ODKM 700: Organizations, Management, and Work: Theory and Practice: fall 2017

Draft requirements and outline for this course. Content, including dates, may be revised.

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Organization Development and Knowledge Management,
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Consultation times:
- I am available before class on the Friday afternoons when a class is scheduled. Please contact me ahead of time, by email, to schedule an appointment.
- To meet at other times, please email me to make an appointment.

PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT CAREFULLY, IN ITS ENTIRETY BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS

PART A: COURSE REQUIREMENTS

At the beginning of the semester, you will be sent information on how to access the SharePoint sites for ODKM Cohort 22. The ODKM 700 SharePoint site contains detailed information about assignments (including due dates) and week-by-week reading preparation. It also has a link to an online ‘virtual library’ of articles for the course and discussion spaces for posting material online.

Class dates and times
Either on Friday nights (5:00 to 10:00 PM) or Saturdays (9:00 AM to 6:00 PM), as scheduled.

The three classes scheduled for Friday nights – Fri Sept 29, Fri Nov 10 and Fri Dec 1 – are in FH 466. The venues for the three Saturday classes are as follows: Sat Oct 14: FH 111. Sat. Oct 21 and Sat Nov 4: FH 121
Texts

The following three books are **required reading** for the course.


Students are also *required to read* additional articles during the course. These are posted online for downloading. You will be sent links ahead of time.

**NOTE**: ‘Required reading’ means students are expected to read the material as scheduled and to come to class prepared to discuss and answer questions on the material. You should **start** by reading MacKenzie. Treat this as background reading for the course and **please read the book before the first class**.

**A summary of the written contributions, presentations, and class participation**

*These are the various items on which your grade will be based.*

**NOTE: You’ll find details of each assignment and the due dates on the class SharePoint site to which you will have access in fall**

Much of the work consists of short written pieces. You can think of each student as having a virtual folder online, in which s/he posts a set of contributions that make up a portfolio. Those contributions consist of your own written pieces and comments on your colleagues' contributions. The due dates are noted with the information on each assignment on the class SharePoint site.

1) **A case study** on “Buurtzorg” from Fredrick Laloux’s book *Reinventing Organizations* is the starting point for this class. It provides a practical perspective on a number of issues that are central to the course. **Students will form groups of 4 or 5** and prepare the case study for discussion in class on September 29. A list of questions will be provided.

2) **A picture/drawing of your organization**. How would you describe your organization to other people, to reveal what it is ‘really like’? Draw your organization, or some aspect(s) of it that you want to depict. Be creative (see McKenzie, *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*). Think of
images that would help others to see your organization through your eyes. You can use any images that come to mind. It may be helpful to think of your organization in metaphorical terms, such as a circus, an emergency room, a zoo, a machine, a laboratory, or any other metaphor that comes to mind, and then use this metaphor as the basis of your drawing.

3) **Three (3) reflections on your organization.** Over the course of the semester, you will write three pieces in which you reflect on what is going on in your organization. In each case, imagine you are writing an entry in a journal you keep, identify circumstances, events, or changes, where things don’t seem to be going smoothly or aren’t going as you would expect, or circumstances that are troublesome to you, describe what is happening, why it’s a problem and what you would do about the situation.

4) **Fifteen (15) comments on your colleagues’ organization reflections.** You will write comments on five (5) of your colleagues’ reflections, responding to their First Organization Reflection. Then you will do the same, with the same five people, commenting on their Second and Third Organization Reflections. In the course of the semester, you will write 15 comments in all.

5) **One presentation (with a partner – ‘pairs’)**

I will either assign chapters from course texts or material from additional readings to pairs of students. Each pair will do a presentation, in class, on their assigned chapters/readings. Each presentation should be **not more than 25 minutes long. Approach the presentation creatively: ‘how can we best convey our learning and engage people in the class?’**

As all students are **expected to prepare the readings before the class,** pairs should not summarize the chapters/readings in their presentation. Instead, your aim is to highlight key points only – the issues you think are most important in the chapter – then offer your own thoughts and perspectives, explaining why they are important (their significance for ODKM theory or practice) and/or exploring issues related to your chapters/readings that are not in the readings. For example, if your presentation deals with an important figure in the history or OD or management you may want to look into his/her background and impact on the field. If you are dealing with OD concepts or tools, you may wish to look for more information about these online, and so on. Remember, your presentation should reflect the pair’s own views/perspectives/interpretation.

