Technology and Organizational Change

TMP 275

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Term: Winter 2016  
Day and Time: Wed 9-12

Office Hours: By Appointment  
Location: Phelps

OVERVIEW

This Ph.D. seminar is designed to introduce students to fundamental questions and approaches to the study of technology and organizations. Specifically, we will explore how organizational structures enable and constrain the development of new technologies, and how new technologies enable changes in the process of organizing. The purpose of the course is to provide students with a thorough grounding in various theoretical perspectives on technology development and use. The readings are organized historically. 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 very heavy reading load. On average, you will read five papers a week. One or two of the papers will be foundational – they played a significant role in formulating the perspective we are studying. Two of the papers provide an empirical elaboration of the perspective and one or two additional papers critique the perspective with new theoretical arguments or empirical research. 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.
Week 1

Technological versus Social Determinism as Paradigm


Week 2

Alternative Theories-1: Media Richness Theory and Social Influence Theory


Week 3
Alternative Theories-2: Structuration Theory and Practice Theory


Week 4
Alternative Theories-3: Actor-Network Theory and Materiality


**Week 5**

**Technology Supported Social Networks**


**Week 6**

**Technology for Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing**


Week 7
Social Media and Knowledge Processes (note: there are six articles to read)


Week 8
Social Media and Organizational Innovation


Week 9
Technology Adoption and Adaptation in Organizations


Week 10
The Interplay of Technology and Organizational Change Processes


