



Culture, Organization, and Technology

SPRING 2007
PUBP 503 Section 002
DRAFT
***CULTURE, ORGANIZATION, AND
TECHNOLOGY***
Mondays 4:30 – 7:10 P.M. in ARL 251

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According to Aztec myth, culture came into being after the immortal spirits had been sacrificed and were no longer present to mortals. To alleviate the people's mourning, Tezcatlipoca appeared to one of them and informed him to go to the sun's house and bring back singers and instruments. The man traveled to the land of the sun and came across singers and musicians playing. Seeing him approach, the sun told his singers to ignore the man, since he was a thief. However, the man began to sing so beautifully that the sun's musicians, entranced, could not resist following him, playing their drums and pipes as they accompany him on his return to earth. From that time on, people have performed music to honor the spirits, who periodically come down from the skies to join in their dances.

Michael Richardson (2001) in *The Experience of Culture* (P.vii).

INTRODUCTION

Michael Richardson (2001) insightfully notes that the above myth locates culture as a mediating process that acts as an intermediary between different realities. This communicative function of culture is the very essence of human beings' capacity for survival and evolution. In this course, we will examine this phenomenological aspect, treating culture as an experience. Culture is not generated by human actions, but is part of it. Just as Heidegger (1962) pointed out that we are born into language, we could argue that we are born into culture. Renowned

philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) wrote in his magnum opus *Truth and Method* (1975) that experience, culture, and prior understanding render the scientific ideal of objectivity impossible. He argued that human world is “linguistically preconstituted” and that we inherit language in the “social uterus,” thereby implying that language and culture precede us in the world.

Culture is everywhere. It mediates every human transaction directly or indirectly and places a permanent perceptual filter in our interpretive schema as we engage with one another, groups, organizations, society, and nations. For that reason, in this course we will not cover all subtleties of *Culture, Organizations, and Technology* (The three words are in italics throughout the text to signify that the three concepts are treated together as a single, integrated construct in this course).

My hope is to introduce you to the “rain forest” of *Culture, Organization, and Technology* and help you appreciate the breathtaking diversity of values, beliefs, ideologies, and paradigms that constitute its “eco-system.” In the process, I will help you learn the various theories, models, and tools about the subject matter so that you may develop the necessary competencies required to be effective and comfortable participants in whatever culture and organizational climate you are embedded in.

The *Culture, Organization, and Technology* landscape is dynamic and continuously evolving. In the hypothetical example pictured on the first page of this syllabus, we are looking at a retired couple in front of their RV/motor home in a distant place somewhere in the globe, possibly during their vacation, which may very well be their life style for most of the year. It looks like they have installed satellites in their RV that give them both GPS and broadband data and voice transmission capabilities. The GPS console constantly displays where exactly they are

while traveling. In an emergency, pressing the GPS switch will instantly bring on an operator on-line who will summon help.

They appear to be smiling while looking at a set of new pictures of their grand daughter electronically sent over to them from 6000 miles away which they downloaded to their notebook computer in a matter of seconds using satellite broadband. The HDTV inside the RV receives “7/24” feeds from CNN, BBC, MSNBC, and the like. Their stockbroker can reach them anywhere in the world.

Life is good for this couple. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are participants in a new *Culture, Organization, and Technology*, which is fundamentally different from what they may have experienced a decade ago. The postmodern culture and technology have changed the way they engage with many traditions, rituals, institutions, and social practices. For example, the concept of retirement is not the same they may have had in mind twenty years ago. In a way, they are not “retired” from anything but are more engaged with the world around them with an intensity and curiosity they may not have experienced before.

The *Culture, Organization, and Technology* nexus is a paradoxical one. It is a “brave new world” as well as a scary one. When technology enables, it does so for every one. While the FBI may use the latest software and advances in information technology to track terrorist plans and movements, the same technology may help those on the other side to thwart them. We will strive to understand this technology-rendered conflicting duality throughout the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

Effective policy analysis, program design, implementation, and management often depend on an insightful understanding and appreciation of the culture(s) of the organization and

stakeholders involved. Whether we are considering the organizational culture or professional cultures such as engineering, healthcare, accounting, transportation, military, or the processes of organizational and societal change, the lack of an in-depth knowledge of culture and how it interacts with organizational processes and technology frequently result in significant shortcomings. This course is designed to provide practical and conceptual skills to minimize those gaps and to maximize your success in organizational and societal contexts.

