

Organization Theory and Information
Systems Studies (OTISS)
New Perspectives and Emerging
Approaches

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Lectures: 20 Hours October - December 2009
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Description

OTISS is a course designed to examine various issues and subjects of new developing discipline and research programs. Specifically, we focus on the organization's components; operational design, technology and structure; and functional processes, including power, group processes and culture. The focus of this course is devoted to new trends and main changes of the organizational analysis and design due to ICT diffusion, implementation and use.

Objectives and contents

- Special attention will be given to enhancing students' skills to analyse organizational forms, structures and processes.
- The program aims at developing a deep understanding of organizational change and ICT effectiveness in collective settings.
- The course aims to introduce the students to recent research and trends in the field of organizational theory and IS studies.

Organizational Design: Organizational design is intended to address effectively the problems of control, coordination and integration inherent in large complex organizations. In those sessions, we discuss basic and complex design decisions about which activities and people to group together formally and how to link together the separated groups or individuals.

New Organizational Forms: We analyze the change of architecture in very decentralized companies. These changes entail building strong links across parts of the organization and provide an opportunity to think analytically about choice of architecture and about issues of aligning architectures, strategies and ICT.

ITC and Organizational Alignment: The organizational cases illustrate the difficulty of moving crucial information around a decentralized organization and architectural linking mechanisms that might improve

efficiency. We evaluate the introduction of organizational mechanisms and new ICT uses.

Social Networks, Trust and Social Capital. Networks often provide critical information and access to resources; we focus on the roles social networks in mobilizing resources, control and information as organizational design mechanisms. The IS contribution to the organizational efficiency is seen linked to networked organization. The consequences of ICT on the nature and intensity of social networks and capital are seen and compared in different places.

Organizational Culture and Collective Behavior. Culture can be a powerful tool to motivate and direct employees; if an oppositional culture develops, it can greatly hinder organizational action. In this session, we will analyze a firm's culture, looking at where its origins and how it can be sustained and managed strategically. We will also examine the relationship between the culture and the organizational architecture. Questions of both strategy and cultural management arise.

Organizational Identity and ICT. Organizations develop identities that make their behavior and conduct predictable. Clear identity serves as constraint that limits what an organization can do and how it can change. The analysis is concerned with understanding the bases of organizational identity in a ITC mediated work environment.

Change, adaptation and evolution. Changing organization's architecture and culture can be extremely difficult and take enormous amounts of time and resources. In this last part of the program we consider the organizational flexibility and how deeply organizational forms are changing, adapting in a complex process of evolution. We consider the various forces favouring inertia, including the information disclosure, political resistance due to self-interest, and cultural resistance and how they may influence organization performance in a ITC-dependent organizations.

Material

Students are expected to do all of the assigned reading. We use a reading packet containing conceptual readings as well as cases. We use a series of notes, developed specifically for this course and available for downloading on the class web page.

A full list of readings and detailed references will be available on the course website.

The Instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as appropriate. For further information please contact the instructor (e-mail).

Attendance and Participation in Class

The course is short (20 hours) and involves intensive analysis and case discussion. Attendance and participation are essential parts of the learning process for this course. We expect students to attend all scheduled sessions and to come prepared to contribute to the discussion.