It is perfectly acceptable for you to get views of students in the class by asking what they think or how they would approach a particular issue. In the same vein, you can raise questions in your presentations about the meaning, usefulness, or practicality of the ideas and/or practices described and discussed in your chapters/readings.

6) **One position paper.** In every class, starting in Class 2, pairs of students will be doing presentations on the chapters or other readings that they have been assigned. When you do a presentation on selected chapters from the reading material (See also ‘Presentations’ above), the pair that is presenting will submit a **single** short position paper.
Your position paper should be no more than two (2) single-space or four (4) double-spaced typed pages per reading or per chapter. So, if you have 3 chapters to present on, a total of no more than 6 single-spaced pages. Half or less of the position paper can consist of a summary/synopsis of the main ideas in the readings/chapters assigned to your pair. The rest of the paper should be your perspectives on the material including an assessment of the usefulness of the material and, if you wish, comments on what was missing or what was not explained adequately.

Each position paper should cover:
- a brief statement of the highlights of the chapter: i.e. the main issues or the main learning points that the author intends to convey in the chapter. (33 percent)
- Either a longer evaluation/assessment/comment on the arguments, highlighting the strengths and also the limitations of the chapter. (66 percent)
- Or a summary of additional material that you’ve found on the web which extends the content of the chapter (66 percent)

Each pair of students who are doing a presentation must post their contributions on the course SharePoint site (by attaching or pasting the document) in time for the class in which the topics or chapters are going to be discussed.

7) **The Org Observer’s Blog.** Write a short (a few paragraphs – upwards of 300 words) blog entry in ‘The Org Observer’s Blog’, as a comment on what people are saying - e.g. in newspapers, magazines, books, or on the web - about organizations, management, organizing, and work and/or to report on what you’ve read or heard in a way that makes it relevant to what we are discussing. You may write your comment as a ‘response’ to material which you find on the web which you either link to or reblog on the ‘Org Observer blog’. You’ll find a link to the blog on the class SharePoint site.

8) **Confidential grades** of the reflections of the five colleagues on whose work you’ve commented. Completed grade forms to be emailed to me.

9) **Class participation.** Because of the emphasis on collaboration and discussion, participation by way of attendance and discussion (including ‘on-line discussion’) is crucial in this course. The instructor reserves the right to adjust a student’s overall grade based on the quality of her or his contribution in class.
Grades

Points for course-related assignments and activities will be allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MAX</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A portfolio of contributions (including organization drawings, blog</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entries, and comments on others' work)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Case study, position papers and presentations</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Students' confidential grades</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
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Letter grades for the course are awarded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade letter</th>
<th>Points range</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95–100 points</td>
<td>Outstanding. Exceptional quality work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A--</td>
<td>90–94 points</td>
<td>Excellent. A solid effort all round.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85–89 points</td>
<td>Generally good. Sound, although the work has weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B--</td>
<td>80–84 points</td>
<td>Adequate. Meets the minimum standard for a graduate course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75–79 points</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory. Below standard for a graduate course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Less than 75 points</td>
<td>Well below minimum requirements.</td>
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*Late submissions — generally not permitted — should be negotiated before due dates.*

Note that students choosing to take an incomplete may be penalized by at least a grade letter.

Outline of topics for each class session

(You will find more details on the SharePoint pages for each class)

1) ‘Reading Organizations’. We start at the end of the story. Change: ‘old’ and ‘new’ organizations, management and work. Work is creative. The way we manage (organize) it is not.

2) ‘How organizations really work’ (and what the world actually looks like) Making organizations ‘work better’. The evolution of thinking and practices about organizations, management and work. Includes where and why OD got started and where it is headed.

3) Work matters and it’s not all the same. A practice perspective on work, why and how do we do it and what is missing when wearing a management hat.

4) Management and organizing: Conventional versus emerging ideas and practices.
5) **Change and the role of consultants:** How you try to do OD (and change) depends on your paradigm. Diagnostic vs dialogic approaches.

