

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND COMMERCE

COURSE OUTLINE  
WINTER, 1998

**THEORY OF FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**Course:** OT 3110 A3 3 (3-0) UT (3) - Theory of Formal Organizations  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 12:20 p.m.  
Room B 201

**Instructor:** D. C. (Don) Harper  
Office - H129 (Early Childhood Development Suite)  
Phone numbers - On campus 532-2053;  
Off campus 532-5771; Home 532-4338.

Office Hours - 10:30 - 11:00 Tue. & Thur. or by appointment.

**Required Text:** Robbins, Stephen P. (1990). Organizational Theory, Structure, Design, and Applications, (Third Edition). Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.

Nature and Purpose of the Course

This course will provide an introduction to the Theory of Formal Organizations. Through reading, class discussion, student presentations, assignments and examinations, the nature of formal organizations will be explored from a sociological perspective. The purpose is to gain both a greater understanding of the historical development of organizational theory, and of its contemporary understandings and applications. Throughout the course the focus will be on organizational effectiveness.

We all participate in organizations on a daily basis, and therefore all have considerable experiential knowledge of them. In this course we will synthesize theoretically-based empirical research from the social and management sciences with personal experience and intuition. Personal experience will provide insight into the theoretical models and concepts found in the literature; these models and concepts will provide new frameworks with which to view past and present organizations, and to project what future developments might be. The purpose of the course is not to come up with a set of "truths," but rather to develop comfort and confidence with useful ways of explaining organizational structure, design and change with respect to the pursuit of effectiveness.

### Objectives of the Course

1. To develop an understanding of the major *theories* of organizational structure and process including the distinction of various organizational designs;
2. To develop the ability to apply these theoretical models and concepts to specific situations and problems respecting the development and change of organizational structure;
3. To identify relationships between the *dimensions* of organizational structure (*complexity, formalization, and centralization*) and organizational effectiveness;
4. To obtain a clear understanding of the *structural imperatives* or determinants of organizational structure (*strategy, size, technology, environment and power-control*), and relationships among them.
5. To develop an understanding of the principles of managing organizational culture, conflict and change.
6. To develop the ability to communicate effectively with others regarding theoretical and experiential knowledge of organizations.

### Course Evaluation

The purpose of all evaluative activities is to enhance the learning process. The goal of each activity will be to ensure that students know more as a result of doing it rather than having it be a static measurement of "what they know" at a given point in time. All assignments are designed to make you think about, and apply, the information you have gained through reading, class presentations, and discussion. The goal of the course is to have each student achieve a grade with which he/she is satisfied. Students with concerns about any evaluative activity, before it takes place or after it has been completed, are strongly encouraged to speak to me about it. The following activities will be scheduled:

<u>Date (Due)</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Course Weight</u>
February 3 - March 31	Presentations (2 x 10)	20
March 5	Mid-Term Examination	15
April 2	Research Paper	25
April (20 - 28)	Final Examination	30
Throughout	Participation	<u>10</u>
		100

*Presentations:* Each student will be required to do two presentations to the class. On January 20th, a schedule of topics and dates will be circulated in class. Each student will review the schedule, and identify two choices and an alternate choice. On January 22nd, I will circulate the final schedule. Each presentation should be 20 to 30 minutes including time for other students to respond with questions or elaborations. Topics will be drawn from the Course Schedule. You be expected to explain the topic clearly, and to elaborate on the material found in the textbook by using at least one outside source, and/or relevant personal experience.

*Participation:* Participation will be evaluated on the basis of student demonstration that the assigned readings have been done; questions and comments that lead to greater understanding of the material is the benchmark.

*Mid-Term Examination:* The mid-term exam will be a combination of "objective" questions (concept identification), and short essay questions dealing with concept application (e.g. compare/contrast concepts, apply them to cases or examples, give original examples).

*Research Paper:* Each student will submit a research paper of approximately 2,500 words (ten pages) in length. A complete *style guide* will be distributed early in February. All papers will require library research; students may chose to incorporate original analysis if they wish. Papers will be marked for presentation (style, grammar, spelling) as well as content.

*Final Examination:* The final examination will include material from the whole course, and will be a combination of "objective", short-answer, essay and case analysis questions.

### Course Schedule

January 6	Class and Course Introductions
<u>Introduction</u>	
January 8	Overview: Definitions and Perspectives - (Ch.1: 1-28)
January 13	History and Development of Organizational Theory (Ch.2: 29-46)
January 15	Organizational Effectiveness (Ch.3: 47-80)
January 20 - 22	Dimensions of Organizational Structure (Ch. 4: 81-118)

The Determinants: What Causes Structure? (*Imperatives*)

January 27 - 29	Strategy (Ch. 5: 119-148)
February 3	Size (Ch. 6: 149-174)
February 12 - 17	Technology (Ch. 7: 175-203)
February 19	Environment (Ch. 8: 204-236)
February 24 - 26	WINTER BREAK - no classes
March 3	Power-Control(Ch. 9: 237-274)
March 5	MIDTERM EXAM

Characteristics of Organizational Design

March 10	Design Options (Ch.10: 275-307)
March 12	Bureaucracy (Ch. 11: 308-328)
March 17	Adhocracy (Ch. 12: 329-357)

Applications and Issues

March 19	Managing the Environment (Ch. 13: 358-380)
March 24	Managing Organizational Change (Ch. 14: 381-409)
March 26 - 31	Managing Organizational Conflict (Ch.15: 410-436)
April 2 - 7	Managing Organizational Culture (Ch. 16: 437-465)
April 9	Managing Organizational Evolution (Ch. 17: 466- 491)
April 14	Review

**PLEASE NOTE:** You are expected to have completed the readings for the topics identified above prior to the days that they are scheduled to be covered in class. A majority of class time will be spent in discussion. From time to time you will be asked to read one of the case studies found at the end of the book in preparation for the following week's class discussion.