

## **ED 761: Higher Education Institutions as Complex Organizations (Fall 2020)**

### **Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education University of Michigan School of Education**

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Class: Tuesday 4-7pm  
Calendar: <https://goo.gl/fBFDY6>

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#### **Course Description:**

How do administrators manage modern postsecondary organizations? And how should they? How does organizational purpose get defined? How do context and environment influence the way we think about the structure and function of an organization? Why is organizational change so difficult? Why are management and change strategies effective in one organizational setting and futile in another? How do power, discrimination, and inequality influence an organization? These questions, and a multitude of similar thoughts, are central to the content of this class.

It is useful for those involved in postsecondary institutions to understand what organizations are, how they function (and dysfunction), and why. Therefore, this course intends to provide you with insights into the functioning of educational organizations by exposing you to a wide range of viewpoints in the literature that portray colleges and universities as complex organizations. This is not a class on how to do your administrative or faculty job; this is a class on how to understand the context in which you work.

To do this, we will delve into a variety of scholarly literatures, examining a variety of theories and concepts as tools for understanding academic environments. We will argue and discuss the merits of these ideas and theories for describing and explaining the reality of colleges and universities as we understand and experience that reality. In the process, we will engage in a dynamic learning process that involves most basically our own understandings of postsecondary environments. That is to say, all of us already use theories to guide our actions and shape our understandings; some are quite explicit but others are implicit. These personal "mental models" must become part of the conscious discussion in the class. No matter what your purpose is in taking the course, one outcome will be a deeper understanding of your own (possibly changing) viewpoint and a better appreciation of others' views.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To provide students with a systematic and critical understanding of organizational theory and research, and the factors involved in the functioning and analysis of

- postsecondary institutions, particularly colleges and universities, as complex organizations.
2. To show how these ideas serve as tools for the analysis of organizational situations. The topics covered in the course are chosen to allow students to make connections to various academic contexts, both to encourage students' reflective understanding and critical analysis, and to provide an improved basis for action.

### **Course Requirements:**

*Class Participation.* As in any graduate course, including a core class, everyone needs to be co-owners of the class and collectively responsible for its quality and outcomes. I take responsibility for the overall design and direction of the course and for the academic requirements, but it will be facilitated as a seminar or inquiry in which we hold ourselves and each other accountable for a strong and rich intellectual enterprise and dialogue.

Your attendance is essential to a successful collective experience. The format of the class requires that each person come prepared to take an active role in class. This means not only having read the assigned materials, but also being prepared to discuss the salient issues, questions, and problems emerging from the readings, to utilize your knowledge and professional experiences in addressing the readings and any class activities, case problems, etc. Class participation also involves opening oneself to challenge and to be challenged by the ideas and topics of the session. Participation is worth 20% of your final grade.

Guidelines for discussion: This classroom will be inclusive of a range of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. It is my job to ensure that everyone is treated with respect, that a wide range of views are heard, and to invite alternative perspectives. We are in this classroom to learn from each other, not just to confirm what we already think we know. Always remember that when we share our own experiences that they will rarely generalize to everyone in the room. We will challenge ideas when needed for a healthy discussion, but never challenge a person or their right to speak. Please listen carefully, especially when you disagree, and assume that everyone is speaking in good faith and with good intentions. Appreciate when a student is “conversationally courageous” and express gratitude for new thoughts and ideas. If a student ever feels that a discussion did not meet these guidelines, or otherwise has left them with negative feelings about the classroom environment, please let me know.

Guidelines for Zoom: These guidelines are designed to make the class as inclusive and productive as possible. Please turn on video during class, but mute audio when not speaking. Please turn off distractions – browsers, social media, and other doodads – and pay extra attention to listening and engaging when people talk. For anyone with hearing difficulties, turn on the live transcript function. All classes will be recorded in the cloud for future use. Feel free to use a virtual background if you'd like to restrict others' view of your living arrangement. If you want to speak, please unmute your microphone, and I will do my best to make sure everyone has a chance to speak. Feel free to use the chat function as a backchannel to ask questions when it's not a good time to interrupt the main

speaker, or if you simply feel more comfortable asking your question that way. I will stop periodically for questions, and will often go to the chat questions first.

