ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Syllabus for COMM 640:

Communication and Organizational Change

Spring 2013, Wednesdays 12:30 – 3:20 p.m., ASC 228

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Course Description

Theories of evolution have risen to the forefront of the social sciences over the past decade. Applications to organization theorizing and research have increased dramatically. Information and communication are integral aspects of evolutionary thinking at all levels. This doctoral seminar examines evolutionary theorizing and research in the areas of communication and organizations to see how each informs the other. The course begins with a general overview of evolutionary theory to identify its primary arguments, essential claims, and modes of analysis. Following the introduction, the course is organized around hierarchical evolutionary levels: entrepreneurial activity and organizational foundings, intraorganizational evolution and managerial choice, organizational evolution, populations and coevolution, environments and niches, communities of organizations, and the entire ecological system. In these areas attention is focused on primary information processes in organizations, including searching, retrieving, interpreting, and learning. Routines, capabilities, networks, boundaries, and environments are crucial locations in which these information processes occur and each location processes information in unique ways. Central to these activities are the communication technologies and social influences that affect the processing. Throughout the course, a number of important methodological issues are explored, including dynamic theorizing, longitudinal research and multilevel analysis. Students will also choose topics and work with me to organize class discussions and supplementary materials each week.

Texts and Readings

Required:


A number of other journal articles and book chapters will be made available in pdf format on the course website throughout the semester.
Recommended:


**Evaluation**

Your grade in this course will be assigned on the basis of a term paper. The paper should focus on an important topic in organizational communication from one of the evolutionary theoretical perspectives reviewed in this class. The paper can be theoretical or empirical. A three-page topic proposal is due on March 6. I will set up times throughout the semester when we will get together to discuss your ideas and progress. A draft of the complete paper is due on April 24, but I will gladly read earlier drafts or portions of papers. You should also select a student colleague from the class to provide feedback on the April 18th draft. I will also provide you with comments. The last day of class, May 1, will be devoted to presentations of the papers. The final version of the paper is due on May 8. Papers should be written in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2008, 6th ed.); copies are available in the library and the bookstore. All proposals, drafts, and final versions of the paper should be submitted as electronic Word files attached to an email message addressed to munge@usc.edu. I will return your papers to you as Word files with feedback posted as electronic comments.

**Academic Integrity**

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, purchasing papers or other assignments, or any other form of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course from the instructor and the School will recommend that the student be dismissed from the Communication program. There are no exceptions to this policy.
Course Outline

January 16: Introduction to the class

Introductions

Review the syllabus and texts

Discuss revisions of the class according to student interests

January 23: Overviews of Evolutionary & Ecological Theory in Organizational Study


January 30: Classic Views of Organizational Evolutionary and Ecological Theories


February 6: Organizational, Population, and Community Foundings

Aldrich & Ruef (2006), Cp. 4, 5

Anderson, P. Venture capital dynamics and the creation of variation through entrepreneurship. In Baum & McKelvey, Cp 8


Optional Reading


February 13: Organizational, Population, and Community Forms and Structures

Aldrich and Ruef (2006), Cps. 6.


Optional Reading


February 20: Fundamental Processes: Variation, Selection, and Retention


February 27: Density Dependence, Adaptation and Survival: Fitness & Fitness Landscapes

Organizational Environments, Density-Dependent Processes I, Density-Dependent Processes II, and Organization Theory.


**March 6: Organizational Niches and Environments: Resource Partitioning Theory**

Carroll & Hannan, Cp. 12: Segregation processes.


**Recommended Reading:**


Research Paper Proposal Due

March 13: Mutual, Competitive, and Symbiotic Processes


Optional Reading


March 18-22: Spring Break: Enjoy!!

March 27: Organizational, Population, and Community Learning

Aldrich & Ruef (2006), Cp. 6


April 3: Replication and Coevolution

Aldrich & Ruef (2006), Cps 9 & 11.


April 10: Transformation: Change and Inertia

Aldrich & Ruef (2006), Cps. 7, 8


Optional Readings


April 17: Maturation and Intergenerational Transfer


April 24: Organizational, Population, and Community Obsolescence and Death

Aldrich & Ruef (2006), Cp. 10


**Draft of final paper due**

**Optional Topic and Readings: Complex Adaptive Systems**


May 1:

**Paper presentations**

May 8:

**Final Paper Due**

**Additional References**


McKelvey, B. (1999) Complexity theory in organization science: Seizing the promise or becoming a fad. *Emergence, 1*, 5-31. Can be obtained from the Internet. See also other issues of the journal *Emergence*. See: [http://www.calresco.org/intro.htm#def](http://www.calresco.org/intro.htm#def)


Instructor: Ted M. Coopman, Ph.D. Contact: I am located in Eugene, OR. The best way to get a hold of me is via the class email address: prof.ted.uofl@gmail.com or we can also Skype (tmcoopman). Class Location: Online. *class was formerly listed as COMM 463. Have a better understanding of the nature of global communications. 
Understand the complex cultural, political, and social forces that impact global communication. Be able to intelligently discuss, research and analyze various aspects of global communication processes. Assessment. This course will assess your knowledge through regular quizzes, regular wiki writing assignments, and discussion.