful point of reference for determining what information about your organization should be included in your report. This introductory section should not exceed three pages in length.

(b) A series of sections applying each of the perspectives discussed in class to the case situation. Each class will give an image or metaphor through which you can see and understand the organization you are studying. It is your job to try to apply these ideas in practice, identifying the detailed ways in which the different metaphors relate to your particular organization.

One useful way of doing this is to keep a course journal. After each class, ask yourself the question: How does this metaphor relate to the organizational situation that I am studying? Take the ideas that you have been given and sketch them on the left-hand side of a sheet of paper. Then use the right-hand side of this sheet to demonstrate where and when they apply in the situation being studied. This attempt to link theory and practice provides the basis for each stage of analysis. Each week you should be able to write a section of your preliminary report showing the relevance of the metaphor under consideration. By the time that you are required to
submit the preliminary report, you will thus have already performed most of the
difficult work.

Make sure that the report is written in a professional manner. It will be judged
according to the quality of analysis and presentation, in accordance with the criteria
listed below.

2. THE FINAL CASE STUDY REPORT (35%)

The purpose of this report is to produce a professional analysis of the situation
being studied. The preliminary report will have given you an opportunity to explore
the situation from different points of view. You are now required to:

(a) Present the situation you have studied as a case description (similar to the case
studies examined in class), followed by

(b) Your analysis of the situation.

The report should not exceed twelve double-spaced typewritten pages.

The different metaphors that we discuss in class fit different situations with different effects. Which
metaphor or combination of metaphors best accounts for your situation? In the preliminary report, you
had the luxury of being able to hedge your bets by looking at the same situation from a number of
different points of view. In the final report, you will be expected to use the insights that have emerged
from this process to produce the best analysis or “storyline” that you can (For more details, see
Chapter 11 of Images of Organization). This will call upon your ability to use your data and to judge
their significance. For example, you may find that your case is best understood as a situation of
organizational politics, one of classic bureaucracy, or one that is best understood in terms of the
inability of the organization to adapt to its environment. Only time will tell. You cannot make this
judgment early in the course—you will have to wait until you have finished the preliminary analysis. If
you are successful in this final stage of the project, you will find that you have a much deeper
understanding of the situation studied than you did at the beginning of the course.

Your task in writing the final report is to communicate this understanding to the
reader.

Whereas in the preliminary report you have been asked to write within a structure that requires you to
apply each of the metaphors discussed in class to the case, this is not a requirement for the final
report. If the idea of viewing organizations through metaphor has served its purpose, the metaphors
will have generated useful insights. Your task now is to use these in any way you can without being
constrained by the need to stick to one particular metaphor or combination of metaphors – though this
is clearly an option if you so desire. The criteria for evaluating this report (which also apply to the
interim report) are listed below.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE REPORTS

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the preliminary and final reports:

• The professionalism with which the report is presented.
• The **comprehensiveness and care** with which the case situation being analyzed is described.

• The **complexity** of the case (cases that are very simple and offer little challenge will not necessarily earn a high grade).

• **Demonstrated understanding of relevant theories and concepts**, which can be used to explain the case situation; a discussion of alternative ways of viewing the case will be particularly valuable when relevant

• The **quality** of discussion linking theory to data: the rigor and soundness of your analysis and general conclusions

3. **ACTION-LEARNING BRIEFS and GOOD FIT ANALYSIS (20%)**

You are expected to post three briefs-2 to 3 pages- that are an analyses of (a) situation(s) you encounter in your workplace, or (b) a journal article, management magazine item or newspaper item that is relevant to, and extend your thinking on the topics covered in this course. These briefs should explain the relevance of the topic to the concepts of the course and how it reinforced or changed your thinking about your understanding of organization and management. You will also post a **Good-Fit Analysis** of your company using the Contingency framework model of Chapter 2 (Form will be handed out to students).

Grading criteria will include:

• **Relevance**: How well it reflects and relates to core concepts and course readings

• **Communication**: Effective written communication, including spelling, grammar, etc.

• **Understanding**: How creative, original and insightful it is and that it clearly demonstrates what you have learned from the item you have selected.

• **Action**: How your new insights are influencing the way you act as a leader and/or manager. If you are not a manager, state how your understanding would influence how you will act.

