
Organization Theory

POLI 3260, Spring 2012, 27 Lower, 2-2:50 -- [Mark Burns](#), Instructor



“Tied up in Red Tape”

Course Introduction

This material is designed to give you a basic introduction to *POLI 3260, Organization Theory*.

If you're in the class on the first day, you'll receive a paper copy.

In the introduction, you'll find:

- 1. Course Objectives
- 2. Methods and Grading
- 3. Textbooks
- 4. Initial Readings
- 5. Additional Syllabus Components

- 1. COURSE OBJECTIVES -

This course will introduce students to the structure and functioning of governmental organizations with an emphasis on theories of administrative hierarchies and evaluation of bureaucracy. Upon successfully completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Identify major theoretical concepts concerning the behavior of public organizations.
- Identify principal authors of those concepts.
- Discuss those concepts.
- Apply the concepts in order to explain the behavior of actual public organizations.
- Critically evaluate the appropriateness of the concepts for such explanations.

- 2. METHODS AND GRADING -

Prerequisites for this course are POLI 3250 and POLI 1090 or POLI 1093 or POLI 1097.

POLI 3260 is structured in a “blended” format, so many of the "meetings" of the class will not take place in the physical classroom (look for the designation "Internet Lecture" on that particular day). These lectures can be accessed on Canvas from any location with any Internet connection at any time of day throughout the course. Questions related to them can be posted on the "Lecture Matters" discussion group of the class Canvas site.

Grading will be as follows:

Component	Date	Weight
Test 1	Feb. 13, 15	20%
Test 2	Apr. 9, 11	20%
Full Idea Journal Check #1	April 6	10%
Full Idea Journal Check #2	Oct. 19	20%
Final Examination	May 2	30%

Tests

The two tests and the final examination will be mixed objective-subjective and will cover both assigned readings, including any posted to Canvas, and in-class materials (including lectures, class discussion and any presentations by outside speakers). The final examination will be comprehensive. All tests are to be on "blue books" purchased by the student.

Idea Journals

To encourage student to reflect seriously on the concerns of the course, each student will be required to keep a weekly "idea journal." The class will be divided into two groups, 1 and 2. The idea journals of each member of each group will be briefly reviewed on the day assigned to each group (designated **BCIJ** in the course schedule), and their contents used in the discussion period part of the next class. More extensive reviews of the idea journals will occur at Full Idea Journal Check #1 early in the course and Full Idea Journal Check #2 late in the course. However, items noted in the preceding brief reviews may also impact on these grades (e.g. failure to provide the weekly journals on time or failure to have an entry for a given date).

How to Keep an Idea Journal

Keep the idea journal on a Microsoft Word document with numbered pages. Each week add to the idea journal to take notes on important aspects of the readings; reflect on the significance of the concepts and examples in the readings, lectures, and class discussions; integrate any related concepts or examples from other sources (such as other courses you are taking, professional journals, or Internet sites); and raise issues or questions about the class.

Begin each weekly entry on a separate page with the heading "Idea Journal Entry for Week of --" (replace the dash with the actual date) and conclude with at least three questions of interest to the student, either for discussion or for inquiry. Type any issues you would particularly discussed by the class and/or the instructor in **BOLD**.

Include the following headers in a typical week's Idea Journal entry:

<p>Idea Journal for the Week of --</p> <p>Notes</p> <p>Reflections</p> <p>Related Concepts/Examples</p> <p>Issues/Questions</p>
--

A sample entry will be provided in "How to Do Stuff" in the "Modules" section of the class Canvas site.

Length of the entries is not the main concern; quality is. But, for those focused on such matters, an appropriate minimum length would be approximately one single-spaced typed page or two double-spaced typed pages.

The due dates for the brief check of student idea journals are designated in the syllabus schedule as **BCIJ—Group** followed by 1 or 2. By no later than 5 p.m. on that date, send your idea journal to me as a Canvas message attachment. Keep the original maintained on your computer or a USB device. (Be sure to back it up regularly!) In the same way, send your idea journals to me on the dates for the two Full Checks of Idea Journals (**FCIJ**).

Discussion

Class Discussion will not be explicitly graded for regular class days. However, all students are expected to come to class prepared to use the information in the readings assigned for that day. *Knowledgeable participation in general class discussion will be used to help decide cases of "borderline" final grades, both positively and negatively.* In the unfortunate event that I find large numbers of students neglecting the readings to the point that reasonable class discussion of reading material becomes impossible, I reserve the right to institute "pop tests" that can impact up to 10% of student grades, with consequent readjustment of other grade factors.