6) **What this means for OD practices.**

**Baseline course objectives**

- Make connections between theory and practice
- Gain insight into the history of management and the history of OD
- Recognize what is going on in larger organization: Systems Thinking
- See commonalities among both organizations and their problems
- Understand what is missing from traditional management perspectives (‘view from the top’) and the deeply social (cooperative) nature of knowledge work.
- See how having distinctions (organizations/organizing, top/practice, factory/knowledge work, tame/wicked problems, technical/adaptive work, diagnostic/dialogic OD) allows new possibilities for action.
- Understand why knowledge-workers need to be agile (networks, collaboration, wicked problems, adaptive work, ‘muddling through’)
- Draw conclusions about the scope of OD and the value of different approaches to OD
- Begin to explore the use of collaborative technologies to learn from one another (‘sharing knowledge/stories’ of work experience).

**The School’s Policy on Plagiarism:** The following statement is included in all syllabi

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of ‘F.’ This may
lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Mark Rozell, Dean Schar School of Policy and Government, GMU

Additional from Mark Addleson: The Instructor reserves the right to use ‘SafeAssign’ in ‘Blackboard,’ a plagiarism detection and education tool used at Mason, as a way of assessing whether portions of submitted written materials not having been properly referenced and/or attributed to the original authors/sources, are claimed to be the work of the person submitting the paper or assignment.

PART B: THEMES OF THE COURSE

This course is about organizations and change

The term organization development (OD) was coined to cover work that various people (mainly scholars who were also practitioners) were doing in 1950s to make organizations better (this what ‘developing’ organizations means). By definition, ‘development’ involves change. So, OD practitioners were involved in organizational change efforts. A little reflection suggests that there are lots of things you can do to change the way organizations function. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Changing the organizational ‘structure’ (organizations).** Organizations, usually described as ‘hierarchical’ and ‘bureaucratic,’ are typically run in a ‘top-down’ way and are ‘silooed,’ with limited interaction among people in different areas or departments. Today, there is a lot of emphasis on doing away with both hierarchy and bureaucracy.

- **Changing the way organizations are run (management).** Typical management practices include an emphasis on plans and ‘performance’ (goals or outcomes) as well as processes and structures. The plans and goals are set at the top, by senior management who rely heavily on ‘numbers’ (data). Today, this approach is under scrutiny. Things change quickly. Organizations need to be nimble and conventional management practices are burdensome.

- **Changing how people get things done, both individually and together (work).** In most organizations there is a distinction between ‘management’ and ‘employees’ (or ‘workers’). Work is organized and assigned in a top-down way. There is an assumption that each
individual is responsible for his/her own work and that people work best – they produce better results – when they compete with one another. Today, all this, too, is being questioned. Teams and project group members need to collaborate, not compete and organizing is an important part of what they do. They can’t wait for instructions from superiors.

- **Changing leadership practices.** Leadership, although treated as distinct from management, has been associated with positions in the hierarchy and seen as the responsibility of people at the top. Amongst other things, this makes decision-making slow. Agile organizations need a different kind of leadership, associated with the work, not the structure.

In practice, these areas are not only closely interconnected but also to a large degree inseparable. In the ODKM 700 course we pay attention to three of the four: structure(s), management, and work. Leadership, the fourth issue, is the topic of a later course in the program.

We spend much of our lives in organizations without thinking about why things happen or are done in a particular way and what we could do to improve them. Competent OD practitioners, who are engaged in organizational change efforts, must have a good understanding of these issues. Prompted by questions like the following, this course is an opportunity to lay some foundations, enabling you to understand how organizations work and what you might do to improve them:

- What is .... (the organizational structure, the management practices, and so on)?
- Why do things function this way? (e.g. why are organizations run/managed this way? Why do we have performance evaluations, for example?)
- What changes will improve the way organizations work?
- How should/can we make the desired changes? This question includes who is going to do it (who is responsible for the changes) and how are the changes going to be implemented.

**Changing OD practices.**

There is another set of change issues that OD practitioners need to know about. To be competent in their field, they need to be able to answer the question, how do you ‘do’ (i.e. implement) OD. *What constitutes good OD practice?* You will discover quite early in the course that there are different views on how to practice OD and that OD practices have evolved and are changing in quite fundamental ways.

There are many possible answers to the question, ‘why try change organizations’. Some early OD practitioners, like Kurt Lewin, believed that democratic work environments are better for people and that organizations, typically, are too authoritarian. For others, it was a matter of providing managers with tools and techniques that would enable them to be more effective managers and get better results. I will take the view that OD practices, aimed at improving
organizations, are associated with the human desire to ‘do better,’ whether this means putting flowers in your family room to make it brighter, improving your golf swing, or paying attention to the way you raise kids or to the quality of your project work. When OD practitioners turn attention to improving organizations, they aren’t simply concerned with efficiency and getting better bottom-line results. They recognize that work and workplaces are *social phenomena*, shaped by people’s attitudes, values, and beliefs – including their attitudes towards power (as well as who has the power and how they wield it) and their beliefs about the need for more, or less, control over what other people do.

In the early years, there was only one accepted way of bringing about change: applying the scientific method. Practitioners of organizational change – who usually apply their pet theories to their work – needed to gather data about what was happening, analyze this data, then make recommendations for change based on their analyses. The actions based on these recommendations would involve telling people about the need for change and instructing them on what they should do to make the changes. A typical ‘OD intervention’ was conducted between one or more consultants and senior management, with directives for change flowing from the top.

There are any number of consultants and consulting organizations doing ‘change management,’ which rely heavily on this approach. A more recent development, however, is to see ‘organizational change’ as a result of changes in people’s (collective) attitudes, values, beliefs and habits. Approaching change from this standpoint, instead of something you would do to an organization (e.g. changing the structure, like changing a tire on a car), is revolutionary. Influencing people’s attitudes, for example, is very different from redrawing an organization chart. How do you do it? For a growing group of OD people, what people do depends on how they see things and what they believe and this has a lot to do with the language they use and their stories, or narratives. When you see your work in terms of ‘efficiency’ and ‘results’, you approach it differently from people who think about work in terms of your commitments and responsibilities, including helping others.

For practitioners who see language and stories as foundations of work (practices), organizational change is a ‘dialogic’ process of influencing attitudes and values (the ‘culture’ of organizations’) to shape practices, in contrast to a ‘diagnostic’ one, where the emphasis is on using data to make changes to structures and processes. While the former (dialogic) is necessarily a participative process, the latter (diagnostic) is typically top-down, driven by ‘experts’. Although the terms ‘dialogic’ and ‘diagnostic’ are fairly recent, coined by Gervase Bushe and Bob Marshak, the distinction between these two different ways of practicing OD has been ‘in the air’ for some time and ODKM program is much more ‘dialogic’ than ‘diagnostic’.
Theory and practice

It is an important part of Western thinking that theory and practice belong in separate boxes, that it is difficult to combine them and you shouldn’t try to do so. You need separate courses. The story goes that theory is the stuff you want students to have. This is what makes them into ‘experts’. Equipped with theoretical knowledge, most of which comes from a scientific study (i.e. analysis) of problems, they’ll be able to go out into the world (e.g. as consultants) and solve problems.

Western thought is changing. We’re coming to realize that much of the knowledge that people need to do their work comes from practice, through experience, rather than from theory. This thinking means practitioners are a source of expertise and it’s one of the considerations behind the emphasis in OD on having all stakeholders involved in solving problems; or, what Weisbord refers to as ‘having the whole system in the room’.

It is difficult to ‘teach practice’. In a way it is a contradiction. Practice is learned through experience. In this course I want to place quite a bit of emphasis on new practices for organizing work. But how are we going to learn practices in the classroom? Part of the answer is that you’re going to share your practical knowledge with one another: writing about your experiences, so others can learn from them. Then, later, in the knowledge management course, you’re also going to do a project in organizations, to see what goes on there.

Seeing beyond your immediate, personal experiences and reactions

It takes reflection to make sense of what is going on in organizations. I want you to relate what we are talking about to your own experience in your organization and to draw from your own experience in talking and writing about what goes on at work, in organizations. So, some of your writing assignments are designed to get you to reflect on what is going on.

But, it is important when you do this that you also think beyond your own immediate, personal experience. You want to ask what your experience tells you about the larger organization and, possibly, about organizations in general. Being a good organizational analyst and/or consultant depends on being able to connect dots. But, to do this, you also have to identify the dots, understanding how and why things are connected. For example, what purpose does a performance evaluation really serve and who supports having these and why? Whose interests does the performance evaluation serve?. You need to be able to ask – and have an answer to questions like: what is the issue here, or what is the real problem. Why is this a problem and for whom? How did the problem arise? What contributed to it? In the course and in the program as a whole, you must learn to make connections between theory (ideas, concepts, and models) and practice (what is going, what people are doing, why....).
If, at times, you are wondering where we are going in the course or how you should proceed, it will probably be useful to say:

- We want to get the bigger picture of organizations and how they work.
- This includes the theory and practices of management. What is management? Why do people practice management as they do?
- It also involves questions about work, that people very rarely ask: what is work, what does it mean to do ‘good work’ and what does it take to do good work?
- You should constantly being asking, how does this connect with other ideas about organizations and how does it contribute to my understanding of organizations.
- Finally, ask what is the relevance of this to me, in my work, in my organization’.

