Introduction to Organization Development
Fall 2006

New York University
Psychology Department
MA Course G89.2074
Mondays 6:20 - 8:10

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Course description:
This course is designed to provide students with different perspectives on Organization Development at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis. Theoretical models will be considered, along with real-world examples of organizations that have or have not benefited in the past, or that might or might not benefit in the future, from Organization Development interventions. Students will learn how to use theoretical models to evaluate organizations that they research (and/or where they are currently working or have worked in the past), and will also learn how to evaluate theoretical models in terms of their research and work experience. The course is structured to cover both the “process” (classes 1 - 4) and the “content” (classes 5 - 12) of Organization Development.

Readings:

Additional materials are available on the course Blackboard, which should be printed out each week and brought to class.

For each content area covered in the course, there will be optional readings which may be of particular interest for the presentation. The readings are available in the reserve area of Bobst Library on the A level.

Office hours (in room 161G):
Office hours are held one hour before class. I will be glad to answer any questions you have about the readings, the assignment, or any other questions you may have about OD or I/O. I will also be glad to review and give you feedback about any written work that you bring to office hours, and encourage you to err on the side of over communicating, rather than under communicating with me. Scheduling time to discuss your outline at least two weeks before you present, and a complete draft of your presentation at least one week before you present, are required. The demands of my consulting practice make it unlikely that I will be able to review and respond to written materials that you email me at other times during the week. However, you are welcome to give me written materials to review when class meets and then schedule a phone call to discuss what you have handed in, or to email me materials that you would like me to review during office hours.

Course grading:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>80%</td>
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**Class participation**

In order to get the most value out of this class, and contribute the most value to this class, it is critical that all students come to class fully prepared to discuss and debate that week’s readings. I encourage you to bring to class and share any brief handouts, web links, or other materials or resources that can help illuminate or bring to life the concepts or interventions described in the readings and that your classmates may find interesting and useful.

**Presentation:**

For the presentation, you are free to write about interventions that either internal consultants, external consultants, or both internal and external consultants might conduct. In addition to the recommended topics below, you are welcome to choose any other kind of OD intervention listed in Cummings & Worley or to pick another type of OD intervention not described in the textbook, as long as you can find enough written about that topic and discuss the topic with me first. You will need to select a real world organization that is facing organizational challenges, research those challenges, describe those challenges, and present one or more relevant, integrated OD interventions that could help the organization successfully adapt to those challenges. Your argument for what the organization should do should be based on evidence and precedents, case studies and best practices, and you will need to closely link what was done at other organizations to what should be done at the organization you are endeavoring to assist. It is helpful to simultaneously consider solutions and problems as you pick a topic, as it is often easier to start with solutions and find an organization that could benefit than to start with the organizational problem and search for solutions. This assignment should help you both in terms of preparing for comps, and in terms of learning how to respond to client requests in the real world.

Recommended topics include:

**Human Process**  
Executive coaching; process consultation; conflict resolution

**Technostructural**  
Organizational design; work design; responsibility charting

**Human Resource Management**  
Performance management; employee development; workforce diversity

**Strategic**  
Mergers and acquisitions; culture change
Once you have picked a topic, you will:

1) Write and hand in an outline, and schedule time (during office hours or less preferably, on the phone) to discuss your outline with me so that I can approve it and give you feedback and suggestions about it before you begin your research and start writing your first draft. After completing your first draft, you will need to schedule an additional meeting to discuss it with me. Two weeks before you present, you will have a few minutes of class time to describe your work to your classmates, and to get suggestions for what they might be interested in knowing about your topic. Please email everyone a one page synopsis of your presentation at least one day before you provide the preview of your work and bring hard copy handouts to class. This will enable your classmates to formulate questions that will help you to better conceptualize and structure your presentation.

2) Create a 25-30 slide presentation about the intervention(s), including a consideration of relevant case studies, research about best practices, and relevant theories and models. The reserve readings in Bobst may be helpful, however, you will have to find other sources to supplement them. Your presentation should have a clear introduction that gives a preview of its structure and a clear conclusion that summarizes what you have covered. The presentation itself should be well structured with a logical progression from one section to another, and one slide to the next, in order to read as an integrated whole. Case studies should be woven thematically, rather than being presented one at a time, and there should be clear linkages between descriptions (of best practices and case studies) and prescriptions (for the organization you are helping). The slides should be carefully edited and should be free of any grammatical or typographical errors. Successful OD presentations often have as many as 20 to 25 citations, although there is no formal minimum number of sources required. In class 3 we will review examples of successful and unsuccessful presentations from past semesters to give you a clear sense of the criteria that will be used to evaluate your work. Your presentation should be good enough for you to feel comfortable in giving it, either in person or in hard copy, to current colleagues or prospective clients or employers, and my hope is that you will have an opportunity to do so at some point.

