

PUBA 710: ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Lead Professor: Willow Jacobson, PhD
COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description

Managers are confronted with new challenges brought about by the global economy, pressures to improve government performance, and demands to produce more with less. Organizations are downsizing, becoming less hierarchical and more decentralized. How can managers rise to the challenge of managing the tumultuous future? How can they understand and lead the transformations of the organizations within which they operate? This course is designed to provide students an opportunity to wrestle with these questions by acquainting them with the basic themes, concepts, and competencies of the field of organizational theory and management.

Through this course, students will come to see that organizations operate as systems. Within this overarching orientation are many diverse strategies for understanding organizations and management; the materials are drawn from a range of perspectives including public administration, private-sector management, psychology, sociology, and political science. This course will integrate these various perspectives and stress their application to public and nonprofit organizations.

This course will require students to illustrate and apply the issues learned from theoretical and conceptual materials. At the completion of the course, students will be able to

- Define traditional and contemporary interpretations of what is an organization and how various management functions shape public service organizations.
- Conduct a systematic diagnosis of organizational dynamics including challenges and opportunities.
- Identify appropriate strategies and actions to address public management issues.

Course Objectives

- Provide students a conceptual and experiential grounding in the basic themes and concepts of management and organizational operation.
- Create an opportunity for students to learn and demonstrate the methods of organizational diagnosis, analysis, and recommendation.
- Allow systematic examination into important dimensions of organizational life—what motivates people, how decisions are made, and the challenges of diversity, conflict, and power dynamics.

These objectives will be attained through reading, lectures, debate, class simulations, exercises, and group projects. *Students will be evaluated on both their knowledge of course material and the quality of their written and oral presentation skills, to simultaneously promote substantive learning and professional development.*

Ground Rules

This is a graduate-level course that demands students be carefully prepared. Furthermore, this course is presented within the context of a professional degree program and will be conducted according to the standards of the professional workplace. Students are expected to refrain from non-class-related communication and interactions such as texting, Facebook, and IM. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts. To facilitate this process, class will start and end on time. All assignments must be

completed on time. Late work will be penalized five points for every 24 hours, up to 50 percent of the final grade. Finally, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and disciplinary action will be pursued if such behavior is discovered. For further information about academic misconduct, see the UNC Code of Student Conduct located at <http://instrument.unc.edu/>.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

This course adheres to AI usage guidelines noted in the [MPA Program Policies](#), which were adapted from guidelines provided by the [UNC Generative AI Committee](#). Students are responsible for 100% of the final product and for engaging with AI in a responsible and ethical manner.

Unless otherwise specified for a specific assignment, all assignments should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Please use author-date citation style and in-text citation.

Required Texts:

Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021.

Some readings are accessed via the UNC Libraries page, where students must authenticate to access e-reserves. In addition to the required readings, the course makes extensive use of supplemental readings and resources that will be posted. Please see “Reading Assignments” below.

Grading

Class Participation	12 percent
Responses to UNC Case and Other Discussion Questions	8 percent
Application Team Project	15 percent
Organizational Culture Exercise	5 percent
Organizational Analysis 1	16 percent
Organizational Analysis 2	24 percent
Final Examination	<u>20 percent</u>
Total	100 percent

Grading System

The MPA program follows the graduate school's grading system of “H,” “P,” “L,” and “F” or High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail. In PUBA 710, assignments are evaluated on a traditional numerical 100-point grading scale. Unlike a traditional grading scale, however, numerical values awarded for assignments do not convert directly to a letter grade at the end of the semester. A High Pass is awarded to students who consistently submit course assignments that are truly excellent and distinguishable. Conversely, a Low Pass will be awarded to students who consistently do not put enough effort into course assignments and/or fail to demonstrate mastery of key concepts. For more information on the grading scale, please visit the graduate handbook: <https://handbook.unc.edu/grading.html>.

Class Participation:

This course has a heavy participatory component. Your class participation comprises participation in forums and response to questions posted, class attendance, and live session participation. Although

attendance is self-explanatory, participation during live sessions and on forums and discussion questions refers to how adequately you prepare for and engage in these.

