BUS87401: Organizational Behavior  
Professor Molly Kern  
Spring 2021

Phone: (646) 312-3673  
E-mail: mary.kern@baruch.cuny.edu  
Office: 9-264, Management Department  
Office Hrs: by appointment

**COURSE INFORMATION**

We will meet on Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. via Zoom.

The purpose of this course is to examine and understand fundamental theories and empirical research in the field of organizational behavior and to increase our understanding of people’s behavior in organizations. To do so, we will study a blend of classic and contemporary literature so that we can appreciate the prevailing theories and findings within a broader context. I will encourage you to alter your perspective, re-frame the research questions, introduce new theory, and to consider the impact of the level of analysis.

The following is a partial list of course objectives:
- Provide exposure to a variety of topic areas in organizational behavior
- Assist students in the process of developing expertise in a domain of interest
- Assist students in learning to develop theoretically-based research propositions
- Explore new research ideas

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Due (by 8am each day)</th>
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<td>Course Overview: What is OB?</td>
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<td>Insights in OB Learned Through Meta-analysis</td>
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<td>Creativity and Innovation</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Equity, Fairness &amp; Trust</td>
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<td>Group Process &amp; Diversity</td>
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<td>Organizations in denial: Work-life Meets Sustainability</td>
<td>Idea paper</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Presentations and Feedback</td>
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<td>May 17</td>
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**Changes may be made to the schedule as the course progresses. All changes will be addressed in class and also communicated via Blackboard.**

**Attendance at external seminars may also be requested.**

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**PREPARING FOR CLASS**

You are expected to come prepared to each class prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings for that session. The essence of this seminar is contained in the quality of the classroom discussion. As you review each reading you might consider the following questions:

- What is the basic formulation of the theory (constructs and relationships among them), and what drives the theory?
- What are the underlying assumptions?
- What is the main contribution of this paper? What are the interesting ideas?
- What is your analysis of the methods?
- What was done well, what is novel, and what could have been improved?
- Do you believe the argument? What would it take to convince you?
- What are the boundary conditions of the argument; in other words, under what circumstances does the argument apply and not apply?
- What are the critical differences between this author’s argument and others you have read? Can these differences be resolved through an empirical test?

Our discussions will assume that everyone is familiar with the readings for that day. So, you should be prepared to discuss them in detail. Each class will explore what we know and what we don’t know about the day’s topic. We’ll pursue what we would like to know and how we would go about discovering it. We will generate a variety of questions and we will try to outline actual research projects that might eliminate alternative explanations, assess and potentially validate the underlying assumptions of a model, and identify its boundary conditions, causally if possible.

Students are expected to attend all class meetings, to be prepared (i.e., complete readings in advance of every class meeting) and to contribute constructively to the discussions. Please notify me in advance if you cannot attend a class.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Your grade will be made up of two components: idea papers and a research paper.

1. **Idea papers (50%)**
   You are required to submit an idea paper (1-2 pages, TNR 12 point, double-spaced) by 8am the day before class (Tuesday) for 8 of the modules indicated in the course outline. These papers should propose a novel hypothesis (something not already known or immediately obvious to researchers in OB) and should build on one or more of the ideas that have surfaced in the
papers we have been reading. The write up should include a paragraph that defines the relevant constructs, and also a paragraph that discusses the "real-world" impact (i.e., organizational benefits) of gaining knowledge about the proposed relationship. Please try to support the idea as logically as you can.

2. Research paper and presentation (40%)
The culminating assignment for this seminar is a research paper which adds new knowledge or brings a new perspective to old findings within the field. It is perfectly acceptable to incorporate your idea papers into this longer paper, but this is not necessary. The paper should review prior research on your topic or related literatures (if your topic is quite new), and then should pose a set of hypotheses that would be worth pursuing in future research (e.g. a grant agency would find sufficient merit to fund this research). You should then describe what an empirical test of your ideas would look like through a description of a research design (e.g. the methods section). Note: Your paper should not be one you are working on for another course requirement.

Thus, your paper should look like the first half of a journal article and include:

• Introduction: What is the research question? Why is it important? What prior research has been done? What question(s) remain unanswered?
• Theory, model, and hypotheses: What are the independent and dependent variables? What relationships do you expect? Why?
• Methods: How would you collect data to test your hypotheses? What would you use to manipulate your factors and/or what measures would you use to operationalize your constructs? What statistics would you use to test your hypotheses? If the data confirmed your hypotheses what would the results of the statistical tests look like?

Feedback is a critical component of the research process. If you send the first readable version of one of your papers to a journal, its chances of getting a revise-and-resubmit decision are extremely low. In fact, editors are often angry and disappointed when they read papers that have obviously not been looked at by others first. Thus, the “friendly review” is one of those activities that will help make you a professional in the field. Developing a set of colleagues who can comment critically on your work is one of the many keys to success in our profession. We will share feedback in two ways. First, you will submit a rough draft with two more senior students in the doctoral program by May 1st. They will provide feedback on this draft either in writing and/or verbally by May 8th. Then, in our final class on May 12th you will deliver a 15 minute “Academy”-style presentation. Your presentation should follow the same bulleted outline as provided above and should be presented using PowerPoint (or something similar). All of the guest lecturers as well as the senior students in the doctoral program will be invited to attend and will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

When you have considered the comments shared by the class and revised your paper in line with their suggestions, you should submit your paper with a cover letter as if you were submitting it to a journal. Please submit both a hardcopy and a soft copy (via Blackboard) by
May 17th at 8am.

ETHICS

Please make sure you understand the Graduate Center’s policy on academic integrity and honesty (See http://web.gc.cuny.edu/provost/pdf/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf). Written assignments are to be your own work. This course has a “zero tolerance” policy on cheating and plagiarism. Any student who breaks academic rules will receive a zero for that assignment. As required by Graduate Center policy, I will submit a report of suspected academic dishonesty to the Executive Officer for the program and Vice President for Student Affairs.

ASSIGNED READING

Course Overview: What is OB?


Porter, W., & Scheneider, B. (2014). What was, what is, and what may be in op/ob. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1.

Insights in OB Learned Through Meta-analysis


**Person vs. Situation**


**Motivation**


**The Individual**


**Please read last and skim.**

**Counterproductive Work Behaviors**

Creativity and Innovation


Recommended:

Power & Influence


Leadership

To be added
Conflict


Equity, Fairness & Trust


Group Process & Diversity


Harrison, D., & Klein, K. J. (). What’s the difference? Diversity constructs as separation, variety, or disparity in organizations. Academy of Management Review, 32(4), 1199-1228.


Research on Work-life Integration
Subtopic: Work-life Roles versus Environmental Stewardship


**Optional Readings:**