Students should also attend any sessions involving outside speakers. Failure to do so may result in a lower final grade.

As an alternative to discussion in the physical classroom, students are also welcome to raise questions, make comments, or suggest relevant articles within the discussion groups on the course's **Canvas Site**. (see below). Details on this opportunity will be discussed in class.

Individual Meetings

There will be three *Individual Meetings* throughout the course to give each student and the instructor the opportunity to review the student's goals and progress for the course. These meetings are not required, but each will add one extra point to the student's final grade. Make your appointment for these meetings at least 24 hours in advance using the "Collaboration" section of the Canvas site. The first of these meetings will be Wednesday, **Friday, Jan. 27**. (Students with a documentable conflict on that day may see me on my regular office hours through Feb. 1.) The second and third assessments will be held later in the class.

Communication Matters

It is a class requirement that students use the class **Canvas Site** or their *A.U. e-mail accounts* to communicate with each other and with the instructor. These methods provide students experience in modern electronic communications. Your primary source of e-mail ("message") communication with the instructor should be through our class **Canvas Site** (see below). This site is similar to using professional electronic workgroups.

The class **Canvas Site** is a center for course announcements and communications which allows students to pose discussion issues, post comments, share news materials, and raise questions outside the physical classroom. Check this site at least one day prior to each scheduled class meeting for announcements and relevant class readings; failure to do so is the sole responsibility of the student. This site is restricted to class members; access requires your standard Auburn IT user name and password. Informational materials posted to the Canvas site are just as much "fair game" for tests as standard lecture/reading/class discussion materials.

- 3. TEXTBOOKS -

- Morgan, Gareth. *Images of Organizations*. Sage, 2006
- Perrow, Charles. *Normal Accidents*. Princeton, 1999.
- Readings labeled with an asterisk ("*") will be on reserve.

Textbooks will be available at J&M and J&M II. The "M" appearing below corresponds to the Morgan text, the "P" to the Perrow text.

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- 4. INITIAL CLASS MEETINGS –

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
<i>Week of Jan. 9</i>		
Monday	Course Organization, General Overview	M, Ch. 1, "Introduction," 3-10.
Wednesday	Introduction to Canvas Organizations & Theory 1	M, Ch.10, "The Challenge of Metaphor," 337-344.
Friday	Organizations & Theory 2	Harmon, Ch. 4, <i>Organization Theory for PA</i> "Theories and Theorizing," 57-67.***
<i>Week of Jan. 16</i>		
Monday	HOLIDAY	
Wednesday	Will Organizations Be the Death of Us? Theory and Science 1 Start Idea Journal	P, Ch. 1, "Normal Accident," 15-31.
Friday	Will Organizations Be the Death of Us? Theory and Science 2	P, Ch. 2, "Nuclear Power," 32-62.

- 5. ADDITIONAL SYLLABUS COMPONENTS -

The other parts of this syllabus are listed below. If you are taking the class, you are responsible for reading **ALL** of them, as well as this introduction, and following their instructions.

Are you reading this introduction on the Worldwide Web? Simplicity itself. Use the links below to read each component. As you probably know already, that also means you can save them as a printed copy or files on your computer or USB drive.

Are you reading a paper handout? Then you can access this introduction--and its links to the other course components--through the Worldwide Web address "<http://www.auburn.edu/~burnsma/POLI3260/intro.pdf>".

1. [Course Schedule](#). Complete list of *all* the activities, required readings, etc., for each day of the semester. Consult this list before every class day. There is a lot of material to cover in this class, and it's much easier to keep up than to try to catch up later!
- 2.
3. [About the Instructor](#). Information about Mark Burns and his expectations for the class.
4. [My Office Hours](#), contact information, etc.
5. [Additional Course Information](#) you need to be aware of.

You can quickly access components of the syllabus, as well as other useful links to course materials, through the **Course Hub**, at <http://www.auburn.edu/~burnsma/POLI3260/hub.html>

On Alternative Modes of Organization

"Gangster? I'm no gangster. Gentlemen, all I do is provide services for people that needs 'em."

--attributed to Al Capone, Chicago "entrepreneur"

Have ideas for other information that should be included here? [Send your suggestions!](#)

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