The subject of organizational learning came to academic attention in 1978 when Chris Argyris and Donald Schon published *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. Schon followed with the *Reflective Practitioner*, which evoked considerable interest among practitioners in the field. The momentum that was building during the following ten years culminated with the publication of Peter Senge's widely read *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Since then, hundreds of articles and books have announced the birth of a new discipline, expanded public awareness of it, and motivated a significant number of corporations, nonprofits, and governmental agencies to set forth on the path to becoming a learning organization.

Conventional organizations are locked into a rigid view of their methods and goals. They attend only to a narrow range of experience and feedback, and encourage their managers to make only those changes that fit the current structure. Consequently, the conventional organization merely adapts or reacts to change. In contrast, the learning organization anticipates the future and strives to create new services and products before others are able to perceive those needs. They are flexible, open to new ideas, and willing to innovate because they are intensely reflexive. In other words, they discover organizational excellence by continuously rethinking what they do, how they do it, and how they might do it better.

The categorization of organizations into conventional and learning is for conceptualizing purposes only and is artificial. Few will fit into either exclusively. Many organizations have elements of both.

Using experiential learning approaches *Organization Development Practices* will focus on both micro and macro aspects of organizational change from a consulting point of view. Further, just as in a laboratory, you will have opportunities to experiment with, observe, and experience the relevance of several constructs related to organization development and develop critical thinking about them. The course will also focus on developing the skills needed for organizational analysis, design, and change using one of
the two inter-related methodologies, *appreciative inquiry (AI)*, and *appreciative sharing of knowledge (ASK)*. Students will work in small teams with the goal of learning to function as consultants to a selected list of organizations. The anticipation is that through the project work you will acquire the competencies for diagnosing and analyzing organizations and for becoming skillful facilitators (change agents) of organization development.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

1. **Organization development case study application: Analysis of the film Office Space** (1999, directed by Mike Judge)

The movie *Office Space*, a fictional account of an employee who works in a familiarly dysfunctional organization and hates his job has become a cult classic. The lead character Peter Gibbons works in an IT company (*Initech*) and shows with wit and ironies a lot of practices that are commonplace in many corporate settings such as poor management, supervisors belittling employees, mindless routines, and an organizational culture that stifles creativity and innovation. Though produced almost twenty years ago, the characters and the plot in this movie will resonate with you today.

**Your task:** Watch the film carefully and take notes. Then imagine that you have been hired as an OD consultant to “fix” the dysfunctionality in Initech. You will write a paper diagnosing the key issues in Initech and propose a detailed recommendation for organizational improvement utilizing six to eight of the classic OD interventions outlined in the textbook *Organization Development & Change* (Cummings & Worley). You should be very concrete to list all the process steps that you would recommend in implementing the chosen OD interventions. I suggest that you read all the interventions listed in the textbook such as human process interventions, process approaches, technostructural interventions, employee involvement, work design, human resource management interventions, and strategic change interventions.

Your paper written strictly in APA format should be about 20 pages in length and should have the following outline:

Part 1: **Organizational assessment and diagnosis:** As an OD consultant, what are the top five (or more) dysfunctionalities you see in Initech? Describe them specifically.

Part 2: **Recommended OD interventions:** As an OD consultant, what are the five OD interventions (outlined in the Cummings & Worley textbook) that you believe will address the dysfunctionalities described in part 1. You should describe the specific interventions and justify what made you choose those as opposed to the rest in the textbook.

Part 3: **Implementation:** What challenges would you expect in implementing your OD interventions? The textbook describes the interventions in general terms only. Your task will be to customize them for the unique organizational culture and context of Initech.
Utilizing the “future-present scenario” construct described in class, create a narrative of the specific process steps that you see unfolding as a result of your suggested interventions. What will be the sequence and timeline of your intervention? Consider creating a project plan for implementation.

Due date: 5:00 PM EST, Tuesday, March 2. Only an electronic copy is needed. Late submissions will be penalized.

2. Organizational Analysis and Presentation

(a) Organizational Analysis

Using the appreciative inquiry or appreciative sharing of knowledge (ASK) model each team will analyze an organization. You should choose an organization which will grant you reasonable access; that is, you can go see it, talk to people, and ask questions. It may be your place of work, other affiliations such as a nonprofit organization, or any other organizational entity that has enough structure and dynamics for analysis (at least a medium size organization of over 200 people).

After your group has collected data and analyzed them, please submit a written report that describes your assessment of the organization. It should include a short description of the model, the methods using which you collected data, your conclusions, and recommendations. This paper, about thirty-five pages in length, should be delivered both in electronic and paper format. In addition, it should contain the interview transcripts as appendix (which will not count toward the page limit) and your class presentation slides. The report will be graded based on the criteria outlined at the end of this syllabus.

Due dates: Thursday, February 4 for a one-page description of your proposal emailed to thatchen@gmu.edu and Tuesday, May 4 for the final paper.

