Course Description

Organizational Behavior (OB) examines people’s thoughts, feelings, and behavior in organizational contexts. The goal of this course is to provide you with an overview of the main theories, concepts, and research in this field. You will learn about employee motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, negotiation, conflict, stress, diversity, organizational culture and development, leadership, teams, among other topics. This course emphasizes the application of OB topics to real world problems and issues in the workplace. Class time will be spent on class discussions, cases, exercises, and guest speakers.

Course Objectives

1. To understand, critique, and analyze the theories, concepts, and research in OB.
2. To apply the course material to real world problems and issues in the workplace.
3. To further develop your leadership and managerial skills.
4. To learn to think critically about resolving issues related to the world of work.

Faculty Bio

Dr. Seyranian earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in applied social psychology from Claremont Graduate University and a B.A. in psychology and government cum laude from Claremont McKenna College. She has worked in public relations/marketing in Europe and North America and helped to improve organizational effectiveness in various industries including in higher education, petroleum/energy, event design and planning, legal services, IT, and real estate. In addition to teaching and consulting, Dr. Seyranian conducts basic and applied research on leadership, communication, organizational change, diversity, and persuasion. Her research has been published in peer-reviewed outlets such as The Leadership Quarterly, Journal of Social Issues, and Group Processes and Intergroup Relations.

Textbooks and Books


Organizational Case Study

The organizational case study will give you experience in assessing OB-related problems/issues facing a real-world organization and applying the course material to formulate recommendations on how to improve these OB problems. You will write a 10-15 page paper of the organizational case study and present your case study to the class in a 30 minute presentation.

For this assignment, your first task is to identify a real-world organization. You should begin looking for a case study organization during the first week of classes. You may choose to study an organization where you are currently (or previously employed). On September 12th, turn in a short description (one paragraph) of your organizational case study. Once you have identified your case study organization, your job is to closely examine its problems and issues. You should investigate at least four OB-related problems/issues that are posing a challenge to the organization (e.g., low employee motivation, high turnover, globalization, occupational stress). What problems or issues did you uncover? What steps is the organization taking to address the problem or issue (if any)? Your assessment needs to be evidence-based. Be sure to corroborate your analysis with employee interviews, quotes, observations (e.g., illustrative examples, anecdotes), secondary sources (e.g., company histories, brochures and annual reports, material from internet sites), and/or any other means at your disposal. Then, your second task is to propose specific recommendations to improve the problem or issues and make a cogent case as to why your proposed solution(s) might work by drawing on relevant course material (theory/research studies). More information will be provided in a class handout.

Group Discussion Leader

Each student will engage in the role of group discussion leader for 1-2 class sessions. The main task is to encourage your peers to engage in a critical and constructive discussion of the issues, challenges, and dilemmas facing organizations that are raised in the journal articles and textbook readings only. Note that the Group Discussion Leader is not responsible for covering or leading
Harvard Business School cases. To set a foundation for class discussion, begin by reviewing the key theories, research studies, and issues raised in the required journal articles and textbook chapters (30-45 minutes). Use PowerPoints and/or provide handouts to students and the professor. Next, be creative in designing a 1 hour session that will challenge your peers and stimulate dialogue and interactions for the class related to the readings. For instance, you may pose a series of provocative and interesting discussion questions. Some ideas include comparing and contrasting approaches, assumptions, methods, and conclusions of the articles. How do the theories, concepts, and research build on one another? What questions do they raise? What are the limitations to the approaches? When and how might they be applicable to real-world situations and when might they not? Another idea is to identify key gaps or debates in the literature and have the group craft solutions to key problems in the area. You will be graded on the extent to which you show that you have mastered the content of the readings for that week and put in significant thought to create challenging questions and activities that encourage critical integration, debate, interaction, and dialogue in the class.

Harvard Business Case Studies

In addition to assigned readings, most weeks you will have one (or two) Harvard Business Cases to prepare. Cases are designed to simulate a real world situation. While nothing can top personal experience, case analysis can provide a rich milieu for developing the kind of knowledge that can only be gained through years of experience. Cases will help you to learn how to diagnose problems, sort through information, engage in critical integration of theory with real-world applications, problem solve, and generate your own management principles. However, these cases often provide inadequate attention to psychological theories and factors. As such, the main challenge in the course is to incorporate the OB theories/concepts/research from that week’s readings (or from other weeks if applicable) to arrive at a decision or take a stance about the case situation. As such, you should read the assigned readings for the week prior to reading the case. The case will likely contain some irrelevant details and be riddled with ambiguity, just like the real world. There are no “correct” answers or no hard and fast solutions. It is your job to analyze the psychological factors in the case and employ the course material to come up with a cogent and evidence-based position. To adequately prepare for case discussion, you should carefully read each case (twice), analyze it, and write detailed case notes (typed) that you can use to guide your participation during class. The format of case notes will be discussed in class. You are required to turn in a hard copy of your case notes at the beginning of each class for grading. On the day that you are a group discussion leader, you will be exempt from turning in your case notes but you should still read and prepare to discuss the case.