The course focuses on the influence of culture at individual, group, organizational, societal, national, and global levels. More specifically, the objectives are:

- Observe and describe culture at individual, group, organizational, societal, national, and global levels
- Identify cultural enablers and barriers to effective policy development, program design, and implementation
- Observe and describe the role of technologies and their interactions with organization and culture in global context
- Enhance the oral presentation, writing, and cross-cultural skills as well as methodological skills such as conducting organizational and cultural audits, using open-ended interviewing, participant observation, social network analysis, and negotiation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. Lead one class presentation on a selected topic

You will participate in this group assignment as a member of a four-person team. The professor will assign students to the team. Using a specific metaphor of organizations from Gareth Morgan's *Images of Organizations*, each team will make a presentation and lead a class discussion lasting 30 minutes. The professor will evaluate the quality of the presentation and the discussion generated (The same team would undertake the cultural

audit, another assignment described below, and using the same metaphor).

2. Midterm exam

You will be given a set of questions at the end of class on February 26. The answers will be due the following week.

3. Final exam

You will be given a set of questions on the last day of class. The answers will be due on Friday, May 4.

4. Group Project: Cultural audit of an Organization

You will participate in this group assignment as a member of a four-person team (which will be the same as in item 1 above). Each team is expected to choose an organization, collect data using interviews and participant observation (to the extent possible), analyze the data, and write a report. More instructions for doing this project will be given in class. The groups are expected to make a presentation to the whole class about their projects towards the end of the semester. Your report should contain the interview notes as appendix. In addition to the paper copy, an electronic copy of the entire submission should be emailed to thatchen@gmu.edu. You will also be given a team participation checklist which you should attach to the report.

5. Attendance and Participation

The expectation is that each of you will take an active part in class discussions and group projects and form into a learning community. Full attendance for all classes is required. The professor will evaluate your class participation based on observations and interactions relevant to the course over the semester. The criteria will include your emphasis on inquiry more than advocacy, and practicing specific behaviors regarding participation that are less

well developed. Speaking in class will need to be carefully self-monitored in ways that support the mutuality of learning by all class members. The quality of your listening, efforts to build on the contributions of others, asking questions of each other and of the professor, and the thoughtfulness of comments will also be factors in this assessment. The professor will keep weekly notes on his observations to be used at the end of the semester.

Along with the specific criteria listed for various assignments, the quality of all your work for this class will also be evaluated on the basis of:

- Scope, thoroughness, depth of insight, and understanding
- Richness of observation and expression
- Demonstration of your personal learning by stretching yourself beyond previous experiences and underlying assumptions
- Specific efforts in application of learning to real life or work situation.

For all written assignments, please submit both a hardcopy (without extra folders or covers) and an electronic copy. The hardcopy should be double-spaced, 12 fonts size, and have page numbers on all pages. All written assignments should include a title page with your name, title, date, name of the assignment, course name & number. You should have a bibliography listing all sources (including the assigned class readings) that you use other than your own ideas. Please use the most recent version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Missing classes, late submissions, and significant variance in the recommended length of papers will negatively impact your grades.

Students with Special Needs

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the

professor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

New Voices in Public Policy

The professor will consider nominating the best papers in this course for publication in *New Voices in Public Policy*. *New Voices* is a student- and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPP's finest student work with the outside world.

SPP Policy on Plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

All written work submitted in this course should be emailed to the professor as a file attachment. Your submissions may be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. You should submit your mid term and final exams to Turnitin.com and attach the results with those assignments. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it (<http://www.gmu.edu/acadexcel/findex.html>).

Recommended Textbook

Hofstede, Geert. (2004). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Course Outline

Session 1: Monday, January 22, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Overview of the course

Course objectives

Managing expectations

Introduction to the historical and theoretical perspectives on *Culture, Organization, and Technology*.

Form presentation and project teams

Initial discussion on cultural audit project

Homework

Morgan pages 3-8, and 337-366

Volti chapters 1, 3, and 5

Hofstede and Hofstede chapter 1: Introduction- the rules of the social game

Frechtling, Joy and Sharp. (Eds). (1987). Chapter 3 in *User Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations*. National Science Foundation.