(b) Organizational Analysis Presentation

Each team will present their organizational analysis including recommendations/interventions to the entire class. An electronic copy of your presentation should be sent to thatchen@gmu.edu before the presentation to the class. Ideally, all group members should participate in the presentation. Teams are encouraged to be creative in designing their presentations such as using role-play and skits.

The presentations will be graded both by the instructor and the class. Richness and depth of analysis, organization of the presentation, and the degree of audience involvement will be used as criteria for evaluation.

Presentation date: Saturday, May 1
3. Attendance and participation

You are expected to take an active part in class discussions and group projects. Full attendance for all classes is required. In addition, you are expected to meet with your team members outside of class time and contribute to the project work. This includes collecting data from the chosen organization by doing interviews, analyzing them, writing an organizational analysis report, and presenting it to the class.

Class participation requires your full attention to what is being discussed and shared by the professor and your classmates during class. To be mindfully present in the class, it is important to turn off the various forms of distraction such as your electronic devices (laptops, tablets, and phones). You are encouraged to take notes using paper and pen.

Since experiential exercises and in-class discussions constitute the major part of the class time, missing classes will significantly reduce the learning you may derive from this course. You will lose grade points for coming late (including after breaks), or leaving early from class. According to ODKM policy you cannot miss more than one class and still receive a passing credit for the course.

Evaluation:

The distribution of points will be as follows:

- Analysis of Office Space movie: 25%
- Organizational analysis paper (group assignment)*: 40%
- Class evaluation of organizational analysis presentation: 10%
- Attendance and participation
  - Team evaluation**: 10%
  - Instructor evaluation***: 15%

*Your individual score for the group assignment will also be determined by the team evaluation score you will receive. For example, if your group receives 38 of 40 points for the report, and your team evaluation score is 9.00 of 10, your individual score for the group report will be 38 x 0.90 = 34.20.

** Team evaluation will be based on class participation and your contribution to the organizational analysis project and presentation.

*** Instructor evaluation will be based on attendance and contribution to class discussions and organizational analysis project.
The following scale will be used to determine your grade out of a total of 100 points.

- 98-100 = A+
- 93 –97.99 = A
- 90 - 92.99 = A-
- 86 - 89.99 = B+
- 83 - 85.99 = B
- 80- 82.99 = B-
- 70 - 79.99 = C
- Below 69.99 = F

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC before the start of the class.

**GMU & Schar School policy on plagiarism**

[https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/) (Cut and paste the link in your browser).

From Schar School site: The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of education. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics. Plagiarism is the use of others’ 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 others’ work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources are essential while writing your assignments. The faculty of the Schar School of Policy & Government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F" and may lead to failure for the course.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, your written work may be compared with electronic databases and submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student’s work to such services without prior permission from the student. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code. It is not intended to replace or substitute the GMU policy.

You must cite each time you reuse any of your own work indicating all previous uses you have made of the same work. Using the same citations (readings) from other assignments written for any other professor should be acknowledged. The citations that use for individual and group assignments in this course should not have been used in any of your previous assignments in GMU or ODKM courses. However, if you must re-use them, give reasons and acknowledge doing so.
Required Texts:


Suggested Readings:


COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: Friday, January 15; 5:00 – 10:00 P.M.

Agenda
- Overview of the course
- Course objectives
- Managing expectations
- Introduction to appreciative inquiry
- Appreciative inquiry and ASK workshop

Read before class
- Thatchenkery text pp.13-107
- Cummings and Worley Text Chapters 1-3, namely:
  - General Introduction to Organizational Development
  - The Nature of Planned Change
  - The Organizational Development Practitioner

Session 2: Saturday, January, 16; 9:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.

Agenda
- Appreciative inquiry and ASK workshop (cont’d)
- Data collection methods
- Organizational analysis models

Read before class
- Cummings & Worley Text Chapters 4, 5 and 6, namely:
  - Entering and Contracting
  - Diagnosing
  - Collecting, Analyzing and Feeding Back Diagnostic Information

Session 3: Friday, February 19; 5:00- 10:00 PM.

Agenda
- Appreciative Intelligence, feedback, & motivating others
- Appreciative Performance Improvement by Relationship Management (AFFIRM)
  - Simulation

Read before class
- Cummings & Worley Text Chapters 7, 10 & 11, namely:
  - Designing Interventions
  - Interpersonal and Group Process Approaches
  - Organization Process Approaches
Session 4: Saturday, March 6; 9:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M

Agenda

Designing Interventions: Human Process Interventions, Techno-structural Interventions & Human Resource Interventions
Writing possibility propositions: The mechanics and various options
Discussion of any remaining aspects of AI/ASK project

Read before class
Cummings & Worley Chapters 12-17, namely,
Restructuring Organizations
Employee Involvement Work
Design
Performance Management
Talent Management
Workforce Diversity and Wellness

Session 5: Friday, March 26, 5:00 – 10:00 P.M.

