Lori Qingyuan Yue
Email: qyue@marshall.usc.edu
Phone: 213-740-6972
Office: HOH 513

**Objectives:**

This course is an introduction to the major theoretical approaches and debates in macro-organization theory. As an inter-disciplinary endeavor, macro-organization theory draws on sociology, economics, psychology, and political science to explain the origins, persistence and eclipse of social structures that order economic life. We will familiarize ourselves with some of the classic statements of the major approaches and trace the history of ideas as the field has evolved to the present. Naturally, diversity of perspectives translates into lively debates within the field, and by the end of the course, you should have a good idea of which debates are amenable to empirical resolution and which ones are due to differences in first principles. The purpose of this course is to provide you a roadmap for you to roam the terrain of macro-organization theory and thereby, be prepared to generate original research ideas that extend inquiry in your chosen area of research.

**Course Culture and Pedagogy**

The course is organized as a seminar and thus, your cooperation and willingness to actively participate in these activities will ensure that we create the best learning environment. To make our classes as successful as possible you must read the assigned material for each session - preparation includes reading the material and forming your own assessment in the following generic areas:

1. What is the basic argument/point made by the author(s)? What are its strengths?
2. What are the weaknesses of the argument/point?
3. If you disagree with an argument, what would it take to convince you?
4. What are the scope conditions, under what circumstances is the argument meant to apply, (e.g. only to U.S. non-profits, family businesses in the U.S. etc.)?
5. What modifications would be necessary to extend the argument? Are there critical differences between these authors’ arguments and those of others we have read?
6. Can these differences be resolved through an empirical test?
7. What alternative explanations can account for the findings of the authors?
My expectation of you is that you will always be prepared for a class - you do not have to be right, but you do have to give it your best shot, and be willing to logically put forth a convincing argument in favor of your analysis. My own view is that the best classes are marked by constructive debate. If a student proposes a point that you think is untenable, then say so! Do it in a way that is helpful, but do challenge ideas that you think need to be improved upon. Graduate school is a time to hone your own critical thinking and help your friends hone theirs.

My role is to facilitate and direct the discussion. Your role is to engage each other in developing the best critical understanding of each paper. If you are uncertain, or hesitant about what to do, I have two recommendations: 1) try anyway, 2) talk to me about how to participate.

**Books and Materials**

You must read the compulsory articles mentioned in the reading list and at the minimum recommended number of the optional articles.

In addition, if you like, you might consider purchasing

W. Richard Scott, and Gerald F. Davis 2007, Organizations and Organizing Rational, Natural and Open System Perspectives: Prentice-Hall.

**Evaluation**

1. Class Participation: (Weight 30%) There are two components of participation. One is the regular participation of the class discussion (20%). The other is to serve as the discussant of the class (10%).

2. Memos on required readings for every class: (Weight: 30%) For six of all the sessions, I would like to ask you to write a memo (1 page) that synthesizes lessons from across the readings for a week. You are required to submit six such memos over the course of the term. If you submit more than six memos, your weakest memos will be dropped from your grade. Memos can outline your critical evaluation of the papers and/or talk about their scope conditions, how a better test of the authors’ arguments can be constructed, and how alternative explanations can be ruled out. I expect you to email this document by Thursday evening for our classes that begin on Friday.

3. Final Paper (Weight 40%): You will be asked you to draw on what you have learnt to explain a contemporaneous phenomenon. Your analysis is expected to be a 15 page (or less) double-spaced write-up that analyzes a phenomenon from the standpoint of any of the major perspective(s) of organizational theory (Final paper weight 20%). Its purpose is to help you apply what you have learnt to a setting that you might wish to study later. A proposal (Weight 10%, 5 page or less, double-spaced) is due on February 22. I will meet you individually on March 1 to discuss your proposal. You are also encouraged to discuss your proposal with your peer classmates. Final presentation accounts for another 10% of your grade.
Class Schedule and Reading List

Schedule of Sessions

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1. Early Classics: Contingency Theory & Resource Dependence

   Why don't all organizations look the same? Are there systematic differences in organizational structure across industries and technologies? Given a set of conditions, is there one best way to organize, or can alternative structures get you essentially similar results? Are organizational structures and processes best explained as the (more or less efficient) outcomes of Darwinian processes or as manifestations of power and dependence relations?

Compulsory Readings

   Thompson, J.D. 1967. Organizations in Action. Chapters 1-6, pages 3-80


Optional Readings


2. Social Networks

Compulsory Readings:


Optional Readings:


3. Status, Authenticity, and Social Structure

Compulsory Readings


Optional Readings:


4. Institutional Theory and Diffusion

Compulsory Readings


Optional Readings:


5. Elite Theory and Inequality

Compulsory Readings:


Optional Readings:


6. Social Movement, Power, and Politics in Market

Compulsory Readings:


Optional Readings:


7. Competition, Politics, and Regulation


Optional Readings:


8. Research Proposal Feedback

9. Categorization

Compulsory Readings:


Optional Readings:


10. Spring Break

11. Institutional Logics and Imprinting


Optional Readings:


12. Organizational Ecology

**Compulsory Readings**


David Clifford, "Neighborhood Context and Enduring Differences in the Density of Charitable Organizations: Reinforcing Dynamics of Foundation and Dissolution," American Journal of Sociology 123, no. 6 (May 2018): 1535-1600.

**Optional Readings:**


13. Individual, Employment, and Career

**Compulsory Readings**


Optional Readings:


Compulsory Readings


Optional Readings:


