Seminar in Micro Organizational Behavior

Spring 2023
Tuesdays 3:00pm-5:40pm, Janice Levin 219
Professor Jessica Methot
Office: JLB 209
Office hours: By Appointment
Email: jmethot@smlr.rutgers.edu

General Course Information

Course Description
This is a doctoral level seminar on the major approaches to the field of micro organizational behavior (OB), which can be coarsely defined as the study of the thoughts, feelings, attributes, and behavior of individuals in organizations (see the Academy of Management OB Domain statement for details: https://ob.aom.org/about-us/about-the-ob-division).

Topics include but are not limited to:
- Individual characteristics such as beliefs, values, personality, and demographic attributes, and individual processes such as learning, perception, motivation, emotions, and decision making
- Interpersonal processes such as trust, justice, power/politics, social exchange, and networks
- Outcomes such as performance, creativity, attachment, citizenship behaviors, stress, absenteeism, turnover, deviance, and ethical behavior.

This is a survey seminar, and accordingly, the main objective is to familiarize students with the major assumptions, concepts and theories that ground the field. As you will soon see, there are many different concepts and theories that have been used by scholars to understand why people in organizations think, feel and behave the way they do. One semester is not enough time to cover everything with a high level of depth and detail. Therefore, I highly encourage you to explore the relevant journals on your own and to think deeply about how the concepts and theories are connected. This will help you achieve the more specific end goal of this course: To help PhD students develop a mental model of micro OB that is elaborated, cohesive, and internally consistent.

Course Objectives
After completing this course, you should be able to:
- Describe and synthesize content from the various OB content areas
- Understand the various methodological approaches relevant to research on OB topics
- Generate and evaluate research ideas that incorporate OB content areas

Changes to the syllabus: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; if deviations become necessary, they will be clearly communicated to the class.
### COURSE OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Discussion leader (students will lead on open days)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>OB: Introduction and Overview</td>
<td>Professor Methot</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>What is theory?</td>
<td>Professor Methot</td>
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<td>January 31</td>
<td>Job Performance</td>
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<td>February 7</td>
<td>Commitment, Withdrawal, &amp; Turnover</td>
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<td>February 14</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Mood, Emotions, and Attitudes</td>
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<td>February 28</td>
<td>Stress, Stressors, and Strain</td>
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<td>March 7</td>
<td>Motivation I</td>
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<td>March 14</td>
<td>*** SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS***</td>
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<td>March 21</td>
<td>Motivation II</td>
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<td>March 28</td>
<td>Trust and Justice</td>
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<td>April 4</td>
<td>Individual Differences</td>
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<td>April 11</td>
<td>Identity, Time, Meaningful Work</td>
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<td>April 18</td>
<td>Relationships and Social Networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>Paper Presentations</td>
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### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### Individual Contributions and Deliverables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Contribution/Deliverable</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Class</td>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>60 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Discussion Leadership</td>
<td>40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>Viable Topic Worksheet (I will return with feedback by 3/7)</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<td>3/21</td>
<td>Article Review</td>
<td>30 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/28</td>
<td>Initial Paper Submission (I will return with feedback by 4/11)</td>
<td>50 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/25</td>
<td>Paper Presentation</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>Final Paper + Response Letter Submission</td>
<td>60 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>300 points</strong></td>
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Scale for Determining Overall Performance. Your course grade will be based on the total points you earned during the course, using the scale below.

270 - 300 points (90-100%) A
255 - 269 points (85-89.9%) B+
240 - 254 points (80-84.9%) B
225 - 239 points (75-79.9%) C+
210 - 224 points (70-74.9%) C
209 or fewer points (0-69.9%) F

1. Class Participation (60 points). Your participation will be assessed on a weekly basis. During each class meeting, you are expected to actively participate in class discussions in ways that show a firm grasp of the reading material and critical evaluation of any assigned questions. You are also expected to actively listen and respectfully respond to others’ comments. Everyone is expected to contribute in substantive ways during each class meeting. Scholarly work in OB is such that reasonable people can be expected to disagree on the nature of the constructs, processes proposed by theorists, and interpretation of data. Thus, everyone is expected to form opinions, and to share and defend them in class. In assessing participation efforts, I aim to be mindful of the quality of student participation and not just quantity.

You will be responsible for reading the weekly assigned articles in depth. The “optional” articles are provided in order to give you an opportunity to read more on a given topic and to “go above and beyond” during the discussions if you so choose.

You will need to email a question(s)/comment(s) to the discussion leader (and copy me on the email) by noon on the day before class each week, so that she/he has time to integrate appropriately into the discussion plan: Each week, it’s expected that you briefly note something that you would like integrated into the discussion about one or more of the articles from that week. For example, you might note something that stood out to you or that you found interesting, something you were confused about, something you agreed or disagreed with from the readings, or anything else that comes up for you. These weekly questions/comments are both meant to give everyone some ownership over weekly discussion content, and also to give the discussion leader some advanced insight and the opportunity to integrate your burning thoughts and questions most effectively. These questions/comments should be thoughtful, but should not be a daunting task when it comes to writing or managing them (as a discussion leader). In that spirit, please keep them concise—you will have plenty of time to elaborate during the discussion on the following day.

2. Discussion Leadership (40 points). During selected class sessions, you will be asked to lead the discussion. When you are discussion leader, you will structure our time together and guide our analysis and integration of the readings, and should be prepared to integrate the discussion as it unfolds and point it in useful directions.

A. To help prepare for your role as discussion leader and to help you facilitate our class discussion, it is suggested that you use a tactic called the “6 word synthesis.” First, describe each article in 200 words, then 100 words, then 25 words, then 6 words. This tactic is derived from the 6-word
story in the flash fiction genre (a fictional work of extreme brevity that still offers character and plot development), inspired by Ernest Hemingway’s famous challenge and first six-word story, “For sale: baby shoes, never worn. This gives you a chance to distill the essence of an article and to consider how the addition and deletion of words and information can impact the narrative. You are encouraged to draft a document with these details, and you should plan to distribute the document to the class by the time class starts on the day of discussion. The information should be presented in such a way that it is useful for all members in the discussion.

B. In your role as discussion leader, you will facilitate the participation of other class members. This goes beyond asking other students to summarize articles. Your responsibilities will include deciding in what order we discuss the articles and making sure that we compare and contrast perspectives, discuss key themes and contributions of the research, identify gaps and potential areas for future research, and keep us focused on the topic. Keep in mind that the purposes of the discussions are to provide a brief overview and contributions of assigned readings, address theoretical status while noting the quality of the available empirical evidence for the assigned topic, highlight any interesting new developments, and share ideas on future directions for the topic. You have free reign in determining the exact format for the discussion, but at a minimum, the discussion should be facilitated to cover:
   - key terms
   - key theory and underlying theoretical mechanisms
   - key measures, research design, and methodology used
   - basic grasp of the research findings and contribution of the work discussed
   - quality of the work
   - how (as we progress) this week’s topic/readings relate to those discussed in previous weeks
   - gaps and future directions

C. In addition to organizing the discussion around the focal articles, you will be responsible for integrating “optional” articles with the discussion in such a way that presents these articles to the class.

D. You will also be responsible for identifying an article published in a peer-reviewed journal that you find interesting and that is relevant for your topic week. The article you select should meet the following criteria: a) it cannot be a paper already included on our reading list, b) it must have been published in the last two years, and c) it should be a paper that you find interesting. You will need to email a copy of the article to all of us by Monday of the week you’re scheduled to lead the discussion.

3. Short Paper (130 points total; see points breakdown in A-C below). Write the opening (i.e., hook or introduction) of an empirical journal article surrounding an original idea—one that is yours and yours alone. It should read like pp. 3-6, assuming the first two pages are the title and abstract pages. This section should be around 1000 words, all inclusive, and should refer the reader to a figure depicting a model. That model should have a predictor(s) → mediator(s) → outcome(s) structure where the mediators represent mechanisms from some theory covered in this course. Put differently, the reasons behind why your predictor(s) explain variance in your outcome(s) should be supplied by
some theory we covered. This is typical of theory grounded work in OB—the theory typically “lives” more in the mediator space than in either the predictor or outcome spaces. Your opening paper should articulate the mystery, puzzle, dissensus, or problem that motivates your study before positioning that inspiration in some existing conversation among scholars. You should then describe how you are contributing to that conversation while laying out the theory that you are using to ground your work.

Following the introduction, please list out your formal hypothesis statements.

Following your formal hypothesis statements, include a brief methodological section that includes your proposed design, sample, procedure, and measurement choices.

You should include a reference section for any cited work and your paper should be prepared in accordance with AMJ’s Style Guide for Authors (see the journal’s website). Adherence to this style guide will be one factor in your grade.

While you are not required to read any of the following, you might find one or more these sources helpful in developing your topic and writing the introduction:


A. **Viable Topic Worksheet (20 points).** A copy of this worksheet can be found in Appendix A of this syllabus. This worksheet is intended to help in developing your paper topic and should be completed in that spirit. Keep in mind that your topic may shift from the ideas initially submitted in this worksheet, but this should help you get the ball rolling. I will give individual feedback on the ideas presented in this worksheet.

Viable Topic Worksheets should be submitted to the course Canvas site (and will be filtered through TurnItIn software) by 11:59pm on February 21th.

B. **Initial Paper Submission (50 points).** After you’ve received feedback on the viable topic worksheet and you’ve settled on a topic and model, complete an initial version of the paper as described above (introduction/hook, formal hypothesis statements, brief methodological section). Please keep in mind that this paper is not a “rough” draft. It should be logical, legible, and represent your best effort at a first stab of the paper.