The expectation is that your participation will reflect your careful reading, review of the asynchronous materials, and consideration of the material for the session as noted on the syllabus. For live sessions and forum and discussion participation, be prepared with questions to ask of the instructor and fellow students from the reading assignments and asynchronous material. Live sessions will not summarize the readings but rather will provide the context for discussions and apply materials to case examples. For live sessions as well as forum participation, your comments should provide meaningful contributions, integration of material, and advancement of the discussion. Your live session participation is based on both frequency and quality. Frequency is important so that the class can benefit from your own unique experience. Your instructor will evaluate quality using several criteria. The first is relevance. Making a comment that is extremely insightful but not relevant to the question your instructor has asked or the point that your classmates are discussing is rarely helpful. Comments that are directly relevant will help to advance the class's thinking on a topic. Finally, participation means not only active involvement in discussion but also careful listening, consideration, and respect for your colleagues' opinions. Therefore, it is important that we all treat the classroom as a safe environment. It is a place for experimentation and risk-taking.

Perspectives of all individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students are valued. Varied voices and views enhance our learning community and diversity—broadly defined to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability—is honored. The asynchronous and synchronous components of the course are designed to create an inclusive space for all students.

Throughout the course we will be using cases and exercises *that you devise* to examine and apply organizational theory. These methods allow us to discuss issues raised by examples or experience to uncover deeper management principles. The philosophy of these techniques is that students learn best when they grapple with actual material to uncover lessons themselves, rather than when the instructor feeds them information and they listen passively.

Discussion on forums and during live sessions will be one of the primary ways in which you will learn—you are expected to contribute to discussion for your own benefit and the benefit of your classmates. Simply attending class is not sufficient for earning a high grade. At each class, students are expected to be prepared to

- Suggest questions for class discussion.
- Engage in a thoughtful and critical evaluation of the class's readings.
- Contribute relevant examples from your own experience.

Assignments:

Note: All assignment deadlines are listed in the assignment grid at the end of this document.

Responses to UNC Case and Other Discussion Questions:

Throughout the semester we will talk about the UNC case. You are expected watch the case videos before the live session for that week and to post to the discussion associated with the case when appropriate (not all weeks have associated discussion boards). UNC case posts will be evaluated based on how well the student integrates the course material in their comments, draws in new material, or makes important connections. UNC case discussion responses should be completed 24 hours prior to the live session. It is expected all students will review all UNC forum posts prior to the live session.

In addition to posting on the UNC forum, students will be expected to respond to a number of other discussion prompts throughout the semester. These questions are designed to allow you to reflect on the topic and apply and integrate learning and should be completed prior to the live session each week.

Application Team Project:

Students will be assigned to a group that will be responsible for leading a case, exercise, or debate discussion. These teams will be established by the second class meeting. Within the team's discussion the members should be sure to illustrate the substantive theme for the week to which they are assigned, drawing on both course reading as well as outside material. The presentation should not be a summary of the reading but an interactive exercise that illustrates the theme of the week and guides a follow-up discussion through thoughtful questions. The instructor will provide suggestions and assistance if the teams require them, but students are encouraged to be creative in developing their exercises. Dates for each team's presentations are noted in the assignment grid. Applications should focus on applying concepts to the public or nonprofit organizational context.

Each team must notify the instructor, at least a week in advance, about the type of exercise it will be conducting. Following their presentation, students should post their slide deck and any other materials to the course wall.

Students will have 30 minutes total for the application team presentation. Grading criteria for the presentation include the following:

1. Appropriate focus of the presentation on key concepts and material related to the topic of the week
2. Effectiveness of the activity to illustrate the substantive material
3. Degree of organization and clarity in guiding and debriefing the activity
4. Ability to engage classmates in discussion and interaction throughout the presentation

Organizational Culture Exercise:

Students will make a collection of photos/images or a short (2-4 minute) video showing the artifacts of the organization you are studying for your organizational analysis or an organization that you currently or previously have worked for. To accompany the submission, write one to three paragraphs describing what you selected, why you selected it, and what you think the artifacts communicate about the organization. This submission and commentary should be posted 48 hours prior to the live session. Students are expected to review submissions posted by the members of their application teams and comment on each other's posts. This should be completed 24 hours before the live session.

