MOR 601: Seminar in Organizational Behavior, Fall 2020

Instructor: Prof. Nathanael Fast
Office: Hoffman Hall 404
Phone: 213-740-1047
E-mail: nathanaf@usc.edu

Instructor: Prof. Sarah Townsend
Office: Hoffman Hall 403
Phone: 213-740-8420
E-mail: sarahtow@usc.edu

Class Time and Location

The course will meet from 2:00-4:50 p.m. on Thursdays via Zoom.

Introduction and Course Objective

This seminar provides doctoral students an overview of the major topics in organizational behavior. The course is designed to provide a broad exposure to the field, an understanding of its central concepts, and opportunities to develop ideas for how you might contribute to this literature. We will pursue these goals by examining a mix of theoretical and empirical research, thinking critically about the strengths and limitations, and creating a forum for you to test your own conceptual and empirical ideas. Our goals are to help you to gain broad familiarity with theory and research concerned with micro-organizational processes and to help you develop the analytical skills necessary to critically evaluate and integrate work in this area. We will also encourage you to use the course to hone your own research agenda. Our ultimate objective is to prepare you to contribute to the current dialogue in the field of organizational behavior (along with related fields; e.g., social psychology, communications, political science, education).

Achieving these goals will require a good deal of reading. It is essential that you read the material before class, as well as spend time thinking about the implications of the readings. We provide a list of questions each week and ask that you come to class prepared to discuss them.

For your reference, here are some of the key journals in the field along with their acronyms:

AMJ: Academy of Management Journal
AMR: Academy of Management Review
ASQ: Administrative Science Quarterly
JAP: Journal of Applied Psychology
JESP: Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
JPSP: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
OBHDP: Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes
OS: Organization Science
PSPB: Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin
Psych Bull: Psychological Bulletin
Psych Science: Psychological Science
ROB: Research in Organizational Behavior
Course Expectations and Requirements

Over the years, students have expressed a desire to have high standards for their own and their classmates’ conduct. To foster the best possible learning environment, please abide by these expectations, and be aware that we will actively enforce them. Failing to meet theses standards for classroom behavior will result in lower participation grades. Please also see the Appendix for expectations specific to our online environment this semester.

Be here (on time): This course relies on extensive discussion and interactive activities. If you are not here, you deprive yourself and your fellow students of the optimal learning environment. You are expected to attend every class, on time, and to stay for the entire class session. Plan ahead and take care of your personal needs so that you can stay throughout. If, for any reason, you need to miss class, please notify us at least 24 hours in advance (except in the case of an emergency) so we can make arrangements for any in-class exercises and ensure that you get all of the materials distributed in class.

Be prepared: Do all the assigned reading before class, and be ready for a substantive discussion of each article that has been assigned. Our job is to help you push beyond, to a deeper level of comprehension. To do so, you must come to class having done all of the assigned readings.

Put away your gadgets and close your mail and browser software: Except during breaks, we have a “no gadgets” (phones, pdas, etc.) policy in class. This includes not checking email, social media, or browsing the internet. If you need an exception (whether one-time or ongoing), please talk to us individually beforehand.

Observe the honor code: The honor code was written by Marshall students and is upheld by Marshall students. We have agreed to support the Marshall Honor Committee in its efforts to make the code relevant and meaningful by providing this reminder and endorsement of the code.

Various legalistic administrative notes in fine print

Returned paperwork, unclaimed by a student, will be discarded after 4 weeks and thus will not be available should a grade appeal be pursued by a student following receipt of his/her course grade.

Academic Conduct

• Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards [https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/]. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/].

• Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity [http://equity.usc.edu/] or to the Department of Public Safety [http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/public-safety/online-forms/contact-us]. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/] provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu] describes reporting options and other resources.
• **Support System**: A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute [http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali](http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information [http://emergency.usc.edu/](http://emergency.usc.edu/) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

• Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability must register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodation can be obtained from DSP. Please deliver it to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP’s phone number is 213.740.0776.

• The use of unauthorized material, communication with fellow students during an examination, attempting to benefit from the work of another student, verbatim text from other sources submitted as the student’s work, and similar behavior that defeats the intent of an examination or other class work is unacceptable to the University. Where a clear violation has occurred, the instructor may disqualify the student's work as unacceptable and assign a failing mark on the paper. Students are responsible for knowing and following standards of academic honesty. Please become familiar with University policy at [http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/](http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/).

### Assignments and Grading

1. **Class participation (30%)**

Class participation grades will be divided into the following components:

• **Comments and questions (10%)**. Each week, you will be required to submit three comments or questions about the material on Blackboard prior to midnight the day before the seminar. These are comments or questions that you would like to discuss further in class and that will be helpful for the facilitator.

