Course Rationale and Objectives

With few exceptions, all health care is provided by or through health care organizations. The structure, behavior and performance of these organizations, therefore, demand a close examination by anyone interested in accessibility, quality, safety and cost of health care, and allocation of health resources. How do health care reform, regulatory pressures and economic competition the growing organizational complexity of care, and the resulting fundamental changes in organizational structure, financial arrangements, and interorganizational relationships influence health care organizations? How do health care organizations influence patients, providers, employees, the government, and organizations in other industries? Organizational theory provides valuable answers to these questions.

The objective of this course is to review and apply various theoretical perspectives to research on health care organizations. Ironically, as one of my former professors once said, our field is anything but organized. Since an exhaustive overview of the field is not possible in a single semester, I will give you (1) a “guided tour” of selected aspects of organizational behavior, performance, structure, process, and environment and (2) the tools necessary to explore aspects of the field that we will not have time to explore together. Throughout the course, special emphasis is placed on comparing alternative theoretical perspectives and research strategies, and on identifying issues for organizational research in the health care sector.

This course will challenge you to: (1) become familiar with several major theoretical perspectives underlying research on health services organizations and systems; (2) understand the purpose and components of scientific theory as used in health services research; (3) understand the process through which knowledge about health services organizations develops and cumulates; (4) analyze the environments, strategies, technologies, structures and effectiveness of health services organizations; and, most importantly, (5) develop clear, logical arguments based on organizational theory to support your health services research.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Explain and defend the value of using theory to frame research problems
- Identify the characteristics of a good theory and explain why so few theories possess them
- Select a theory that is appropriate for your research
- Apply a theory to your research
- Thread theory throughout a research proposal (and, by extension, a manuscript reporting study results), from background and significance to conclusions
- Describe fundamental features of organizations
• Describe major organizational theories and their relevance for health services research

Course Structure

To meet the course objective, each session of the course will address a central issue or perspective in organization research. The first part of the course (sessions 1 and 2) provides an overview of organizations (e.g., Why study them?) and organizational theory (e.g., What theory is and what theory is not). The second part (sessions 3 through 6) focuses on some “fundamentals” of organization research to build your vocabulary for an informed discussion of different theoretical perspectives. The last part (sessions 7 to 13) reviews several of the major organizational theories and perspectives that you will often encounter in organization and health services research. Each session of the course includes readings that illustrate the conceptual, pragmatic, and empirical aspects of the issue or perspective being discussed. The first half of each class will be devoted to covering background readings. The second half of each class will be devoted to discussing and critiquing empirical readings. The readings serve as the basis for class discussion. To make the discussion effective and stimulating, please come to the class prepared by completing all the readings and forming your own interpretations and questions about the readings.

Roles and Responsibilities

This course invokes an adult learning model. My primary role is to help create an effective learning environment, act as an expert resource, help you find other resources, and facilitate learning.

Your role is to be an open learner and to help each other learn. You do this by keeping up with the readings, participating in class discussion, completing required assignments, and helping each other to add value to the course.

To take full advantage of the learning experience in this course, you need to bring an openness to learning, a willingness to explore possibilities (both alone and with others), a desire to be engaged in thoughtful reflections about the readings, and the motivation to explore and develop your own line of research. To make this class useful, you need to spend time outside of class pursuing additional readings about theory and its application and being prepared to participate in class discussions.

Course Requirements

Course Moderation

The course is in seminar format. Part of the learning at the doctoral level is to develop the ability to conduct a seminar. For this reason, each of you will be assigned to moderate several class sessions during the semester (the number of sessions you moderate will be determined based on the class size). As a moderator, you will make a presentation at the beginning of the seminar and to facilitate class discussion. As appropriate, you should facilitate your presentation with visual aids, handouts, or any other media you think will make your points effectively. The following guides may help you prepare for moderating your session.

1. Review the assigned readings (particularly conceptual articles) collectively, identifying key premises, assumptions, theoretical arguments, research questions, and methods.
2. Constructively critique the material you read (on both sides of the issue, as appropriate) by considering what the material tells you, when and where the theory predicts and explains, what questions remain
unanswered, and where the particular study/theory might be modified or expanded (particularly for examining health care organizations).