<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/start.htm>

Ethnographic Studies Can Inform Agencies' Actions. U.S. Government

Accounting Office.GAO-03-455, March 2003, (see especially pp. 1-14).
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03455.pdf>

Session 2: Monday, January 29, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Cultural audit group project preparation

Introduction to ethnography and case studies

Ethnography and case studies as sources of knowledge

Culture and Language

Thought, Language, and Culture

Read before class

<http://www.georgelakoff.com/articles/> to learn about various examples of framing.

<http://leo.oise.utoronto.ca/~vsvede/culture.htm> to become familiar with terms related to organizational culture and assessment.

Session 3: Monday, February 5, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Presentation by group 1 on Organizations as machines

The origins of mechanistic organization and bureaucracy

Read before class

Morgan chapter 2: Organizations as machines + pages 367-374
Hofstede chapter 7: Pyramids, machines, markets, and families

Notes on Hofstede from Professor Charles Tidwell are available at:
<http://www.andrews.edu/%7Etidwell/bsad560/Notes2004.html>

Session 4: Monday, February 12, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Presentation by group 2 on Organizations as organisms

Organizations as open systems

The population-ecology view of organizations

Read before class

Morgan chapter 3: Organizations as Organisms + pages 374-379

Hofstede chapter 2: More Equal than Others

Hofstede chapter 3: 1, We, and They

Hofstede chapter 4: He, She, and (S)he

Session 5: Tuesday, February 20, 7:20 - 10:00 P.M. in ARL 329. Please note change of day, time, and location. No Class on Monday, February 19.

Agenda

External Perspectives on America

Guest Speaker: Professor Peter Mandaville, Public & International Affairs, GMU

Topic: External Perspectives on America: The View from the Muslim World

Read before class

Hofstede chapter 5: What is Different is Dangerous

Hofstede chapter 6: Yesterday, Now, or Later?

American Character Gets Mixed Reviews. (2005). The Pew Research Center report on 16-Nation Global Attitude Survey. <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/247.pdf>

Huntington, Samuel. (1998). The Clash of Civilizations. *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 3, 22-28

Inglehart, Ronald., & Norris, Pippa. (2003). The True Clash of Civilizations. *Foreign Affairs*, 82, 2, 67-74.

Said, E., (1980). Islam through Western eyes, *The Nation*, April 26.
<http://www.thenation.com/docprint.mhtml?i=19800426&s=19800426said>

Session 6: Monday, February 26, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Presentation by group 3 on organizations as brains

Cybernetics and the learning organization

Double-loop learning

Organizations as holographic brains

Read before class

Morgan chapter 4: Organizations as brains + pages 379-386

Session 7: Monday, March 5, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Presentation by group 4 on organizations as cultures

Social construction of organizations

Creating organizational realities

Read before class

Morgan chapter 5: Organizations as cultures + pages 386-390

Hofstede Chapter 8: Organizational cultures

Read the narrative on culture change at Chrysler Corporation (now a unit of DaimlerChrysler AG) from <http://www.toolpack.com/culture.html>

Suggested reading: Schein, Edgar H., *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2nd ed., (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), chapters 1-5, pp. 1-93. An outline of the entire text by Ted Nellen is available at: <http://www.tnellen.com/ted/tc/schein.html>

Suggested reading: Practitioner example: Richard Seel, "Describing culture: From diagnosis to inquiry," Oct 2001, http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/describing_culture.htm and "Organizational culture check list," <http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/checklist.htm>

No class on Monday, March 12. Spring Break

Session 8: Wednesday, March 21, 7:20 – 10:00 P.M. in ARL 329. Please note change of day, time, and location. No class on Monday, March 19.

Agenda:

The Role of Technology in Society

Technology, Innovation, and Model of Progress

Guest lecture by Professor Don Kash, School of Public Policy, on the topic, “the Role of Culture in Organizational – Technological Change.”

Read before class

Volti chapters 15 and 16

Morgan chapter 8 (only sections related to complexity) Organizations as flux and transformation + pages 401-410

Rycroft, Robert, and Kash, Don. (1999). The Silent Emergence of Complexity (pp. 3-15) & Complexity (pp. 54-73). In *The Complexity Challenge: Technological Innovation for the 21st Century*. New York: Pinter. GMU e-reserve.