Class Participation and Guidelines

A key to managerial success is to be able to learn from your own experience and from your peers. My goal is to provide an environment where all of us will be sharing and learning from each other. Therefore, each of us must take responsibility not only for our own learning, but also for the learning of the group. It is imperative that you come to class energized, prepared, and ready to participate in class. Be willing to take a risk to actively commit yourself in front of the class. If you tend to be shy, this is your chance to overcome it.

You will be graded on your class preparation and the quality of your contribution after each class. I will give you a list of dimensions that I will your class participation grade on. I will deduct points
for more than one class absence and any evidence of mental disengagement during class (e.g., checking Facebook, chatting with your neighbor, texting).

I will do what I can to foster a challenging but supportive learning environment based on mutual respect. Some of the topics such as gender, culture, race, sexual orientation, and individual differences may raise sensitive issues. If you have any questions or issues, let me know and we will work out any concerns to allow learning to be as effective as possible.

**Policies**

**Late Assignments and Papers.** Late case study final papers will be marked down one letter grade for every 24-hour period it is overdue. Late HBS case notes will not be accepted.

**Academic Honesty and Integrity.** Students are responsible for honest completion and representation of their work. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: [http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/](http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/). Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/).

**Sexual Harassment.** Immediately bring matters of sexual harassment to the attention of the instructor, department chair, or other university authority.

**Special Needs.** If you have a disability (physical, learning, or psychological) that may make it difficult for you to carry out the course work as outlined and/or requires accommodations such as recruiting note takers, readers, or extended time on exams or assignments, please contact me and Disability Services & Programs (DSP) during the first week of classes. Keep in mind that students who request academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Note.** The syllabus and/or course schedule may be modified at my discretion. I will announce any changes in class, via email, or Blackboard.
Course Schedule

Week 1, August 22 – Syllabus and Course Introduction
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 1
- Locke, Editor’s Introduction

Week 2, August 29 – Overview of Organizational Behavior and Methods
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 2
- Reading from the Case Study Handbook posted on Blackboard

Week 3, September 5 – Labor Day (No Class)

Week 4, September 12 – Recruitment, Socialization, and Performance
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 3 & 4
- Locke, Chapters 1-3 (Intelligence, Conscientiousness, Interviews)
- Guest Speaker: Dr. Johan Julin
- Organizational Summary Due

Week 5, September 19 – Work Attitudes and Counterproductive Behavior
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 5 & 6
- Locke, Chapters 6 (Promoting Job Satisfaction)

Week 6, September 26 – Motivation
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 8 & 9
- Locke, Chapter 10 (Self-Efficacy) and 11 (Empowerment)
- Motivation exercise in class

Week 7, October 3 – Managing Stress, Emotions, and Work-Family Balance
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 7 (Stress)
- Locke, Chapter 31 (Work-family balance)
- Prepare HBS Case: Irene Rodakis (multi-media case)
Week 8, October 10 – Conflict and Negotiation
- Fisher & Ury, read the entire book
- In Locke, Chapter 28 (Manage conflict through negotiation and mediation).

Week 9, October 17 – Management and Leadership
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 10 (pp. 303-326)
- In Natemeyer & Hersey, read the following:
  - McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise, pp. 63-72
  - Blanchard, One Minute Management, pp. 349-353
  - Kouzes & Proser, Fundamental Leadership Practices, pp. 354-359
  - Kotter, Management and Leadership, pp. 360-373
  - Greenleaf, Servant Leadership, pp. 374-377
  - Bennis & Thomas, Crucibles of Leadership, pp. 384-392
  - Machiavelli, Is it better to be loved or feared? pp. 395-397.
- Prepare two HBS Cases:
  - Snook et al. (2005). *Coach Knight: The will to win*. 9-406-043

Week 10, October 24 – Work Teams, Identity, and Trust
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 12
- In Natemeyer & Hersey, read the following:

Week 11, October 31 – Organizational Diversity


**Week 12, November 7 - Organizational Structure and Culture**
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 13-14
- Locke, Chapter 22 (Design structure to fit strategy)

**Week 13, November 14 –Organizational Change and Development**
- Jex & Britt, Chapter 15 (Organizational Development)
- Locke, Chapter 29 (Continuous learning, change, and realignment)
  - The simulation will take 90 minutes. Once you have completed it, write a brief 1-2 paper on your change management strategy, the results you obtained, and what lessons you can take away from this simulation. Papers are due in class and will count towards your participation grade.
- *Guest Speaker: Joe Herold, The Herold Consulting Group.*

**Week 14, November 21**
- Organizational Case Study presentations

**Week 15, November 28**
- Organizational Case Study presentations

**Week 16, December 2**
- Final Organizational Case Study paper due