3. When reviewing theoretical work, you may want to consider the following as you evaluate the material and prepare your presentation and discussion:
   a. Describe the theory—What is the theory supposed to explain? What are the key concepts (antecedents, consequences, mediators, moderators, etc.)? What is the scope of the theory? What are the appropriate units and levels of the theory?
   b. Is the theory logically consistent? Can it be empirically tested? If so, how might this be done?
   c. What are the predictions made by the theory? Are any of the predictions non-obvious or surprising? How or why might these be of interest to academicians and to practitioners?
   d. How is the theory related to those that we have discussed in the class? Are there any contradictions? How could we reconcile or integrate the differences?
   e. In what ways do you think this theory could/should be extended, if at all?

4. When reviewing empirical work assigned for the session, consider the following as you evaluate the material and prepare your presentation and discussion:
   a. What are the research questions examined in the study? Is the significance of the research problem clearly justified?
   b. Is the theoretical perspective or framework clearly explained? Is it appropriate for addressing the research problem?
   c. Are there specific hypotheses? Are they clearly justified according to the theoretical perspective or framework?
   d. How are the theoretical constructs operationalized? To what extent do you agree that the operationalizations are appropriate?
   e. What is the research design? Is it appropriate? What are the target population and the sample? Is the sample properly selected? Is the sample large enough for the analysis?
   f. What is the statistical analysis? Is it appropriate for the purpose of the study?
   g. What are the conclusions of the study? Do you agree with the authors’ interpretation? Are there alternative explanations? What might be an appropriate follow-up or extension for the work reported?

I strongly encourage non-moderators to consider the above questions in preparation for the class; doing so will help to guide your reading and make it more efficient, and it will help stimulate thoughts to inform your weekly reading reflections (see below).

Class Participation

Active class participation is critical in a doctoral seminar and demonstrates that you have prepared by reading course materials. As such, class participation is a significant part of your grade.

A key component of your class participation grade is reading reflections. Each of you is expected to email 3 of your most thought-provoking questions and/or comments from the readings for class discussion. The questions/comments assignments are intended to (1) stimulate class discussion and (2) demonstrate that you have actively engaged with the readings on an intellectual level. I encourage you to use the questions at the beginning of each session’s reading list as a guide. Please email the questions/comments to me by 7:30pm the Sunday evening before the session. Please also bring the questions/comments and be prepared to discuss them during class.

Peer Reviews
There are two assignments intended as opportunities for you to practice reviewing articles for journals. First, you will review a manuscript that was submitted for publication to a journal. The manuscript to be reviewed can be found on Sakai under “Assignments.” The first peer review is due before class on February 27. Second, your final paper (see specifications below) will be assigned to one of your classmates for peer review and returned to you before class on April 10. Both reviews must be formatted and worded as if they were to be submitted to an academic journal. A copy of the HSR Guidelines for Reviewers, Meyer’s (1995) “Balls, strikes, and collisions on the basepath: Ruminations of a veteran reviewer,” and examples of peer reviews are available on Sakai under “Resources” to help you prepare constructive, high quality reviews. The exercises will be evaluated as part of your final grade and their due dates are listed on the class schedule below.

Final Research Paper, Peer Review, and Response

The purpose of the final research paper is to explicate and apply a selected aspect of organizational theory to a current phenomenon or issue in the health care sector, and to develop hypotheses or research propositions based on the particular theory. **The theory that you apply may be one of the theories or theoretical perspectives covered in this course, but it does not need to be. The theory that you apply should be appropriate for the phenomenon that you plan to study.** In essence, this paper is a research proposal. Although the sections included in papers will vary based on topic and data availability, most proposals should include the following sections: (1) Statement of purpose and specific aims; (2) hypotheses and/or research questions; (3) background and significance; (4) theoretical framework; (5) study design; (6) sampling plan; (7) instrumentation and data collection; and (8) data analysis plan. In addition to the peer review described above, I will be available to review and provide feedback on a draft of the paper before the final due date to give you the opportunity to improve it. Drafts of the research proposal should be 15-20 pages in length (excluding references, tables, etc.), double-spaced. Please see https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm#font for font and line spacing instructions.

The first draft will be assigned to one of your classmates for peer review and returned to you for response along with a final, revised draft of your research proposal. I will make every effort to assign your draft to a classmate with a research topic that is similar to yours. If you have suggestions regarding a classmate to whom your draft should be assigned, please let me know (although I cannot ensure that I will choose the person whom you suggest). The peer review must be formatted and worded as if it were to be submitted to an academic journal. A copy of the HSR Guidelines for Reviewers, Meyer’s (1995) “Balls, strikes, and collisions on the basepath: Ruminations of a veteran reviewer,” and examples of peer reviews are available on Sakai under “Resources” to help you prepare constructive, high quality reviews. I will also provide feedback on all first drafts of the research proposal.

