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PSC 504.01: Organization Theory

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Political Science 504
ORGANIZATION THEORY
Spring 2007

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Class Time: Wednesday 4:00-6:30
Class Location: LA 337

Course Description

This course provides a comprehensive overview of organization theory, particularly as it relates to public management and organizational effectiveness. Our goal is to determine what each major school of thought can tell us about how to structure and manage complex organizations and to develop our own theory of organizational excellence.

Course Objectives

1. To develop skill in theory-building.
2. To increase conceptual and theoretical knowledge.

Required Texts

1. Shafritz, Ott, and Jang, Classics of Organization Theory (Wadsworth, 2004).
2. Jonathan Tompkins, Organization Theory and Public Management (Wadsworth 2005)
3. Bob Stone, Confessions of a Civil Servant (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003)

There are also a few articles on electronic reserve in the library.

Course Requirements

Students are required to read all assigned readings, be prepared to discuss them in class, write five 4-page writing assignments and take a final exam (100 points each).

A = 558-600 points
B = 498-521

A- = 540-557
B- = 480-497

B+ = 522-539
C+ = 462-479

2. Papers should be 3-4 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced (12 font). Each should offer a title and appropriate subheadings, as follows:

[Title]

Introduction

Core Concepts

Core Concept #1

Core Concept #2

Core Concept #3

Analysis

3. Your introduction should a) introduce the school of thought under study, b) articulate the the school's implicit theory of organizational excellence and c) establish the paper's purpose, i.e., to develop an enriched understanding of this school of thought by assessing its relevance for your organization as it continues its pursuit of excellence. Regarding (b), introduce the theory under study as follows: Theory such-and-such holds that organizational excellence is achieved by [doing] x, y, and z.
4. The body of the paper is an exploration of how each core concept in the school's implicit Theory of excellence might be applied to your organization (i.e., what your organization would look like and how it would be managed under this concept). So, be sure to begin each subsection by defining the core concept at issue. Do not offer any judgments about the relevance or applicability of this theory in the body; save judgments for the final section.
5. In the final section, "Analysis," offer your judgments regarding the value, or lack of value, of this theory for your organization.
6. Where appropriate make specific references to the readings so that the instructor can tell that you have read and understood them (no footnotes required). Example: "Taylor believed, for example, that..."

Writing Assignment #1 – Scientific Management Theory

Write an essay analyzing scientific management as a theory of organizational excellence by identifying its core concepts and describing what your organization would look like (how it would be structured, managed and/or operated) if it were organized strictly in accordance with scientific management theory. As you will say in your introduction, the purpose of your paper is to explore the relevance of scientific management theory to your organization as it continues its pursuit of excellence.

Close with an assessment of the value or relevance of this theory to your organization as it pursues a state of excellence (i.e., what elements of this theory are valuable to your organization).

1. Thoroughness of answer. The best essays address a theme or thesis thoroughly and with sufficient detail to demonstrate that the subject is fully understood.
2. Sophistication of analysis. In the best essays, the author does much more than just explain or describe. He or she demonstrates having thought about the subject in depth. The subject is analyzed from many angles and assessed critically.
3. Organization and logical development. The best essays show evidence of prior planning as if they have been outlined in advance. They have a purpose or theme which is introduced in the introduction, developed in the body of the essay and returned to in the conclusion. Paragraphs are well constructed and are linked to each other in a logical sequence using transitional sentences. Arguments, examples, facts, opinions, and details explain the main point and lend credibility to each point being developed.
4. Clarity of expression. In the best essays, words are chosen carefully and sentences are constructed purposefully so that each point the author makes is expressed as exactly, precisely, and clearly as possible.
5. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The best essays are characterized by consistently correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Verbs agree with their subjects. There are no single-sentence paragraphs, sentence fragments, or run-on sentences.

One point will be subtracted for each occurrence of the following:

- single sentence paragraph
- verb-subject disagreement
- sentence fragment (incomplete sentence)
- run-on sentence
- contractions