Initial Paper Submission should be submitted to the course Canvas site (and will be filtered through TurnItIn software) by 11:59pm on March 28th.

C. **Final Paper Submission + Response Letter (60 points).** After you’ve received feedback on your initial paper submission, you’ll need to respond to my comments, just as you would respond to reviewer comments on a manuscript you’ve submitted for publication that’s been given a “revise and resubmit” decision. We will look at examples, discuss any of your own experiences in drafting responses to reviewers, and talk more about how you might craft your response letter together in class.

In addition to the letter, you should make any edits to the actual paper that you deem necessary prior to submitting a final copy.

Final Paper and Response Letter should be submitted to the course Canvas site (and will be filtered through TurnItIn software) as two separate files by 11:59pm on May 10th.

4. **Paper Presentation.** Students will present their research papers to the class on April 25th (but all final presentations are due to me via email before class on April 25th). Presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes (time may be adjusted depending on the number of students who enroll in the seminar)—you will be stopped if you go over. Students need to convey the (a) motivation for the paper (what important theoretical question are you trying to resolve and why existing theories and research cannot be used to address this question), (b) the theoretical foundation guiding your choice of constructs/relationships, (c) the key constructs and relationships, (d) overview of the method. Please submit your PowerPoint deck (via Canvas) by 4pm the day before class (I want to have these loaded on my computer so that we can quickly transition between presentations). You will be graded based on your ability to clearly communicate the aspects of your paper as described in the details for your “Short Paper” (#3), above, and to provide thoughtful answers to questions.
5. **Article Review.** One component of service to our scholarly field is serving as a blind reviewer for articles submitted to academic journals. As Sullivan, Baruch, and Schepmyer (2010) recently noted, “Reviewing has long been recognized as a critical part of the academic process of knowledge creation, development, and dissemination. However, as evidenced by recent findings from focus groups and an international survey, the relative lack of effective formal training in management PhD programs on how to review is surprising given the impact that reviewing has on the management field.” Therefore, this activity is intended to give you insight into the process of reviewing a quantitative manuscript.

I will provide an unpublished manuscript for which you will craft a critical yet constructive review. There are at least 5 key responsibilities of good reviewers:

1. Ensure the literature review is current and comprehensive, the topic under study is impactful, and the paper adds value to the field
2. Ensure the journal’s mission statement is upheld
3. Safeguard that scientific principles are upheld and that ethical standards are enforced
4. Ensure that the quantitative or qualitative methods used fit with the research question, are rigorous, and that data are analyzed properly
5. Provide constructive, developmental feedback

While you are not required to read any of the following, you might find one or more these sources helpful in providing guidance:


Your review should be submitted via Canvas as a PDF file by 11:59pm on March 21, 2023.
COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1 – January 17th: Organizational Behavior: Introduction and Overview


Week 2 – January 24th: What is Theory? The role of theory in scientific research


Week 3 – January 31st: Job Performance


**Optional Readings:**


**Week 4 – February 7th: Commitment, Withdrawal, and Turnover**


Optional Readings:

**Week 5 – February 14th – NO CLASS**

**Week 6 – February 21st: Mood, Emotions, and Attitudes**


Optional Readings:


Week 7 – February 28th: Stress, Stressors, and Strain


Optional Readings:


Week 8 – March 7th: Motivation I – The Classics


Optional Readings:


**Week 9 – March 14th: SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10 – March 21st: Motivation II – Contemporary Themes**


**Week 11 – March 28th: Trust and Justice**


Optional Readings:


Week 12 – April 4th: Individual Differences in Personality and Ability


*Optional Readings:*


**Week 13 – April 11th: Identity, Person-organization fit, Time, and Meaningful Work**

*Identity*


*Time and Temporal Processes*


**Job Crafting, Meaningful Work, and Mindfulness**


**Optional Readings:**


**Week 14 – April 18th: Interpersonal Workplace Relationships and Social Networks**


**Optional Readings:**


**Week 15 – April 25th: Student Presentations**
Appendix A

Do I have a viable research topic?

Use no more than a few sentences to answer the following 10 questions. You should be able to answer all 10 questions if you have a viable research topic and have immersed yourself in the relevant literatures.

1. What topic do you want to study?

2. Why is it important to study the topic you’re interested in studying?

3. Who has studied this topic previously (what fields/communities or subdisciplines, if any, have studied it)?

4. What do we clearly know about this topic?

5. What gaps exist in the literature that you hope to address? That is, what don’t we know? In other words, what is your core, overarching research question?

6. Why should we care about this gap/question? That is, why is it important to begin to address and close this gap/answer this question?

7. What theoretical frameworks or prior research will you draw on to close this gap/answer these questions? That is, what literature will you rely on to develop your hypotheses?

8. In brief, what is your core idea? For example, fill in the blanks: Drawing on __________, I argue that _________________________.

9. How will you test your core idea?

10. Assuming your research is wildly successful, how would the New York Times describe your fascinating results?