You will then have 2 weeks to respond to your reviewers’ (mine and a peer’s) concerns in a professional cover letter format (see examples on Sakai under “Resources”) and make final revisions before turning in your final draft.

Due dates are listed in the course schedule below.

Please do not include your name on any submissions. Instead, please provide your PID.

Important notes on style:
• Please ensure that your writing confirms to all of the elements described in “Stylish Writing for the HPM Methods Sequence” (Domino & Stearns, 2009).
• Eliminate typos, spelling errors, and grammatical errors before submitting writing assignments. Doing so will help me to focus on the content of your work. If I cannot focus on the content of your work, your grade will suffer.

Grading*

Although grades in the course will be unavoidably subjective, they will be determined on both the quantity and quality of your effort as well as the level of your understanding of the course material. Specifically, the final grade will be determined in the following manner:

- Class moderation (20%)
- Class participation (20%)
- Peer Reviews (30%)
- Final paper (30%)

*Late submissions will result in one letter grade decrease for each 24-hour increment (with the exception of disability-related extensions). Assignments are due before class on the day identified in the schedule at a glance table. As such, for assignments not submitted before class, the first letter grade decrease takes effect the minute that class begins.

Course Resources

Website

HPM 930 has a Sakai site (See http://sakai.unc.edu for HPM930.001.SP17). This syllabus, assigned readings, and other information are all available on the HPM 930 page.

Be sure to check that the email address Sakai has for you is correct. After accessing Sakai, click on the “My Workspace” tab on the top left of the home page and then in the list on the left of the page click on “Profile.” If you need to change your email address, click on “Edit Contact Information” and follow the directions. Note that you need to use the same email address in both Sakai and the On-Line Campus Directory.

Course Texts

  
  Newer editions are VERY expensive. I suggest that you purchase the 8th edition from an on-line bookseller.

Required readings are accessible on the Sakai (https://sakai.unc.edu/). You are expected to read all those that are required (see the Reading List on pages 9-14) in preparation for the class. You may email me for ideas about additional readings regarding specific topics on the syllabus that interest you.
The UNC-CH Learning Center ([http://learningcenter.unc.edu](http://learningcenter.unc.edu)) provides assistance and tutoring in expository writing. All students are encouraged to make use of this resource regardless of whether English is a first language or not. The Odum Institute ([http://www.irss.unc.edu/odum/home2.jsp](http://www.irss.unc.edu/odum/home2.jsp)) offers a variety of short courses and other social science research training opportunities.

Valuing, Recognizing, and Encouraging Diversity

Promoting and valuing diversity in the classroom enriches learning and broadens everyone’s perspectives. Inclusion and tolerance can lead to respect for others and their opinions and is critical to maximizing the learning that we expect in this program. This may challenge our own closely held ideas and personal comfort zones. The results, however, create a sense of community and promote excellence in the learning environment. Diversity includes consideration of (1) the variety of life experiences others have had, and (2) factors related to “diversity of presence,” including, among others, age, economic circumstances, ethnic identification, disability, gender, geographic origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, social position. This class will follow principles of inclusion, respect, tolerance, and acceptance that support the values of diversity.

Disability Accommodation

UNC-CH supports all reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or a pregnancy complication resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the UNC Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (ARS), [http://accessibility.unc.edu](http://accessibility.unc.edu); phone 919-962-8300 or email accessibility@unc.edu. Students must document/register their need for accommodations with ARS before any accommodations can be implemented.”

Course Evaluation

HPM participates in the UNC-CH’s online course evaluation system, enabled at the end of the semester by Scantron Class Climate. Your responses will be anonymous, with feedback provided in the aggregate. Open-ended comments will be shared with instructors, but not identified with individual students. Your participation in course evaluation is an expectation, since providing constructive feedback is a professional obligation. Feedback is critical, moreover, to improving the quality of our courses, as well as for instructor assessment.

I will conduct an independent course evaluation via Qualtrics before spring break. The purpose of the evaluation is to gather feedback from students regarding how I can improve the course in the second half of the semester.

