

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, HAYWARD  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Fall 1999  
Wednesdays  
Prerequisites: PuAd 4830, 4800, 5000

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MI 4125, 510/885-3282  
Off. hrs: TWR 5:30-6:30

**PuAd 6811. Social Realities and Human Organization**

Is this class an organization? How do you know? How would you know if you are right? These sorts of questions represent the concerns of this course.

The study of organizations, as with the study of other aspects of human life, has long been dominated by one particular set of assumptions about the nature of reality and about how we might come to know that reality. As sociologists, political scientists, social psychologists, and others sought to develop a science of organizations, they based their work on the rules which they understood to govern the physical sciences. This set of assumptions -- called positivism -- and the rules of inquiry associated with it -- the scientific method -- have provided a model for the social sciences that has stood unchallenged until fairly recently.

Thomas Kuhn, in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, published in 1962, however, argued that much of physical science itself does not proceed according to common views of the scientific method. Influenced by this and other work in the philosophy of science, many social scientists subsequently began to question whether the field of organizational studies as a scientific enterprise should continue to base itself on a model of the physical sciences that is now in doubt. (This re-examination has also been framed as an argument about the usefulness of "qualitative" methods versus "quantitative" methods, a subject we engage in PuAd 6831.)

Meanwhile, a line of philosophical argument which had developed in Europe became better known in the U.S. in the 1960s-1970s and intersected with the ongoing re-examination of the social sciences. Known as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and critical theory, these philosophies, together with their American counterparts of ethnomethodology and symbolic interaction (some would add pragmatism), have come to form an approach to the study of human organizations which emphasizes organizational actors' interpretations of meaning through organizations' acts, language, and physical artifacts. These "interpretive theories" offer a contending view of reality and knowledge to that of positivism. This view has more recently been expanded by work in feminist theory as well as other post-modernist arguments about power, silences, and contextual knowledge.

In this course we will explore questions about reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) as they apply to the study of organizations. The central purpose of the course is to develop an understanding of an interpretive view of organizations and the implications of that view for practice. (PuAd 6812, *Changing Human Organizations*, extends this line of inquiry to an interpretive foundation for theories of organizational change.) Our point of departure will be that each one of us has a theory about how organizations work. Much of the task of this course will be to make that theory as explicit as possible. One of the assumptions of the course is that reading and discussing others' theories of organization enable one to broaden one's own theoretical repertoire and, in the process, further to refine the theory which informs one's own practice within organizations.

### **Course readings:**

1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd or 3d edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970/1997 (on order at the bookstore and on reserve in the library);
2. a packet of journal articles and book chapters cited in the syllabus (the course "Reader"; available for purchase at the Copy Center and on reserve in the library).

Three other books make excellent supplementary reading for this course:

1. Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, 1979; out of print, on reserve in the library) provides an academic "genealogy" of ideas and theories;
2. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, NY: Anchor, 1966 (suggested reading for session #6 and for background; on reserve in the library);
3. Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization*, second edition, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1997 (suggested especially to review a multiple perspective approach to the field of organizational studies and PuAd 4830; on reserve in the library).

### **Course requirements:**

1. Read. Think. Come to class. Be prepared to participate. The course will be conducted as part lecture, part discussion; emphasis will be placed on student participation in the discussions.
2. There will be three written assignments: a "reconnaissance" (a description of an organization, ungraded); a directed reconnaissance; and "the situated knower" (the first reconnaissance revisited for further analysis). Details will be given separately. All

papers should be typed, double space.

**Note:** The first paper is due the second week of the quarter. It will not be graded. I will use it to make sure you are on track, subject-wise, as the next two papers build on the first one in various ways. I also want to be able to alert you to any writing problems you may have, so that you can take steps to address them before submitting further work. (Yes, Virginia, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and the overall organization and logic of your papers count!)

**Evaluation** for the course will be based on the following:

1. participation in discussions, based on knowledge of the assigned readings and their integration with personal experience and professional practice (33%);
2. course papers (33% each).

All work will be evaluated on the basis of evidence of thoughtfulness and serious consideration of the issues and the clarity with which those thoughts are communicated.

**ADA:** If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and need assistance, please notify the Student Disability Resource Center and me at the beginning of the quarter. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate your special needs.

**Academic honesty** is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting or collaboration, consult the professor.

- 1. 9/29 Introduction: Ontology, epistemology, methodology**
  
- 2. 10/6 How do you know? 1500 years of "science"**

Review: Syllabus, notes, and readings from PuAd 4830

Read: J. B. Williamson et al., The Research Craft, 2nd edition. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982. Ch. 1.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By. University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp. 185-205.

Think: What is the scientific method?

**Due: Reconnaissance** (Hint: the readings are not designed or intended to help you with the assignment!)
  
- 3. 10/13 "This is not a pipe":  
Positivism -- a science of society**

Read: "Positivism" and "Logical Positivism" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vols. 6 & 5. NY: Macmillan and The Free Press, 1967. Pages 414-19 and 52-7.

"Louis Agassiz as a Teacher." Harvard Business School Case #1-377-042.

Suggested: Burrell and Morgan, chs. 1, 4.

