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Spring 2-1-2019

### COMX 491.01: ST - Organization and Identity

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**Communication 491: Organizations and Identity**  
**Spring 2019**  
**Syllabus**

Instructor: Greg Larson, Professor  
Office: LA 345  
E-mail: greg.larson@mso.umt.edu  
Office Phone: 243-4161  
Office Hours: Tuesdays from 2-3 & Thursdays from 10 to 12.  
\*\*\*\*Or by appointment\*\*\*\*

**Texts:**

Larson, G. S. & Gill, R. (2017). *Organizations and Identity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Other readings available online through Moodle.

**Nature of the Course**

Identity remains one of the most compelling research areas in the social sciences and in organizational communication in particular. The enduring popularity of identity research likely results from asking foundational questions relevant to all humans: “Who am I?” and “How should I act?” (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008). The primary purposes of this class are to introduce students to contemporary theories/concepts related to identity and to show how identity intersects with control and resistance in organizational contexts. Several broad assumptions frame this course. First, language, talk, narratives and/or Foucauldian notions of discourse (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004) are central for understanding the construction of the self. Identities are thus produced by as well as reflected through language use at various levels from micro-conversations to broad ideological discourses. Second, identities are regulated and controlled. In many contemporary organizations, workers are controlled not through coercive means, but rather through identity regulation. Finally, control and resistance go hand in hand, when you have control, you have resistance. The relationship between control and resistance will be shown to be complicated, complementary and conflicted. Overall, the course will engage these themes in a variety of interrelated ways to explore past, present and future directions for research on organizations and identity.

## Course Objectives

As a result of satisfactorily completing the course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Understand the rise of the individual self as a historical construction of contemporary society.
2. Understand the nature and challenges of identity work.
3. Understand the nature of identity regulation in contemporary organizations.
4. Identify the key ethical communicative responsibilities for managing and regulating identities.
5. Link identity with other key organizational concepts like technology and leadership.
6. Understand the need for diverse perspectives, including social scientific and humanistic, for understanding, creating and managing identities.
7. Develop an understanding of how to study and research identity.
8. Use an identity perspective to solve practical organizational problems.

## Attendance/Punctuality/Participation

The course will be discussion intensive. You are expected to attend and to participate in class. Absences will result in the loss of up to 3 points per day from your participation grade. Also, please come to class on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings.

***\*\*Please be courteous by coming to class on time and turning off cell phones and all other screens.***

## Special Assistance

If some extenuating circumstances beyond your control prevent you from meeting your expectations for your attendance and performance, I expect you to contact me immediately. It is important that you contact me sooner rather than later.

## Notice to Students with Documented Disabilities

I encourage students with disabilities, including but not limited to, chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury and attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, to discuss with me, after class or during my office hours, appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to you. Please contact [Disability Services for Students](#) if you have questions, or call Disability Services for Students (DSS) for voice/text 406.243.2243. You may also fax the Lommasson Center 154 for more information 406.243.5330.

## Due Dates

A late written assignment will be penalized one full grade for each day it is late unless arrangements are made with me ahead of time. Presentations must be delivered on the day that they are due.

## Backup Copies

You are responsible for keeping back-up copies of all work that you do for the class.

## Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#).

## Outside Research

Outside research, beyond the assigned readings, is required for this course.

## Requirements of the Course/Grading

| Assignment   | Points Available |
|--|------------------|
| Participation  | 50               |
| Thought Questions (10 at 10 points each)   | 100              |
| Identity Research Project (3 parts @ 50 pts each)                                      | 150              |
| Final Exam   | 100              |
| <b>Total Points</b>  | <b>400</b>       |
| <b>Graduate Students Only:</b><br><br>Term paper: 200 points<br>Total Points = 600 pts |                  |

Letter grades are figured as follows:

**A = Outstanding - goes beyond expectations**

**B = Good - above average**

**C = Satisfactory - meets minimum requirements**

**D = Unsatisfactory - does not meet some requirements**

**F = Failing -- Does not meet requirements**

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------|----------------|
| A            | 100-93%        |
| A-           | 92-90%         |
| B+           | 89-88%         |
| B            | 87-83%         |
| B-           | 82-80%         |
| C+           | 79-78%         |
| C            | 77-73%         |
| C-           | 72-70%         |
| D+           | 69-68%         |
| D            | 67-63%         |
| F            | Below 63%      |