Organizational Analyses

One of the objectives of this course is to offer students an opportunity to apply the course concepts to an assessment of an organization, identify a specific management challenge, and offer recommendations mitigating an organizational challenge. Each student is expected to write an original case study that **diagnoses** a public or nonprofit organization of their choice. The paper will be evaluated on

1. The thoroughness of the research and diagnosis of the organization and its associated challenges and opportunities (including clear citation of source references)
2. Application of course concepts in the diagnosis
3. Clarity in writing style and organization (including correct spelling and grammar)

Writing a series of organization analyses will permit you to apply organization theories to the description and interpretation of a public service organization. You will need to select for study some operational unit, made up of 10 to 50 or so people—for example, the Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department or Police Department, rather than the entire Town of Chapel Hill government. I suggest that you choose an organization close by, so that you will have ready access to the people who work there. You may choose

to study either a government agency or a nonprofit organization. You should not currently be employed by the organization you select, though it can be an organization you have previously worked for.

Organization Selection Memo: In a memo, identify three organizations you would be interested in studying this semester. Indicate your rank-ordering preference for each organization, provide its mission and size (if you can determine it in advance), and explain why you would be interested in studying it. After the memos have been reviewed, the instructor will provide feedback and, if appropriate, approval of the proposed organization for the student to contact to start their organization analysis.

Once you have selected an organization, you will need to explain to people in the organization your interest in learning about how they are organized and to ask for their help in understanding their organization. To get a complete (or at least more complete) view of the organization, over the course of the semester you will need to meet and interview multiple people from the organization as well as review secondary documents about the organization (e.g., websites, annual reports, organizational charts). For each paper, it is expected you will have two to three interviews to provide the needed information, for a total of at least four to six interviews over the course of the semester.

Each student will prepare TWO analyses of their organization:

1. The **first** analysis will describe the organization from structural and human resources perspectives. The purpose of your first paper is to introduce your organization and provide a structural and human resources analysis. Your analysis should include a complete description of the organization from detailing its mission, work product (if any), clientele, services, structure, decision-making process (e.g., who is in charge, who is responsible for financial matters, is there a board). This paper is not intended to be simply descriptive; it should include substantial analysis, drawing on the theories from the readings and materials presented and discussed in class related to the structural and human resources frames.
2. The **second** paper will analyze the organization from one additional frame, either what Bolman and Deal call the “political frame” or what they term the “symbolic frame.” Additionally, it will present a challenge or opportunity the organization is facing.

Using the analyses you have already done (as appropriate to the problem or opportunity you choose to focus on) and whatever other theories you find useful, your second paper should diagnose how the agency’s current organizational patterns relate to that problem/opportunity and suggest organizational changes through which the agency might better address it. This paper should not simply summarize your first paper but **should serve to integrate and provide a more comprehensive assessment** across frames and concepts (e.g., leadership and/or change management).

The two analyses should be eight to 10 double-spaced pages each.

Final Examination:

The final exam will draw on material from throughout the class, including lectures, readings, case discussions, and application team presentations. This will facilitate your reflection on the material we covered throughout the course. It will involve a series of short-answer questions that test your knowledge of key concepts and your ability to apply these concepts to practical organizational situations and issues.

Reading Assignments

Week 1 Introduction and History

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2021. Chapters 1–2.
- Rainey, Hal. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014. Chapter 2. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Tompkins, Jonathan R. *Organization Theory and Public Management*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2005. Chapter 2. Available at UNC Library e-reserves. (Review the chapter briefly with a focus on exhibit 2.1.)