Session 9: Monday, March 26, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Presentation by group 5 on Organizations as flux and transformation

Autopoiesis: Rethinking relations within the environment

Chaos and complexity

Read before class

Morgan chapter 8: Organizations as flux and transformation + pages 401-410

Session 10: Monday, April 2, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M.

Agenda

Presentation by group 6 on Organizations as political systems, psychic prisons, or instruments of domination.

Social networks: networks within and between organizations, communities, groups, institutions, and nations.

Networks and social capital formation.

Read before class

Morgan chapter 6, 7, or 9: Organizations as political systems, psychic prisons, or instruments of domination

Vikas Anand, William H. Glick, and Charles C. Manz. (2001). Thriving on the Knowledge of Outsiders: Tapping Organizational Social Capital. *Academy of Management Executive*.

Adler, Paul., & Kwon, Seok Woo. (2002). Social Capital: Prospect for a New Concept. *Academy of Management Review*. 27, 1, 17-40.

Cross, Rob., & Parker, Andrew. (2004). *The Hidden Power of Social Networks:*

Understanding How Work Really Gets Done in Organizations. Cambridge, MA: HBS Press.

Krackhardt, David., & Hanson, Jeffrey. (1993). *Informal Networks: The Company Behind the Chart.*

Session 11: Monday, April 9, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M

Agenda

Technology as Embedded in Societal, Cultural, Political, and Organizational systems.
Part I: Technological decisions as shaped by societal, cultural, and political constraints and choices

Read before class

Volti chapters 8 and 9

Session 12: Monday, April 16, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M

Agenda

Technology as embedded in societal, cultural, political, and organizational systems. Part II: Technological choices as grounded in organizational and institutional contexts and culture

Read before class

Volti chapters 10 and 17

Session 13: Monday, April 23, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M

Agenda

Cross-cultural negotiation and conflict resolution

Read before class

Hofstede chapter 9: Intercultural encounters

Hofstede chapter 10: Surviving in a multicultural world

Session 14: Monday, April 30, 4:30 - 7:10 P.M

Agenda

Making sense of Culture, Organization, and Technology

Sharing highlights from group projects

Course wrap-up

Team and course evaluation

Hand out final exams

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Suggested outline for the Cultural Audit/Assessment Project Report

1.5 spaced, 12 font size, about 20 pages, 30 grade points

Introduction

Objective of the project/analysis

Description of the organization chosen for analysis (Its size, nature of core task, history, etc.,) 1-2 pages.

Methodology

Describe your way of collecting data

How did you construct your assessment instruments (such as interview or observation schedule)? Attach samples with the report. 1-2 pages.

Sampling

How many people were interviewed in the study? What was your rationale for deciding on this size? What kinds of sampling technique were used (Random, purposive, judgmental, or accidental)? What was the rationale for the type of sampling used? 1-2 pages.

Data Collection

Describe how the data was collected (e.g., How many visits were made to the site? How many of you were involved in that process?). High points? Surprises? Disappointments? 2-4 pages.

Results and Interpretation (the story)

Describe what you found and what they mean. This may best be done in a story-writing format. The word “story” is used in a metaphorical sense. You may describe (telling a story of) what you found and learned in rich detail that may leave the reader with a new understanding of the phenomena or organizational processes you have studied.

Remember to use readings (theories and concepts) from the assigned text and other articles. 10-12 pages.

Recommendations (optional)

If your story/narrative/analysis naturally leads you to make suggestions or recommendations to improve the organizational system that you have studied, please include a section for that.

Conclusion

Summarize your conclusions. 1page.

Other aspects to keep in mind

1. Richness of description (and quality of written work)

Will a reader not familiar with the organization get a clear picture of what you have done? Your ability to use language (narratives) effectively in portraying the organizational reality will be assessed here. The distinction between Anthropology’s “thick” and “thin” description will be important here.

2. Depth of analysis

Is your report a mere description, or surface-level narrative of what you did or does it provide the reader with an in-depth, sophisticated portrayal of the entity you have studied along with fresh insights and new learning? **(If you have used theories and concepts from the text and articles, you will do well for this part).**