*Group Case Development.* The intent of this assignment is to give you a chance to prepare your own case drawn from some organizational aspect or issue in postsecondary education. In small teams, you will write about the case in similar fashion to those examples used in class. The final report calls upon you to provide a complete case description that will be shared with the class. Work on case development and analysis will proceed in the following manner:

1. A brief description of the topic will be due **September 29** (by email; please cc all members of your group).
2. An outline of the major aspects of the case is due **October 20** (by email; please cc all members of the group). This short document should discuss the narrative focus of the case, outline of major events, and describe the sources you intend to use for the case. Students should not change their case topic after this time.
3. For the final case design, you are asked to craft a strong central "story line" describing the key aspects of the case problem. Sufficient detail is necessary for others to make sense of the case problem, but, as authors, the team needs to balance the level of discrete detail with the conceptual threads necessary for the case to be comprehended by the reader. It is important that the case be complex enough to suggest multiple analytic perspectives without becoming too context-specific as to be only understood by those who wrote the case (e.g., watch "insider" language and jargon). More conversation about the drafting of cases will take place throughout the term. Relevant accompanying documentation [attachments, memos, system drawings, etc.] should be turned in with the final case, if you choose to use them, as appendices. Complete cases must be distributed by email on the Friday before the scheduled class presentation. **Group cases will be due one week before the class presentation, with the first papers due November 17 & November 24** (30% of grade). I will upload to Canvas, because your case will be class reading for the following week.

Criteria for evaluating the final case assignment have two parts. The first is the writing of the actual case. Cases will be evaluated for the clarity and professionalism with which the report is presented, the comprehensive care with which the case situation is described and analyzed, and the complexity and relevance of the case. Final cases should be about 20 pages, not including appendices or references.

*Group Panel Presentation.* Each team will lead a discussion about the case as a panel presentation (no PowerPoint). The presentation should illuminate how various theories learned throughout the course apply to the case. Group presentations will be spread across two classes in December. (10% of grade)

*Final Exam.* A final exam will take place on **December 8**. The first part will take place in class over two hours. The second part is written at home and submitted (name

blinded) prior to the in-class exam. Both parts are available now in Canvas. (40% of grade)

### **Course Texts:**

Bastedo, Michael N. 2012. *The Organization of Higher Education: Managing Colleges for a New Era*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Birnbaum, Robert. 1991. *How Colleges Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

March, James G. 1994. *A Primer on Decision Making: How Decisions Happen*. New York: Free Press.

All additional readings are in Canvas.

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

All students are welcome in this course. If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; [ssd.umich.edu](http://ssd.umich.edu)) typically recommends accommodation through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

### **COVID-19**

This course will be primarily if not exclusively online, but we may choose to meet one-on-one or in small groups if there is 100% agreement among the participants. For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. By returning to campus, you have acknowledged your responsibility for protecting the collective health of our community. Any in-person participation in this course is conditional upon adherence to all safety measures mandated by the State of Michigan and the University, including maintaining physical distancing of six feet from others, and properly wearing a face covering in class. Other applicable safety measures may be described in the [Wolverine Culture of Care](#) and the [University's Face Covering Policy for COVID-19](#). Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the [Office for Institutional Equity](#). If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to these safety measures while in a face-to-face class setting, you will be required to participate online.

### **Gender Identity**

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identities. In this class, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we

prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. Remember that all students can and should indicate their personal pronouns via Wolverine access, using the *Gender Identity* tab under *Student Business*. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support your classmates in doing so as well.

### **Policies on Late Papers and Missed Classes**

Papers are accepted late with a penalty of half a grade per week, with exceptions only for medical emergencies and religious holidays. The grade penalty is non-negotiable, but one late assignment does not generally hurt the final grade. Missed classes may also lower the class participation grade. Students who miss three class sessions must withdraw from the course.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **September 1: Introduction to the Course**

Birnbaum, Chapters 1-4

Bastedo, Chapter 1, "Organizing Higher Education: A Manifesto"

### **September 8: Individual Decision Making: Limited Rationality and Rules**

March, Chapter 1, "Limited Rationality"

March, Chapter 2, "Rule Following"

Bastedo, Michael N. 2009. "Conflicts, Commitments, and Cliques in the University: Moral Seduction as a Threat to Trustee Independence." *American Educational Research Journal* 46: 354-386.

Bastedo, Michael N. 2017. "Cognitive Repairs in the Admissions Office." Unpublished paper.

### **September 15: Group Decisions and Implicit Bias**

Bastedo, Chapter 8, "Diversity: A Bridge to the Future?" (Smith)

Banaji, Mahzarin R., Max H. Bazerman, and Dolly Chugh. 2003. "How (Un)Ethical Are You?" *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 56-64.

Ely, Robin J. and David A. Thomas. 2001. "Cultural Diversity at Work: The Effects of Diversity Perspectives on Work Group Processes and Outcomes." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46: 229-273.

Rivera, Lauren. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77: 999-1022.

Case Study: Strategic Plans for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (U-M units)

### **September 22: Ambiguity and Organizations**

March, Chapter 5, "Ambiguity and Interpretation"

Birnbaum, Chapter 7, "The Anarchical Institution" [optional]

Cohen, Michael D. and James G. March. 1974. "Leadership in an Organized Anarchy." Pp. 195-229 in *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Weick, Karl. 1976. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21: 1-19.