Week 2 Organizational Structure and Design

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2021. Chapters 3–5.
- DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields.” *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 147–60. [Available here](#). A synopsis of this article is available on pages 284–285 of Bolman and Deal’s *Reframing Organizations*.
- Weick, Karl E. “Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1976): 1–11. Published by the Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University. [Available here](#).
- OPTIONAL: Mintzberg, Henry. *The Structuring of Organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979. Chapter 2, “The Five Basic Parts of the Organization.” Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 3 Organizational Purpose and Strategic Planning

- Rainey, Hal. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014. Chapter 4. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Mintzberg, Henry, and James A. Waters. “Of Strategies, Deliberate and Emergent.” *Strategic Management Journal* 6, no. 3 (1985): 257–72. [Available here](#).
- Behn, Robert D. “Management by Groping Along.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 7, no. 4 (1988): 643–63. [Available here](#).
- O’Donovan, Dana, and Noah Rimland Flower. “The Strategic Plan Is Dead. Long Live Strategy.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. [Available here](#).

Week 4 People and Organizations

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021. Chapters 6 and 7.
- Grote, Dick. “3 Popular Goal-Setting Techniques Managers Should Avoid.” *Harvard Business Review* (January 2, 2017). Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Locke, Edwin A., and Gary P. Latham. “New Directions in Goal-Setting Theory.” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 5 (2006). Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 5 Culture and Organizations

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021. Chapters 12, 13, and 14.
- Khademian, Anne M. 2002. “Working with Culture” and “Culture as a Management Tool: The Debate.” In *Working with Culture: The Way the Job Gets Done in Public Programs*, chapter 1 and pages 15–24 in chapter 2. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Available at UNC Library e-reserves
- OPTIONAL: Schein, Edgar H. 1992. “Defining Organizational Culture.” In *Classics of Organization Theory*, edited by Jay M. Shafritz Jr., J. Steven Ott, and Yong Suk Jang, 360–67. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 6 Organizational Effectiveness

- Rainey, Hal. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014. Chapter 6. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Behn, Robert D. “Why Measure Performance? Different Purposes Require Different Measures.” *Public Administration Review* 63, no. 5 (2003). Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

- Rivenbark, W. C., and E. J. Peterson. “A Balanced Approach to Implementing the Balanced Scorecard.” *Popular Government* (2008). [Available here](#).
- Senge, Peter M. “The Learning Organization” In *Classics of Organizational Behavior* edited by Walter E. Natemeyer and Paul Hersey. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc, 2011. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 7 Power and Politics

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021. Chapters 9, 10, and 1.1
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. (1979) “Power Failure in Management Circuits.” In *Classics of Organization Theory*, edited by Jay M. Shafritz, J. Steven Ott, and Yong Suk Jang, chapter 6. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- OPTIONAL: Salancik, Gerald R., and Jeffrey Pfeffer. 2011. “Who Gets Power—and How Do They Hold on to It?” In *Classics of Organizational Behavior*, edited by Walter E. Natemeyer and Paul Hersey. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- OPTIONAL: Rainey, Hal. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th edition. Jossey-Bass, 2014. Chapter 7, pages 170–179.

Week 8 Communication and Conflict in Organizations

- Rainey, Hal. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2014. Chapter 12. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Argyris, Chris. “Good Communication That Blocks Learning.” *Harvard Business Review*. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Rogers, Carl R., and F. J. Roethlisberger. “Barriers and Gateways to Communication.” *Harvard Business Review*. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 9 Teams and Working with Others

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 2021. Chapter 8.
- Nahavandi, Afsaneh, Robert B. Denhardt, Janet V. Denhardt, and Maria P. Aristigueta. *Organizational Behavior*. Sage Publications, 2015. Chapter 10. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Hazel, Sarah M., and Willow Jacobson. “Project Management Principles for Use in the Public Sector: Tools for the Everyday Project Manager.” *Project Management Bulletin* 9 (2014). [Available here](#).
- Weick, Karl E. “Prepare Your Organization to Fight Fires.” In *The Work of Teams*, edited by Jon R. Katzenbach, 131–138. *Harvard Business Review*, 1998. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Pentland, Alex. “The New Science of Building Great Teams.” *Harvard Business Review*. April 1, 2012. Available at UNC Library e-reserves. (*Skim article and review graphics.*)