Think: What is a map? What does it mean to map something -- what do you do or think of when you do it? Is the Agassiz story an example of the scientific method? Why/why not? (We will discuss Agassiz in class.)
  
- 4. 10/20 A science of organizations:  
Reconnoitering reconnaissances**

Read: Dvora Yanow, "Ontological and Interpretive Logics in Organizational Studies." Methods 1:2 (1987):**73-79** only.

Re-read: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By. University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp. 185-205.

Suggested: Burrell and Morgan, ch. 5.

Morgan, Images, chs. 2-4, 6.

Think: What is your theory of organizations? Answer in your notes (you will use this in the final paper).

In class: A reflective analysis of 3 reconnaissances. Yours will be handed back with the next assignment sheet.

**5. 10/27 Paradigms in science and organizational studies**

Read: Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (note especially chs. 9, 10).

Think: What is the overall line of Kuhn's argument? Why is it important for organizational studies?

**Bring:** **a copy of Kuhn's book to class;** we will read sections of it together and see what sense we can make of it collectively.

**6. 11/3 Are we blind men and women?  
Lenses and metaphors for seeing organizational elephants**

Read: Sir Geoffrey Vickers, "On the Emperor's New Clothes." Delivered to the Division for Study and Research in Education, M.I.T. No date.

Edward Wachtel, "The Influence of the Window on Western Art and Vision." The Structurist #17/18 (1977/1978):4-10.

Brian Fay, "An Alternative View: Interpretive Social Science." Social Theory and Political Practice. Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1975. Pages 70-83.

George Beam and Dick Simpson, Political Action. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1984. Pages 17-29.

Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension. NY: Doubleday, 1966. Chapter 1.

Suggested: Morgan, Images, ch. 10.

Think: What problem in the original parable is Vickers addressing in his version? And what is the power of the "matched signal"? We will discuss his essay in class.

**Due:**           **The directed reconnaissance.**

**7.     11/10     The interpretive turn, or,  
                  The search for meaning in organizational life**

**Read:**           (spread these readings out over the next 2 weeks!)

Yanow, "Ontological and Interpretive Logics...", pp. **79-90**.

Gareth Morgan and Linda Smircich, "The Case for Qualitative Research." Academy of Management Review 5:4 (1980):491-500.

John Irwin, "Reflections on ethnography." Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 16:1 (April 1987): 41-48.

W. Graham Astley, "Administrative Science as Socially Constructed Truth." Administrative Science Quarterly 30 (1985): 497-513.

Vivien Schmidt, "Four Approaches to Science and Their Implications for Organizational Theory and Research." Knowledge 9:1 (1987): 19-41.

Gareth Morgan, "Paradigms, Metaphors and Puzzle Solving in Organizational Theory." Administrative Science Quarterly (1980): 605-22.

Linda Smircich, "Implications for Management Theory." In L. L. Putnam and M. E. Pacanowsky, eds., Communication and Organizations: An Interpretive Perspective. Sage, 1983. Ch. 10.

**Suggested:** Paul Rabinow and William Sullivan, "The Interpretive Turn: A Second Look." The Interpretive Turn. University of California Press, 1987. 2nd edition. Pp. 1-25.

Alfred Schutz, "The Social World and the Theory of Social Action." Collected Papers Vol. II. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964. Pages 3-19.

Berger and Luckmann, SCR, Introduction, Parts I and II.  
Burrell and Morgan, chs. 6, 7.  
Morgan, ch. 5.

**Think:**           What does it mean to take a multiple-lens approach to management problems? Have you encountered any situation(s) in

which such an approach might have helped?

In class: Hand back paper #2 with next assignment sheet.

**8. 11/17 No class (American Anthropology Association Annual Meeting)**

**9. 11/24 Gender and other diversities in organizations: Critical, feminist, and other approaches**

Read: Sarah Jacobson and Roy Jacques, "Of Knowers, Knowing and the Known." Academy of Management Annual Meeting, August, 1990.

Mark Maier, "Am I the only one who wants to launch? Corporate masculinity and the space shuttle 'Challenger' Disaster." Masculinities 1:1-2 (Winter 1993), pp. 34-45).

Joanne Martin, "Re-reading Weber: Searching for Feminist Alternatives to Bureaucracy." Academy of Management, 1990.

John Forester, "Critical Theory and Organizational Analysis." In Gareth Morgan, ed., Beyond Method. Sage, 1983. Ch. 15.

Think: What do these readings suggest about the certainty of what we (think we) know? Maier introduces another dimension to explain this problem; what is it and how does it work? Do you agree with his analysis?

**10. 12/1 Toward a post-modern organizational theory**

Read: Linda Dennard, "The Three Bears and Goldilocks Meet Burrell and Morgan." Administration & Society 21:3 (1989):384-6.

Robert Cooper and Gibson Burrell, "Modernism, Post-modernism, and Organizational Analysis." Organization Studies 9:1 (1988):91-112.

Ellen O'Connor, "Private lives, public consequences; public lives, private consequences: An interpretation of Kurosawa's Ikiru." Journal of Management Inquiry 2:1 (March 1993), pp. 54-57.

**Due: "The situated knower": Reconnaissance 1 Revisited.**