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**GUIDELINES FOR THE PRACTICAL CASE STUDY AND ACTION LEARNING BRIEFS**

*The purpose of this case study is to create an opportunity to apply the ideas and concepts discussed in class and the readings in the analysis of a real organizational situation. The situation may be drawn from your own experience or from some public event on which information is readily available in newspapers, reports, etc. Your choice of situation will be an important one, and will call for considerable judgment*
and discretion on your part in deciding whether it is feasible to use it for the purposes of the case study.

Be sure to maintain a professional stance in relation to matters which are sensitive and confidential, and disguise the source of your project (unless it is drawn from public records) through use of appropriate pseudonyms. Confidentiality and the general conduct of the project are entirely your responsibility, so proceed with caution and ethical care.

In essence, the case study invites you to do the following:

1) Identify an organizational situation that appears to be amenable to some form of analysis: the situation must be sufficiently complex to generate enough material for the writing of a case that meets the specifications described below.

2) Consider the images, concepts and general ideas discussed in class, and see which, if any, help to make sense of the situation being described.

3) Engage in research activity that allows you to test the relevance of the different ideas through the accumulation of relevant information and data.

4) Write up the case study in a way that relates evidence to theory to provide an appropriate analysis and explanation of the situation described.

Successful organizational analysis rests in an ability to examine any given organizational situation so that its fundamental characteristics are made clear. It is not simply a question of spotting problems and applying appropriate solutions. Rather, it hinges on questions such as:

• What is going on in the situation that you are analyzing?

• How can you account for its characteristics and the way they are changing?

  • How can you make sense of the situation and arrive at an interpretation that allows you to say something concrete about it?

Organizational analysis involves a process of thinking about a situation, constructing and reconstructing it in different ways that seem consistent with its nature so that you can say something about it that may provide a basis for intelligent action. If the analysis has been done well, then the course of action that is appropriate for managing or changing the situation will become apparent.

In this course, you will examine a number of different ways of viewing organizations. Each way provides a lens that highlights different aspects of organization.

These different lenses may be applied with varying effect to the situation you are studying – just as a particular set of spectacles may allow you to see a situation in a way that makes more sense than others do.
Your task is to attempt to view through the different lenses and decide which, if any, are appropriate for making sense of the situation with which you are dealing.

The first few weeks of the course will involve learning to see through the different lenses and gaining familiarity with the organization you are studying. Next will come the task of making some determination of the relevance of these different perspectives for explaining the situation. Third will come the task of writing the results of your analysis, in a way that allows the reader to see and understand the nature of the situation you have been studying.

4. PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH VIRTUAL TEAM PROJECTS. (30%)

You are expected to attend all classes and be an active virtual participant.

Participation is encouraged to enable everyone to learn from each other. Contributions will be based on a “quality, not quantity” approach. More details will be discussed in the first class.

You will be assigned to a team with your colleague(s) across the two continents. The expectation is that you will be in regular contact, through whatever means you choose, to craft a paper on the following topic: “Compare and Contrast Cultural Differences in the Practice of Management in Romania and the United States.”

This paper should have at least five research references from each country and should be no more than ten typed pages. Research references refer to academic journal articles or appropriate books; it does not include material from the popular literature such as newspapers and magazines.

Final course grades will be assigned in accordance with the Grading System set forth in the current DeSales University Graduate Division Catalog.

COURSE STRUCTURE/TEACHING-LEARNING METHODOLOGY

The course will be conducted through live meetings, Blackboard and video-conference technology. Students in such an environment are independent and disciplined learners. Therefore, they use colleagues and their instructor as learning resources. The framework of the course is summarized in the following table:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Images Book</td>
<td>Journal articles and management notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Application</td>
<td>Case Studies and exercises</td>
<td>Interim and final case reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Action Learning Briefs

Cross-cultural insights

Outcomes

Virtual team paper project

Theoretical insights Relevant practice

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Consistent virtual class attendance is a must for many reasons, not the least of which is the obvious fact that it is very difficult to contribute to, participate in, or profit from chats if you are not present. Discuss unavoidable absences with the instructor in advance, if possible, and do whatever is necessary to make-up missed activity. A record of an unreasonable number of absences or late postings of assignments may adversely affect the final course grade.

CONDUCT AND INTEGRITY

As graduate students, it is expected that your conduct will be in conformance with the highest level of professional and ethical standards as described in the Graduate Division Catalog.