• **Discussion facilitator (10%)**. Each student will take a turn as discussion facilitator for one or more of the class sessions. The discussion facilitators will be responsible for synthesizing across the week’s readings and identifying commonalities and controversies. You can also take on the role of provocateur, challenging the class to think deeper, harder, or differently about a topic. For the weeks that you are the discussion facilitator, you will also identify at least one paper that provides an example of a recent insightful usage of either theory or methodology discussed in one or more of the week’s readings.

• **Comments in class (10%)**. You will be graded on the quality of your contributions to the class discussion. To prepare to contribute, read each article carefully and assess:
  - What is missing? What questions aren’t being answered in this article?
  - What are the theoretical implications of the paper’s ideas and/or empirical findings?
  - What assumptions does this perspective make about people and organizations? How tenable are they?
  - What studies need to be done to develop knowledge in the area under discussion?
How can you apply the theory, empirical approach, or methodology in the assigned articles to your own research question or agenda?

2. Two innovation papers (30%)

As part of this course, you will prepare two 2-3 page “innovation” papers. These papers will be very brief presentations of novel hypotheses—i.e., something not already known or immediately obvious to researchers in OB. In these papers, please state a hypothesis and then explain why it is likely to be true, interesting, and important. Many of these ideas can become topics for discussion within the seminar itself. You can also use these short papers as a means of developing a more comprehensive final term paper idea. These papers can be turned in at any point during the semester (your choice when) but must be submitted prior to the last day of class.

3. Final paper (40%)

You will also prepare a paper that adds new knowledge or brings a new perspective to old findings in micro OB. It is acceptable to incorporate your innovation papers into this longer paper, but this is not necessary. While you must incorporate what you have learned from this course into the paper, we are flexible on the topic that you pursue. It is our hope that this paper will eventually develop into the front end of a published journal article, or at least seed your future projects. The paper should be 15-20 double-spaced pages, not including charts, graphs, and references, and following the APA style guide. The paper may be either:

- A conceptual paper targeted toward publication in the *Academy of Management Review*.

- A research proposal suitable for a paper that would appear in the *Academy of Management Journal*. No data or analysis is necessary; however, your research design, data sources, and proposed analyses should be presented showing how you would empirically test your hypotheses. Although no data collection is expected for this assignment, you should develop a proposal with the expectation that you will pursue this project in the near future.

A complete draft of your paper will be due at the start of class on Thursday, **October 29**. Your paper will be assigned to one of your classmates for peer review and will be returned to you at the start of class on Thursday, **November 5**. You will then have two weeks to respond to your reviewer’s issues and make final revisions before turning in your final draft on Thursday, **November 19**. Along with the final draft, you will need to include specific responses to your reviewer’s comments.
Reading List

Please complete all the assigned readings before class, and come to class prepared for a substantive discussion of each article.

Week 1: Introduction 8/20


Preparation Questions

1. What led you to take this class?
2. What is your favorite OB paper or study? Why?
3. What is one idea you currently have that you’ve developed through observation? (*Note this does not need to be anything that you would actually study – just a question you might have.)
4. How can we, as researchers, study topics and questions that are both interesting and relevant in organizations? How can we be sure we are also contributing to a cumulative science?

Week 2: Person vs. Situation 8/27

**Preparation Questions**

1. What are personality traits? How can you distinguish them from values and abilities?
2. As a researcher, do you find situational or dispositional perspectives more interesting? Why?
3. How might you rethink the famous Milgram experiments on obedience to authority in light of the papers you read for this week?
4. Should managers (and org. scholars) care about personality traits? Why or why not?
5. How would you describe yourself using the Big Five? What aspects of your personality are not captured by the Big Five?

**Week 3: Self and Identity 9/3**


**Preparation Questions**

1. What is the self? Where does it come from? What does it want?
2. What would you like to know about the self that hasn’t yet been answered?
3. List your various identities. Which ones are most important? What role do your identities play in your decisions, actions, and interactions with others?
4. Pick one of the topics from this class (or another field of study) in which you are interested; how could you use the self to increase understanding of this topic?

**Week 4: Motivation 9/10**

Preparation Questions
1. Which motivation theories did you find most and least appealing? Why?
2. What are the major limitations of each theory?
3. How important are extrinsic rewards in motivation?
4. How are lay vs. scholarly theories about what motivates people similar and different?
5. What have been most important drivers of your motivation across different work experiences?