Week 10 Collaboration and Interorganizational Relationships

- Thomson, Ann Marie, and James L. Perry. “Collaboration Processes: Inside the Black Box.” *Public Administration Review* 66, no. s1 (2006): 20–32. [Available here](#).
- Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. “[Collective Impact.](#)” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2011).
- **View these brief videos:** Greater Cincinnati Foundation Collective Impact: <https://youtu.be/YRX2y46fHXE>
FSG Consulting Firm Collective Impact: <https://www.fsg.org/areas-of-focus/collective-impact>
- OPTIONAL: Gazley, Beth. “Beyond the Contract: The Scope and Nature of Informal Government–Nonprofit Partnerships.” *Public Administration Review* 68, no. 1 (2008): 141–54. [Available here](#).

Week 11 Leadership and Organizations

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021. Chapters 17 and 18.
- Denhardt, Robert B., Janet V. Denhardt, and Maria P. Aristigueta. *Managing Human Behavior in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013. Chapter 7. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- Collins, Jim. “The Level Five Leader.” In *Classics of Organizational Behavior*, edited by Walter E. Natemeyer and Paul Hersey. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2011. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

- **View this video:** http://www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement.html
- OPTIONAL: Greenleaf, Robert K. "Servant Leadership." In *Classics of Organizational Behavior*, edited by Walter E. Natemeyer and Paul Hersey. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2011. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- OPTIONAL: Hersey, Paul. "Situational Leadership." In *Classics of Organizational Behavior*, edited by Walter E. Natemeyer and Paul Hersey. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2011. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 12 Decision-Making and Ethics in Organizations

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021. Chapter 20.
- Johnson, Craig E. *Organizational Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012. Chapter 3. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.
- MORETOOLS: A Framework for Analyzing Management Dilemmas. Electronic Hallway. [Available here](#).
- Rainey, Hal. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th edition. Jossey-Bass, 2014. Chapter 7, pages 179–200. Available at UNC Library e-reserves.

Week 13 Change Management and Integration of Frames

- Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 7th edition. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2021. Chapters 15, 16, 19, and 21.
- Kotter, John P. "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail." *Harvard Business Review*. Available at UNC Library e-reserves

Assignment Grid

	Topic	Assignments	Due
Week 1	Introduction and History		
Week 2	Organizational Structure and Design	List of organizations due	By the start of week 2 live session
		Post an image of an organization chart	24 hours before week 2 live session
		UNC Case Discussion 1 Response	24 hours before week 2 live session
Week 3	Organizational Purpose and Strategic Planning	UNC Case Discussion 2 Response	24 hours before week 3 live session
Week 4	People and Organizations	Application Team 1	Presentation during class
		UNC Case Discussion 3	24 hours before week 4 live session
Week 5	Culture and Organizations	Organizational Culture Exercise (submission and write-up)	48 hours before week 5 live session
		Responses to culture exercise	24 hours before week 5 live session
Week 6	Organizational Effectiveness	Application Team 2	Presentation during class
		Respond to discussion questions	24 hours before week 6 live session
Week 7	Power and Politics	Organizational Analyses 1 due	Before the week 7 live session
Week 8	Communication and Conflict in Organizations	Application Team 3	Presentation during class
		UNC Case Discussion 4	24 hours before week 8 live session

Week 9	Teams and Working with Others	Application Team 4	Presentation during class
Week 10	Collaboration and Interorganizational Relationships	Application Team 5	Presentation during class
		UNC Case Discussion 5	24 hours before week 10 live session
Week 11	Leadership and Organizations	UNC Case Discussion 6	24 hours before week 11 live session
Week 12	Decision-Making and Ethics in Organizations	Organizational Analyses 2 due	Before the week 12 live session
Week 13	Change Management and Integration of Frames	Final Exam (available after week 13 live session)	72 hours after your week 13 live session