Agenda
Strategic Change Interventions.
Understanding team dynamics
Discovering common ground exercise

Read before class
Cummings & Worley Text Chapters 18-20, namely:
Transformational Change
Continuous Change
Trans-organization change

Session 6: Saturday, May 1; 9:00 AM. – 6:00 P.M.

Agenda
Organizational analysis group presentations
Future work
Course wrap-up
Course evaluation
OUTLINE AND GRADING CRITERIA FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS PAPER

Each group should self-score this and attach to the report.

One-page executive summary

Introduction

Objective of the analysis

Description of the model. 4-5 pages. 4 g.p (grade point). “Model” denotes Appreciative Inquiry, ASK, or any other model you have used.

Description of the organization chosen for analysis (its size, nature of core task, history, etc.) 2-3 pages. 2 g.p

Methodology

Data collect devices/instruments

What techniques were used to collect data (Interview, questionnaire, observation)? How did you construct the instrument? Attach samples with the report. 1-2 pages. 2 g.p

Size of the sample (n), and sampling

How many people were interviewed in the study? What was your rationale for deciding on this size? What kinds of sampling techniques were used (Random, purposive, judgmental, accidental)? What was the rationale for the type of sampling used? 1-2 pages. 2 g.p

Data Collection

Describe how the data were actually collected. How many visits were made to the site? How many of you were involved in that process? (Everyone in a group should try to do at least four face-to-face interviews in the client organization. High points? Surprises? Disappointments? 2-4 pages. 2 g.p

Results

Describe how the data were analyzed and your findings. For example, ---- % of respondents said X. ---- % of the responses from the interview data pertained to the theme of Y. Employees from division A and B differed in ------. In other words, use whatever quantitative measures you are familiar with to illustrate and analyze data. 3-5 pages. 4 g.p.
**Interpretation and Discussion** *(this section is similar to the AC of a PRAE)*

Give meaning to your results and numbers. Relate the findings to the organizational analysis model such as appreciative inquiry or ASK. Make sure readings are extensively used in this section. Some form of conceptualization or theorizing based on your analysis is expected here. 10-12 pages. 13 g.p

**Recommendations**

Assuming you were consultants, what kinds of interventions, if any, will you recommend to the organization? Make sure they are specific and supported by the data analysis. Keep in mind the distinction between pragmatic, acceptable interventions and ideal interventions. How do you propose to overcome the "resistance to change"? (Note: The “possibility propositions” section of appreciative inquiry or ASK model may support this section) 5-7 pages. 4 g.p

**Implications**

What are the implications of your analysis and recommendations (to the organization)? 2-3 pages. 1 g.p

**Conclusions**

Summarize your conclusions. 1 page. 1 g.p.

**Overall grading criteria**

1. **Richness of description** (and quality of written work)
   Will a reader not familiar with the organization get a clear picture of what you have done? Your ability to use language (narratives) effectively in portraying the organizational reality will be assessed here. 2 g.p

2. **Depth of analysis** (and command of theory)
   Overall, how well have you used theories and readings especially in the discussion and interpretation section? What is the quality of your analysis?

   Superficial, simplistic, cursory _____ 0 g.p

   Extensive and insightful use of data, theories, and reading _____ 3 g.p

   Total = 40 g.p

APA document format: Double space, 1.00" margin on all sides, & 12 font size
ODKM 735 SPRING 2021
GRADING CRITERIA AND CHECK LIST FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS PRESENTATION
Please fill this out on May 1 after each class presentation.
(This is a confidential evaluation. You need not write your name anywhere.)

Group Number/ Name/ Organization studied: _________________; Date ___________

1. **Richness of description:** Did you get a good sense of the culture of the organization during the presentation?

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2. **Depth of analysis:** Did the presentation provide you with new insights regarding the use of AI/ASK for organizational analysis or as a consulting approach?

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3. **Organization of presentation material:** Did you get a good sense of what the group had done in this project (such as how they have collected data and analyzed them, sharing matrices one & two, and the future present scenarios (FPS) or possibility propositions (PP), if they had done them)?

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4. **Audience involvement:** Degree to which the presenters sought your involvement, reactions, or feedback during or after the presentation.

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Total points (maximum 10; Add your scores from #1 to 4 above and divide by two) = __________

5. Write here any other feedback you may have for the group using the following format:

What your group has done well are .................................................................

What your group could do differently are .............................................................
ODKM 735 SPRING 2021: Confidential Team Evaluation
Please fill this out and email to me after your group has written the project report.
Write your name and the names of all teammates. The evaluation is confidential. Only I will see the rating. Please assign participation/evaluation points ranging from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest) for each category in the table and complete the qualitative comments section listed at the bottom of the table.

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Required: Your qualitative and confidential comments regarding your or team member participation. Please comment on the following aspects:

Being prepared for the group meetings and staying fully engaged during group meetings.

Responsibility: Amount of work team member took on during the project.

Follow-through and fulfilling deadlines obligations: Timely completion of work that team member had agreed to perform.