Week 5: Job Design and Work Structures 9/17


Preparation Questions
1. How are jobs, roles, and tasks similar and different? How might we go about integrating our understanding of these work structures?
2. What job characteristics have been overlooked in existing theory, and how can we incorporate them?
3. Given the rise of project work, is the job still a relevant concept for understanding work structures? Should we shift to studying projects instead?
4. Contrast the best and worst jobs, roles, and tasks you’ve ever had. What were the key differences between them?
5. How are the jobs, roles, and tasks of PhD students structured? How can they be enriched?

Week 6: Power 9/24

**Preparation Questions**
1. What is power? How have researchers gone about studying the determinants and consequences of power? What are the strengths and limitations of these approaches?
2. What is the difference between power and influence?
3. Reflect on times when you’ve felt powerful and powerless in your life. Is the approach/inhibition theory of power proposed by Keltner et al. (2003) consistent with how you felt and responded in these situations?
4. How does power make it easier to lead? How does power make it more difficult to lead?

**Week 7: Leadership 10/01**


**Preparation Questions**
1. What is leadership? How are leadership and power similar and different?
2. What is the difference between a leader and a manager?
3. Is leadership real? Is it more than a perceptual phenomenon? Can it be taught/learned?
4. What are the most important roles of a leader?
5. Pick one of the topics previously covered in class—how could it be applied to the topic of leadership to create an interesting research question?

**Week 8: Cognition and Decision Making 10/08**


**Preparation Questions**
1. Do you side more strongly with Gigerenzer or Kahneman & Tversky? Why?
2. How might we gain a more balanced understanding of the conditions under which biases and irrational behaviors do and do not occur?
3. What biases have you observed in human behavior that aren’t discussed here?
4. If things are this bad, why do organizations work (relatively) well?
5. Did the readings shed new light on any judgment or decision-making mistakes that you’ve experienced or observed in the past?

**Week 9: Affect 10/15**


**Preparation Questions**
1. In your mind, what are the tricky issues associated with studying affect?
2. What is missing in the field’s treatment of affect to date?
3. How can we develop more imaginative, counterintuitive theory about affect?
4. When has affect played an important role in your work behaviors and experiences?

**Week 10: Conflict and Negotiations 10/22**

Preparation Questions
1. Why is trust more difficult to build and repair than to undermine and erode?
2. Think about the people you trust most and least. What explains the difference?
3. What aspects of negotiations do we miss out on by studying them in the laboratory?
4. How do your social relationships affect whether/when you negotiate?

Week 11: Groups, Teams, & Diversity 10/29


Preparation Questions
1. What are the implications of Nemeth’s arguments for how many people in the US currently consume news (i.e., often seeing information that already confirms their perspective, which they may see as the dominant perspective)?
2. How might “coordination neglect” vary across organizational or national culture?
3. Does it make sense to study demographic diversity (e.g., race, gender) under the same umbrella as other forms of difference (e.g., education, functional background)? Why or why not?

Week 12: Ethics and Morality 11/05


Preparation Questions
1. Is moral judgment driven more heavily by cognition or affect?
2. Under what circumstances is previous ethical behavior likely to license people to behave unethically in the future and under what circumstances is it likely to lead people to behave consistently (i.e., ethically)?
3. Do you expect growing convergence in what people consider to be unethical/ethical? Why or why not?

Week 13: Culture 11/12


**Preparation Questions**

1. What are the conceptual differences/similarities between culture in groups, organizations, and nations?
2. Given that culture exists at so many different levels (group, department, work organization, extracurricular organization, neighborhood, community, society), where should we study it?
3. What is the culture of the PhD program at Marshall and how is it influencing your life?
Appendix

Class Conduct/Netiquette

Professionalism will be expected at all times. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. We will show this respect by exhibiting patience and courtesy in our exchanges (during class and on the discussion board). Appropriate language and restraint from verbal attacks upon those whose perspectives differ from your own is a minimum requirement. Courtesy and kindness is the norm for those who participate in my class. Remember, video conference business meetings and written, electronic communication are and will be the norm, so practice your professionalism in these spaces. Some Netiquette Rules:

- Exhibit professionalism and respect in your self-presentation, including your attire and virtual background.
- Exhibit professionalism and respect in your manner of disagreeing with classmates, and amount of attention paid to your classmates (be an active, engaged listener).
- Display both your first and last name during video conferencing and synchronous class meetings.
- Minimize distractions with muting and video off when moving around
- Do not use all CAPITAL LETTERS or multiple exclamation points.
- Use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Text messaging language is not acceptable. You are practicing for your role as a business leader.

Technology Requirements

Online lectures will be through Zoom and links will be provided in Blackboard. Therefore, you must have access to the Internet to view/hear lectures. No special software is required.

The links to class recordings, assignments, and rubrics are located on Blackboard. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations;
- Reliable Internet access and a USC email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- A working video camera with microphone for use on Zoom;
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.

If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact the USC ITS service portal.