**Why all the questions?**

There are many reasons for asking these questions about organizations, organizing, and management:

- We spend a lot of time doing things, but seldom stop to think about why we’re doing them, or why we are doing them this way. Take an issue like creativity. We like the idea of being creative and innovative and we’d like to have more creativity and innovation (this seems like a good thing). But, how does creativity and innovation fit with what is going on in organizations. What is it going to take to foster creativity?
- Societies and organizations are changing. We’ve done things one way for a long time. In a time of change it’s important to think about how things work and what is changing or what is different now, from the way things used to be.
- There are lots of new ideas about organizations bubbling up: ideas like ‘learning organizations’ and ‘knowledge organizations’. What do these mean? To understand their relevance or significance it is useful to know whether and how they fit with older ideas. This helps us to see why people are coming up with new ideas.

The main purpose of the course is to explore the questions I’ve raised, but there are various subsidiary issues that I want to cover, which are part of the learning.

- As a grounding for the ODKM program, we want some sense of the history and scope of organizational and management studies. What kinds of contributions have writers made. What issues have they focused on and why did they focus on them. Why did management evolve in the way it did. Why do we use particular practices and methods to run organizations? Are they ‘good’ practices? What other practices are available?
- I’m going to emphasize that there is a big shift taking place in how we think about organizations. Actually it’s a series of shifts.
  - The way we think about organizations is changing because there is bigger a paradigm shift, or change in worldview, happening in Western societies. One result is that the ‘machine image’ of organizations is being replaced. What new images do we have? What is their significance?
• The work people do has changed and continues to change. Organization theory and practices were invented in the industrial era. We are now in the post-industrial era, an era of knowledge-work.

Using collaborative technologies in this course

Collaborative technologies offer a means for people to collaborate – to work together and to learn together. To use them effectively, however, we have to appreciate what is gained from people working and/or learning together and we also need to understand what it takes for people to work together using these technologies. What do we want to the technology to do? How can it ‘connect people’ and how well can it do so? What does it take to use the technology effectively for this purpose? What are the limitations of the technology as a means of ‘connecting people’?

Some of this learning comes from using collaborative tools, learning in practice, or ‘action learning’, what their strengths and limitations are. As you use online discussion spaces and other tools for collaborating online, reflect on how you use them. Are the tools useful and in what ways they are most useful? What purposes do they serve and what purposes can they serve? How do we link working and learning using these tools? What factors inhibit people from taking advantage of this type of ‘online interaction’? Can we design collaborative tools that are more useful and more inviting to use?

Mark Addleson, Ph.D.: Resume

Mark Addleson is a teacher, writer, and researcher. In his most recent book, Beyond Management: Taking Charge at Work (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), he argues that today’s productive workplace rests on collaboration and teamwork, not rules and rigid structures. Knowledge workers, dealing with complex issues and a dynamic environment, where events are continually unfolding, need to be agile. They need to go ‘beyond management’ and organize themselves.

Mark taught for more than 20 years in his native South Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand’s Graduate School of Business Administration, where he was head of the General Management program (marketing, strategy, economics). At Mason, he guided the ODKM Masters program through its first decade.

Mark has consulted to many companies, as well as government and non-profit organizations, both in the United States and South Africa. In the ’80s and ’90s he was a director of Econometrix (Pty) Ltd, with clients across all sectors of the economy. In the USA he was an associate of the OCL Group and consulted on the University of Maryland’s TAMAR project, bringing organizational learning ideas and practices to an integrated trauma treatment and
education program for women inmates of detention centers. He has worked in the area of organizational coaching, to develop new approaches to organizational change.

Recently he has worked on the knowledge management part of a grant-funded contract with Quanterion Inc. establishing The Cyber Security and Information Systems Information Analysis Center (CSIAC), a Department of Defense (DoD) Information Analysis Center (IAC) sponsored by the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC).

Mark publishes regularly in academic journals on knowledge management, organizational change, policy, and management decisions. He has given keynote addresses at conferences and is a recipient of the Wits Business School's award for teaching.