Teams, Networks, and Innovation

TMP 291TN

Professor: Paul Leonardi
Email: leonardi@tmp.ucsb.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

Term: Spring 2015
Day and Time: W 1-3:50
Location: TMP

OVERVIEW

This Ph.D. seminar focuses on the antecedents to idea generation within formal and informal organization settings. The readings explore structural configurations, team designs, and work processes that put individuals with different types of information and ideas in contact with one another. The logic of the course is as follows: We begin by considering innovation as the recombination of information into new ideas. We then examine cognitive and structural perspectives on idea generation and creativity. Next, we interrogate the structural perspective to uncover diverse network configurations useful for team design. Finally, we examine what communication and interaction processes are effective for generating ideas once teams are assembled. The course is not intended for master’s students. First year PhD students without any background in the behavioral sciences may want to wait until their second year before taking this course.

This seminar has two major purposes. One is to explore important, contemporary issues at the intersection of organization theory and technology studies from a number of theoretical, methodological, and topic-oriented perspectives. The second is to practice a variety of skills such as synthesizing research, understanding research designs, and developing research questions that should prove useful in your academic careers.

EXPECTATIONS

You will be evaluated on your class participation (70% of your grade) and on your written work (30% of your grade).

Readings

- This course has a heavy reading load. On average, you will read four papers a week. All of the readings are available in PDF format on the course’s blackboard website. You are responsible for downloading the papers. For each perspective, I’ve included additional papers that you may want to find to learn more about the perspective. You are not required to read these papers for class, but I encourage you to do so. Because I expect you to read so much, I’ve reduced the writing requirements for this course.
Class Participation

- Analyze and be prepared to discuss the readings that are assigned for each class. All students should arrive at class with their analyses of the readings, ready to go. A good analysis means that you will think about the "big story" of the day as well as the details of the articles.

For the "big story," it may helpful to ask yourself the following questions about the theoretical perspective under review (think about the readings as a collection):

1. What are the core research problems or questions addressed by the theory?
2. What is the typical metatheory (e.g., concepts, assumptions, evidence, methods, etc.) associated with this approach?
3. Can you specify the general theoretical arguments typically used in the approach?
4. What is the state of the evidence with respect to various theoretical claims?

For the details, it may be useful to ask yourself the following questions about each reading:

1. What are the central theoretical questions addressed?
2. What primary mechanisms are posited?
3. What is the evidence to support the argument(s)? How convincing is that evidence?
4. What are the basic assumptions behind the analysis?
5. How could this analysis be improved? Be specific and practical (do not make suggestions that you could not realistically envision yourself implementing)

- Twice during the quarter, you will be asked to present an empirical paper in the day’s readings in conference-style. That is, present the key points of the paper in 15 minutes (firmly enforced), relying on the following flow of 8 power point slides:

1. Literature background (note key points and citations),
2. Continue #1 (if necessary)
3. Research question(s), major hypotheses (presentation should note underlying arguments),
4. Key aspects of the research design (research design, sample, data collection, construct measures, analytic techniques),
5. Major results (e.g., regression table),
6. Continue #5 (if necessary)
7. Discussion points,
8. Conclusions.

Keep in mind that your presentation should give the audience a few intriguing take-aways, impress the audience with the quality of your research, and stay on time.

Written Work

You are expected to write an original paper at the conclusion of the course. Details about the paper will be discussed in the second week of class. Expect that it will be a paper of sufficient quality and length that it could be submitted to a conference or a journal.
Course Readings

**Week 1. Coming Up With New Ideas**


**Week 2. Where Do New Ideas Come From? Cognitive Perspectives**


**Week 3. Where Do New Ideas Come From? Structural Perspectives**


**Week 4. Exploring the Structural Perspective: Team Design**


**Week 5. Exploring the Structural Perspective: Knowledge Transfer**


**Week 6. Exploring the Structural Perspective: Structural Holes**


**Week 7. Exploring the Structural Perspective: Network Balance**


**Week 8. What Do You Do After Assembling the Team? Climate**


**Week 9. What Do You Do After Assembling the Team? Macro Process**


**Week 10. What Do You Do After Assembling the Team? Micro Process**