3) Prepare a 25 minute PowerPoint presentation for the senior management of the organization that you have researched. You will make this presentation during a relevant class (i.e.: a presentation about a Human Resource intervention would be presented Class 9, 10 or 11) to educate the client about the key aspects of the kind of intervention you have researched and how it might be applicable to the client’s organization. In addition to your presentation, please be prepared to be “on call” (on a panel with others who are presenting) during the entire class at which you present. It is important that you be able to discuss and answer questions about how your presentation relates to, and can be integrated with, the relevant Cummings & Worley chapter(s), the other course readings for the week, and with your classmates’ presentations. Therefore, I recommend that all students presenting at a given class meet beforehand to ensure that there is integration rather than repetition. There will also be 5 minutes of Q & A and feedback at the conclusion of each presentation.

4) Prepare hard-copy handouts of all of your presentation slides. These handouts should include complete citations on each slide, and be detailed and clear enough for your classmates to be able to refer to them in the future for use as a resource for future courses, comprehensive exam preparation, and projects or jobs in applied settings without having to dig up the original sources. You should include an introductory slide that serves as a table of contents for the presentation, as well as a “tracker” that lets your audience know where in the sequence of the overall presentation any given slide is. You are also welcome to print out “notes” slides so that you can provide background information without unnecessarily cluttering up your slides. It may also be helpful, but is not required, to provide your classmates with examples of supplemental materials that
might be used in the intervention itself, such as questionnaires, interview protocols, process maps, facilitator handbooks, etc. However, the main focus of the presentation should be in the slides themselves, which should be so detailed and specific that you would be concerned that your prospective clients have been so educated and informed that they could decide to take your ideas and implement the intervention without hiring you. In other words, the presentation is a combination of an educational tool, a piece of marketing material, and a blueprint for an actual intervention. Again, your work should be good enough that you would feel comfortable showing it to a boss, colleague or prospective client or employer in the real world in order to provide an example of the high quality of research, writing, and presentation that you are capable of.

5) Email a copy of your presentation to me, and to any classmates who request copies. Please distribute a sign-up sheet the evening that you present so that classmates can indicate whether they would like to get copies of your slides. The level of interest you get will provide concrete feedback from your classmates about how valuable they view your work to be.

During the presentation, your classmates and I will play the part of your prospective client. (You will need to tell us what kind of organization we are and what kinds of issues we are dealing with). Your presentation should be geared to convincing us three things: 1) the intervention(s) you are proposing will be beneficial specifically to us, and 2) you are knowledgeable enough about the intervention(s) for us to hire you to implement it for us, and 3) your presentation slides are the blueprint for the way you would actually approach the intervention if we decide to hire you.

Students will choose a feedback and editing partner, and each of you will help the other practice the presentation in advance of your actual class presentation so that you can make sure you have enough backup for any questions that the audience might ask. Additionally, your partner will give you constructive feedback about your slides/handout in order to make sure that your other classmates will understand it and find it useful. I also suggest that you discuss your presentation with other classmates so you can get additional input and feedback about how your presentation could be most useful to them. You are also welcome to come to office hours for feedback about your presentation and your handout/slides as many times as you would like. Anyone who is willing to work hard and to improve their presentation based on my feedback and that of their classmates will get a good or great grade in the course. At any time, you may ask me what grade your presentation would receive if it were the final version, so that you know where you stand and what you would need to do in order to get an A. I’ll also be glad to share your class participation grade up to any point in the semester. There should be no mystery or surprise to your final grade- it will be a direct function of the effort that you invest in learning, participating and educating your classmates.

In the presentation, it is suggested that you include both descriptions (how has this intervention successfully or unsuccessfully been done in the past) and prescriptions (how should this intervention at your client organization). The topic you choose should be approached from the OD perspective, not just from a technical, business, leadership, or HR perspective. In other words, writing about how a CEO changed a culture or how an HR department administers a performance appraisal system are not directly relevant to OD. An OD focus means that consultants, internal or external, facilitated a change process that involved multiple aspects of an organizational system, in a manner consistent with the definitions of OD given in your textbook.

Given how hard it is to find relevant case examples, I cannot emphasize enough my recommendation that you begin researching possible presentation topics as soon as possible, and I will be glad to help you refine your ideas. I also recommend that you not choose a topic until you have verified that you can find enough relevant case studies and other kinds of evidence and data. Think of your presentation as being analogous to
the backup you would need in order to argue a case in court- you are making an argument for a certain kind of OD intervention based on evidence and precedents. Successful presentations usually have at least five to ten detailed case examples, along with more general research studies, that can be woven in as backup.

