MNO3303  Organizational Effectiveness

Course Instructor  Dr. Sangchan PARK

Session  Semester 2, 2009/2010

Course Description

This course introduces you to the study of organizational actions in contemporary economic and social environments. The underlying assumption of the course is that organizations, rather than individuals, are critical actors in today’s society. We will examine a variety of theoretical perspectives that can help you to understand the questions of what shapes organizational actions and how organizations influence individuals and society. This course is designed to (a) introduce you to core theoretical concepts and perspectives from classic and contemporary studies of organizations, (b) provide you with opportunities to use these concepts and perspectives in analyzing and understanding contemporary problems about organizations, and (c) encourage you to develop essential skills for successful managers, including problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, group discussion, formal presentation, and written and oral communication.

Course readings

- Additional required and other supplementary readings will be available through electronic reserve in the IVLE

Expectations

We will explore theoretical and practical foundations for understanding modern organizations using a variety of course materials including conceptual articles for professional managers and real-life cases of business organizations. This course emphasizes an integrative perspective linking contemporary problems about organizational effectiveness and classic ideas from theoretical perspectives in a way that is interesting and enjoyable to you.

The lectures are designed to help you to expand upon theoretical ideas from the readings. To get the most from this course, you are required to attend all lectures and take your own notes. This course also requires your substantial involvement. You are expected to come to class
thoroughly prepared to discuss the course textbooks and other readings assigned for that week. Attending and participating in lectures and discussion will help you to understand the material you read and give you an ample opportunity to combine theoretical concepts of organization studies with common problems of organizations.

Discuss actively and thoughtfully the assigned readings. Focus your preparation on the major issues in the readings, such as the premises underlying the theoretical arguments and implications for explaining organizational actions. Your comments will be evaluated in terms of whether they reflect a careful consideration of the material. As your workload grows throughout the semester, you will be increasingly tempted to be a “free rider.” Overcome the temptation. You can get exactly what you put it in.

Learning Team

In order to help you to meet the expectations, we will organize teams—essential learning units in the study of this course. In the first session of the class, you will be required to sign up for a learning team of 4-6 students. Each learning team is expected to work together to prepare for class discussion of readings and cases. While the instructor provides a general overview of the course materials, learning teams provide their analysis of cases and lead the discussion. Your team should be ready to comments on the case’s background and context, the key issues and problems, and a course of action for designing and implementing solutions for the case discussed. Each learning team will also be given team projects and presentations.

Course Evaluation

Evaluation of your performance will be based on a combination of individual and team efforts. The weighting of each of the components of the final grade is shown below.

- Quizzes: 10% (5% each)
- Midterm tests: 40% (20% each)
- Team assignment: 30%
- Attendance and Participation: 20%

Details about each of the course components are provided below.

1. Quizzes (10%)

There will be two in-class quizzes (Week 5 and Week 9). The quizzes can help you to get an early start on studying for the main exams.

2. Midterm tests (40%)

There will be two midterm tests. These tests are to assess your progress and allow you to show your understanding of the perspectives covered in the course. The tests will consist of true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and essay questions. The questions of tests may refer to content covered in the lectures, readings, discussions, videos, exercises, and cases etc, although lectures will be emphasized in greater depth.
The first test (Week 6) will cover all course materials from weeks 1-5 inclusive, and the second test (Week 11) will cover all course materials from weeks 7-10 inclusive. The time, locations and durations of both tests will be announced later in class.

3. Term project (30%)

You have two options for fulfilling the term project requirement.

Option 1 (Group assignment):
Your learning team may choose to identify a recent problem faced by an organization in the last five years and to analyze specific action taken by the organization using organization theories and concepts. The team will then give a formal presentation in class (Week 12/13), and turn in a final report (Week 14). The assignment is designed to provide you with opportunities to (a) apply theoretical concepts to contemporary problems of organizations, (b) enhance your practical understanding of business, organization, and work system design issues, and (c) give a formal presentation in front of a group in a safe classroom environment. In preparing the group assignment, the learning team will collect and incorporate data and evidence from diverse sources including annual reports, newspapers, magazine articles, company records, personal interviews, and other relevant corporate database. All the team members are expected to participate in the presentation, as well as its preparation. In addition to any time allocated for teamwork in class, you will be expected to meet with your teammates outside class time to prepare the team presentation.

Your team will be asked to turn in an outline identifying the organizational problem and the theories and concepts that you plan to discuss in Week 7. If you are not sure you have selected an appropriate organizational problem to study, please contact me. Each team will be randomly assigned a time slot for its presentation during Week 12 and 13. Before your presentation, you should provide a hardcopy of your slides to me. After the presentation, you should upload your file to the course website.

To receive a high grade for your work on this project, you must select appropriate organization theory (or theories) to analyze the organizational problem/solution(s) you have chosen, demonstrate your understanding of the theoretical concepts, and show how they apply to the organization’s action. Your presentation should include: (a) a brief overview of the organization, the problem, and the context in which it took place, (b) an analysis of the action taken by the organization to resolve the problem using appropriate and relevant theoretical concepts, (c) some discussion of the effects or consequences of the action, and (d) an alternative course of action that could have been taken by the organization. Please focus more on linking theoretical perspectives and actual problems of an organization than on creating impressive PowerPoint slides. An excellent presentation is one for which the team uses organization theories and concepts not just accurately and appropriately, but also creatively and critically. Your team members and the other students in class will have an opportunity to ask questions during and after the presentation, and the question-and-answer session will also be evaluated as part of the team’s presentation as well. Finally, the team presentations will be evaluated on their professional quality (e.g., clarity, organization, and delivery). Practicing the presentation together in advance will help you to perform well.

Option 2 (Individual assignment):
You may choose to write a research paper on a topic relevant to this course. A one or two-paged proposal outlining the topic should be turned in Week 7 for my approval. A final paper
is due on the last day of this course (Week 13). If you decide to choose this option, it would be a good idea to contact me in advance.

4. Attendance and participation (20%)

Attendance will be taken each week. If you need to miss a lecture for good reason, such as a medical situation, you should notify me (in advance if possible), and you will not be penalized. A doctor’s note will be expected in case of illness. If you miss one class without prior permission from me, I will let it pass. However, if you miss two classes, you will lose 5% of your course grade, and if you miss three sections, you will lose all 10% of the course grade allocated to participation. In Weeks 12 and 13, when the teams will be presenting their team projects to each other, the penalties for missing classes will be greater: each unexcused absence during these weeks will automatically forfeit 5% of your course grade.

All course sessions involve classroom discussion based on the readings and cases. To get a good grade, you must do the required reading in advance, actively engage in the discussions and exercises, and come prepared to contribute fully to other students. During discussions, the quality as well as the quantity of your participation is important. Valuable comments are those that address the issues under discussion directly, integrate concepts or different perspectives, demonstrate critical thinking, provide relevant examples, or pose insightful questions. Effective discussion depends on your willingness to take risks in raising issues and asking questions. Discussion of the case and other course materials prior to class with members of your learning team is strongly recommended. Individuals will be often called upon, but most participation is voluntary.