UNC Honor Code

The principles of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship govern the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University as they have during the long life of this institution. Your acceptance of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in the Code of Student Conduct and a respect for this most significant Carolina tradition. Your reward is in the practice of these principles. Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity, however small, strikes destructively at the University’s life and work. If you have any questions about your responsibility or the responsibility of faculty members under the Honor Code, please consult with someone
in either the Office of the Student Attorney General (966-4084) or the Office of the Dean of Students (966-4042). Please see “The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance” (http://instrument.unc.edu).
### Class Schedule at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Assignment Due*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 23</td>
<td>Course Introduction/Overview of Organizations</td>
<td>Birken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 30</td>
<td>Overview of Organizational Theory: Do We Need Theory? Selecting and Applying Theory</td>
<td>Birken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>Fundamental I: Organizational Purpose, Design, and Effectiveness</td>
<td>Haley</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Fundamental II: Organizational Technology and Structure</td>
<td>Drake</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feb 27</td>
<td>Fundamental IV: Autonomy, Power, and Control</td>
<td>Tran</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mar 6</td>
<td>Contingency Theory</td>
<td>Birken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mar 20</td>
<td>Resource Dependency Theory</td>
<td>McCollum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mar 27</td>
<td>Economic Theories of Organizations</td>
<td>Birken</td>
<td>Final paper for peer review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Apr 3</td>
<td>Organizational Learning Perspective</td>
<td>Patel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Apr 10</td>
<td>Population Ecology and Evolution Theory</td>
<td>Jazowski</td>
<td>Peer Review 2: Review your classmate’s final paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
<td>Institutional Theory</td>
<td>Birken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Apr 24</td>
<td>Interorganizational Relations and the Network Perspective</td>
<td>Birken</td>
<td>1. Final paper 2. Response to reviewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All assignments are due **before class** begins on the due date.
Readings and probing questions

Session Topic

1 Course Introduction and Overview of Organizations and Organization Theory

What are organizations? How do they differ from other forms of social organization (e.g., communities, primary groups)? Why do they exist? Why do they matter? What is unique about health care organizations? What are the social conditions that differentiate health care organizations from organizations in other societal sectors? Do these conditions limit the application of organization theory to health care organizations? Alternatively, how may studies health care organizations inform theory development? How has the focus of organizational studies changed over time? What is theory? What theory is not? What is a good or bad theory? What constitutes a research contribution?

Daft. Chapter 1 (Organizations and Organization Theory).


2 Do We Need Theory? Selecting and Applying Theory

What is the value of theory? Is there empirical benefit to using theory? Practical benefit? Are there costs to using theory? How do I choose a theory? How do I apply a theory?

Do We Need Theory?

Selecting and Applying Theory


Birken, S.A., Powell, B.J., Shea, C.M., Presseau, J. Developing a tool to promote the selection of appropriate implementation frameworks and theories. A research proposal funded by the North Carolina Translational & Clinical Sciences Institute.


Birken, S. A., Powell, B. J., Presseau, J. “Uses of frameworks and theories in implementation science.”


3 Fundamental I—Organizational Purpose, Design, and Effectiveness

What do we mean by organizational goals? What are the differences between individual goals and organizational goals? What are the differences between the effectiveness model and the survival (maintenance) model? What are the approaches to organizational design? How do we define, assess, and explain organizational effectiveness?


Clarke, L., and C. L. Estes. Sociological and economic theories of markets and nonprofits:


4 **Fundamental II—Organizational Technology and Structure**

How do we define organizational technology? What is the core technology of health care organizations, such as hospitals? How does technology constrain organizational structure? Is technology easily changeable? Why not? How does technology affect the social fabric of an organization and vice versa?


5 **Fundamental III—External Environments**

How do we define organizational environment? What are the different dimensions of organizational environment? Why does the environment matter to the operation and survival of organizations?

Daft. Chapter 4 (The External Environment).


6 **Fundamental IV—Autonomy, Power, and Control**

How do we define autonomy? Power? What are the bases of autonomy and power in health
care organizations? How have the bases of autonomy and power changed over time and what are the consequences of these changes for the role of managers and health professions? What is the “stakeholder” perspective? Why does it matter?

Daft. Chapter 13 (Conflict, Power, and Politics).


### 7 Contingency Theory


### 8 Resource Dependency Theory


**Economic Theories of Organizations**


**The Learning Perspective**


11 Population Ecology and Evolution Theory


12 Institutional Theory


13 Interorganizational Relations and the Network Perspective