### **Add/Drop/Grading Option Policy**

As per our departmental policy, you may not drop or change your grading option after the thirtieth instructional day except in the following situations: a) documentable accident or illness, b) no evaluation record for the course, c) documentable family/personal emergency, and d) documentable change in employment schedule that prevents completion of course (ref. relevant university documentation).

| COMX 491 Schedule S19  |  |   |  |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Week                   | Subject  | Readings  | Assignments Due  |
| Week #1<br>Jan 10      | Introduction   |   | <b>Discussion Questions: due <u>Thursday before class each week</u></b>                                |
| Week #2<br>Jan 15 & 17 | Introduction   | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 1<br>Gini (2000) Chapter 1   | Discussion Questions:<br>L&G: Chapt 1:<br>Questions 1-2  |
| Week #3<br>Jan 22 & 24 | Identity and Work/Occupation                           | Arthur Miller: Death of a Salesman (Video)<br>Gini (2011) Chapter 2<br>Sennett (1998) Chapter 1 | <i>Death of a Salesman:</i><br>Discussion Questions  |
| Week #4<br>Jan 29 & 31 | Identity in the Modern World                           | Sennett (1998) Chapter 2<br>Putnam (2015) Chapter 1<br>NYT (2018): <i>What is Identity?</i>     | Discussion Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 1:<br>Questions 3-5  |
| Week #5<br>Feb 5 & 7   | Communicative Approaches To Identity and Organizations | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 2<br>NYT (2015): <i>Writing My Way to a New Self</i>               | Discussion Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 2:<br>Questions 1-2  |
| Week #6<br>Feb 12 & 14 | Communicative Approaches To Identity and Organizations | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 2<br>Ainsworth & Hardy (2004)                                      | Discussion Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 2:<br>Questions 3-5<br><b>Identity Research Project Part 1 Due</b> |
| Week #7<br>Feb 19 & 21 | Forming and Managing Identities                        | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 3<br>NYT (2015): <i>Writing Your Way to Happiness</i>              | Discussion Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 3:<br>Questions 1-2  |

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|---|--|--|---|
| Week #8<br>Feb 26 & 28  | Forming and<br>Managing Identities         | Kondo (1990)<br>Wieland (2010)<br>NYT (2015): <i>A University Recognizes<br/>a Third Gender: Neutral</i> | Discussion<br>Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 3:<br>Questions 3-5  |
| Week #9<br>March 5 & 7  | Researching and<br>Practicing Identity     | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 7   | Discussion<br>Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 7:<br>Questions 1-5  |
| Week # 10<br>March 12 &<br>14   | Fragmenting and<br>Intersecting Identities | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 4<br>Tracy & Trethewey (2005)<br>NYT (2014): <i>Why You Hate Work</i>       | Discussion<br>Questions:<br>L&G: Chapt 4:<br>Questions 1-5<br><b>Research<br/>Project: Part 2<br/>Due</b> |
| Week # 11<br>March 19 &<br>21   | Designing Your Life                        | Burnett & Evans (2016) Intro,<br>Chapter, 1 & Conclusion.<br>NYT (2017) How to be Happy                  | Discussion<br>Questions:<br>Burnett &<br>Evans  |
| Week #12<br>March 26 &<br>28  | Enjoy Spring Break!                        |  |   |
| Week #13<br>April 2 & 4   | Identity and Control                       | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 5   | Discussion<br>Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 5:<br>Questions 1-2  |
| Week #14<br>April 9 & 11  | Identity and Control                       | Barker (1998)<br>Tracy (2000)  | Discussion<br>Questions: L&G:<br>Chapt 5:<br>Questions 3-5  |
| Week #15<br>April 16 & 18   | Identity Connections                       | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 6<br>Nelson & Irwin (2014)  | Discussion ?s:<br>L&G: Chapt 6:<br>Questions 1-2  |
| Week #16<br>April 23 & 25   | Identity Connections                       | Larson & Gill (2017) Chapter 6<br>Parker (2005) Chapter 5  | Discussion ?s:<br>L&G: Chapt 6:<br>Questions 3-5<br><b>Research<br/>Project: Final<br/>Part Due</b>       |
| <b>Final Exam: Tuesday April 30<sup>th</sup> from 1:10 to 3:10 p.m.</b> |  |  |   |