Case Study: University of Colorado

### **September 29: Bureaucratic Structure & Governance**

Birnbaum, Chapter 5, "The Bureaucratic Institution"

Bastedo, Chapter 3, "Governance Research" (Hearn & McLendon) [optional]

Clark, Burton R. 1993. "The Problem of Complexity in Modern Higher Education." Pp. 263-279 in Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock (eds.), *The European and American University Since 1800: Historical and Sociological Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Birnbaum, Robert. 1989. "The Latent Organizational Functions of the Academic Senate: Why Senates Do Not Work But Will Not Go Away." *Journal of Higher Education* 60: 423-443.

Ray, Victor. 2019. "A Theory of Racialized Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 84: 26-53.

Case Study: Georgetown University

### **October 6: Workshop: Design Thinking for Organizational Change**

Brown, Tim. 2008, June. "Design Thinking." *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 84-92.

IDEO. 2017. *Design Thinking for Educators* (pp. 1-37 only). Palo Alto: IDEO.

Podcast: Meet [Pounce, the Georgia State Chatbot](#).

Case Study: The Good Kitchen or Better Service, Faster

### **October 13: Group Work on Case Studies**

Normally, we would have Fall Break at this point. This week, work with your group at a time of your choosing on your case study development. I am also available to meet with groups to help facilitate the work on a tutorial basis.

### **October 20: Disciplines and Professions**

Abbott, Andrew. 1988. Chapters 1 & 5 in *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Expert Division of Labor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Abbott, Andrew. 2002. "The Disciplines and the Future." Pp. 205-230 in Steven Brint (Ed.), *The Future of the City of Intellect: The Changing American University*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Small, Mario Luis. 1999. "Departmental Conditions and the Emergence of New Disciplines: Two Cases in the Legitimation of African-American Studies." *Theory and Society* 28: 659-707.

Case Study: Texas Tech University

### **October 27: Strategy**

Bastedo, Chapter 2, "Strategic Thinking in Higher Education Research" (Gumport)  
Bastedo, Chapter 5, "Institutional Strategy" (Toma)

Porter, Michael E. 1996 (November/December). "What is Strategy?" *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 61-78.

Winston, Gordon. 1999. "Subsidies, Hierarchy and Peers: The Awkward Economics of Higher Education." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13: 13-36.

Case Study: Syracuse University

### **November 3: Election Day**

I am supporting the student petition (Safe Election) to teach class asynchronously on Election Day to maximize student opportunities to participate in the presidential election.

Please work with your group this week on a different day to further your case study due on November 17 or 24. I am also available to meet with groups to help facilitate the work.

### **November 10: Resource Dependence and Academic Capitalism**

Bastedo, Michael N. and Nicholas A. Bowman. 2011. "College Rankings as an Interorganizational Dependency: Establishing the Foundation for Strategic and Institutional Accounts." *Research in Higher Education* 52: 3-23.

Jaquette, Ozan, Bradley R. Curs, and Julie R. Posselt. 2016. "Tuition Rich, Mission Poor: Nonresident Enrollment and the Changing Proportions of Low-Income and Underrepresented Minority Students at Public Research Universities." *The Journal of Higher Education* 86: 635-673.

Slaughter, Sheila and Gary Rhoades. 2005. "The Theory of Academic Capitalism." Pp. 1-34 in *Academic Capitalism in the New Economy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Case Study: Paul N. Courant and Marilyn Knepp. 2002. "Activity-Based Budgeting at the University of Michigan." Pp. 137-160 in Douglas Priest, et al. (Eds.), *Incentive-Based Budgeting Systems in Public Universities*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar. [also read update]

### **November 17: Organizational Socialization**

Tierney, William G. 1997. "Organizational Socialization in Higher Education." *Journal of Higher Education* 68: 1-16.

Deil-Amen, Regina, and James E. Rosenbaum. 2002. "The Unintended Consequences of Stigma-Free Remediation." *Sociology of Education* 75: 249-268.

Reyes, Daisy Verduzco. 2015. "Inhabiting Latino Politics: How Colleges Shape Students' Political Styles." *Sociology of Education* 88: 302-319.

Case Study: Student Presentations

### **November 24: Thanksgiving Week Recess**

**December 1: Practical Organizational Change**

Heath, Chip and Dan. 2010. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*. New York: Crown.

Read Chapter 1 and “Switch In One Page.” Then read 2-3 chapters that most intrigue you, or read the whole book over Thanksgiving break.

Weick, Karl E. 1984. “Small Wins: Redefining the Scale of Social Problems.” *American Psychologist* 39: 40-49. [optional]

Case Study: Gender Equity at HBS  
Student Presentations

**December 8: Final Exam**

Revised: September 1, 2020