You are likely to have questions as you research and write. I will be glad to give you suggestions and feedback along the way. One of the most important ways you will learn in this course is through the process of taking the assignment as being a somewhat vague “presenting problem” and seeking my input and feedback and that of your classmates as your “clients” to define the assignment and create a comprehensive but concise presentation that demonstrates your ability to research and integrate OD case studies, best practices, and theories and models. It is your responsibility to actively seek the input and feedback of me and your classmates. As in the real world, failure to do so makes it very unlikely that you will be able to submit a successful outline, draft, or presentation or to design and implement an effective intervention. Again, you are required to submit an outline and at least one complete draft, and you are welcome to submit additional outlines, drafts or presentations for discussion at any time before you give your presentation, but no late assignments or additional drafts or revisions will be accepted after the respective due dates. Students who present earlier in the semester have the benefit of more time to revise the presentation before the final due date, while students who present later have the benefit of more time to prepare as well as the benefit of watching other classmates present. Therefore, you should pick your presentation topic based on what is most interesting to you, rather than selecting a topic simply because it is earlier or later in the semester. I recommend that you think of this course as combining a standard kind of class with an independent study-type class.

**Grading criteria for the presentation:**

The presentation will be evaluated based on: 1) Structure- how well it is structured; 2) Comprehensiveness- the quantity and quality of references that you collect and present 3) Integration- how well the presentation integrates references and evidence, descriptions and prescriptions; 4) Utility- the usefulness of your presentation to your prospective client- e.g. if they only had your presentation to go by, they would be able to design and implement an appropriate intervention, having a clear picture of the “who, what, where, why, when and how” of the intervention that you are advocating.

Late assignments in some classes may simply receive grade penalties. However, given the emphasis on iteration and collaboration in this course, late assignments, including the outline, draft, and final presentation will not be accepted unless there is a very compelling reason and you and I agree upon a revised due date in advance.

You should note that, in addition to a heavy workload, this course requires that you work with and tolerate some ambiguity, bring your own definition to an assignment, and spend 30 minutes in front of the class presenting your research, integrating it with other course readings, and answering questions. Please review this syllabus carefully throughout the semester to ensure that you have fully understood each and every requirement of the course, and do not hesitate to ask questions at any time. OD is an iterative and collaborative process where being prepared and asking the right questions at the right time are the single biggest determinants of success. In addition to developing your substantive knowledge of OD, the goal of this course is to build your competence and confidence in researching, writing, and presenting.
Weekly schedule:

**Class 1:**
Sept 11
Introduction/course overview/content areas preview/history of OD; The role of the OD practitioner, values and ethics, organizational entry and contracting

Cummings & Worley (2005) Chapters 1, 2; Cummings & Worley Chapters 3, 4; Dattner (2002): unpublished article: “Organizations hire consultants for the wrong reasons”

**Class 2:**
Sept 18
Diagnosis, data collection and analysis, feedback


**Class 3:**
Sept 25
Intervention design, leading and managing change, evaluation and institutionalization

Cummings & Worley Chapters 9, 10, 11; Examples of successful presentations submitted in previous classes

Choose feedback/editing partners

Oct 2: Yom Kippur- no class meeting

Oct 9: Columbus Day- no class meeting

**Class 4:**
Oct 16
Human process interventions I: Executive coaching


Outlines due

Sign up for presentations

**Class 5:**
Oct 23
Human process interventions II: Process consultation


Presentations

**Class 6:**
Oct 30
Human process interventions III: Conflict resolution

Dattner (2004) “Conflict resolution” presentation

Presentations
Class 7: Technostructural interventions I: Organizational design
Nov 6
Cummings & Worley Chapters 14, 15, 16; Kaufmann “Organizational design” presentation
Presentations

Class 8: Technostructural interventions II: Work design, responsibility charting
Nov 13
Presentations

Class 9: Human resource management interventions I: Performance management
Nov 20
Cummings & Worley Chapters 17, 18; Dattner (2002) “Performance appraisal” presentation
Presentations

Class 10: Human resource management interventions II: Employee development
Nov 27
Hay Group: “Emotional Competence Inventory”, “Emotional Competence Inventory Workforce Audit”
Presentations

Class 11: Human resource management interventions III: Workforce diversity
Dec 4
Presentations

Class 12: Strategic interventions: Mergers and acquisitions; Organizational Culture Change
Dec 11
Cummings & Worley Chapters 19, 20; “Successful mergers” presentation
“Changing a culture of face time” HBR article
Presentations
Final presentations due