

# BUSI 2743 CIN3: Organizational Theory

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## Syllabus

### Course Description

This course on Organization Theory offers students insight into why organizations act as they do, why they look like they do, how they might be altered and why they are often not that easy to change.

This course focuses on helping students improve their analytical and managerial skills. At its completion, students will note an increase in their abilities to understand complex organized behavior occurring in the private or public sectors. It offers a series of different theoretical lenses useful for explaining one event from multiple perspectives or many events from one perspective. Throughout the text, it provides a series of well-established theories of organization and economic theories of the firm.

Business schools, their professors and consultancies such as McKinsey & Co., the Boston Consulting Group, Gartner and Bain & Co. have played a role in developing ideas that help explain why organizations look and act as they do and why some succeed and others fail. Their ideas also help analysts and observers understand what is feasible for organizations themselves and for the wider social system as well as some inherent contradictions which limit the impact that individual actors can have (Hall, 1996; 25). These ideas are captured under the heading of Organization Theory which encompasses perspectives originating in diverse fields of inquiry including economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, biology, and psychology.

To simplify matters, consider that these concepts can be divided into two groups - concepts with economic origins and concepts without economic origins. Those with economic origins are normally referred to as 'economic theories of the firm' or models of business organization conduct. As with most disciplines no one definition exists to unite those seeking to understand why companies act and organize as they do. A few ideas are however accepted by most management thinkers. A theory of the firm is normally an abstraction of a real world business enterprise designed to address a particular set of its characteristics and behaviors. (Machlup 1980). Most of these theories or perspectives seek to predict the behavior of firms in their competitive environments, and are often non-critical of management activity. Most of these theories also assume that executive decisions are made under conditions of imperfect knowledge but reject the idea that firms exist solely to maximize profits.

A second group of concepts are non-economic in origin. Researchers and writers in this tradition are interested in analysing organizations, not just business enterprises. Performance or effectiveness from this perspective is not limited to the corporate bottom line or externally imposed market measures. Desired outcomes may take many forms including survival and legitimacy. There is also recognition that corporations may not necessarily act autonomously or behave in a manner consistent with the decisions of managers. Many of these theories view organizations as being comprised of many individuals with distinct opinions and viewpoints. Finally, thinkers of this tradition do not shy away from looking closely at the relationships between performance or effectiveness with internal structures and cultures (Grant, 1996).

With this in mind, what are the hoped for learning outcomes associated with this course?

- Explain the major concepts of organization theory
- Develop a mental tool box of different explanations of corporate and organizational behaviour
- Improve understanding of the main issues confronting organizations
- Comprehend why it is important to theorize about organizations
- Learn how these theories are constructed

# Instructor

Professor: Conor Vibert Ph.D.

I am a Professor of Business Strategy and have taught at Acadia University for 22 years. I have worked in the Oil and Gas and Technology sectors. In terms of research, I am interested in how companies use online information to understand export markets. I create video business cases and I am also the co-founder of Casenet Media Inc. (<https://www.casenet.ca>), a company that streams video case studies. I look forward to helping you learn more about how to effectively manage in different types of organizations.

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# Course Overview

The course structure is based on insights related to organizations and their operation found in the Jones textbook. The course is structured to follow the order of material as presented in the Table of Contents.

Your knowledge of organizations and their relationship to the environment will be assessed in Assignments 1 through 3. These assignments will cover concepts such as effectiveness, ethics, stakeholder management and globalization.

Your understanding of organizational design will be assessed in Assignments 4 through 7. In these assignments, students will explore the leading theories and frameworks that address issues such as design challenges, coordination, communication, control, specialization, culture, strategy, competencies and technology.

Your knowledge of organizational change will be assessed in Assignments 8 through 12. These assignments will cover subjects such as forms and types of change, transformation and life cycles, decision making, information technology, innovation and creativity, and conflict, power and politics.

**What might an answer to a question posed in this course look like? Here are two examples.**

Example 1: How might the main ideas underlying Population Ecology Theory be summarized in three sentences?

Environments define a strategic resource path that an organization must follow to be selected for and survive over time. Niches provide the resources that a firm must follow to be selected for and survive over time. Because limited environment resources constrain the number of populations a niche can support, some populations and organizations are selected against and disappear. Source: (Ulrich and Barney 1985, 474).

Example 2: What are some of the criticisms of transaction cost theory?

Criticisms of transaction costs economics are numerous. First, the theory is pessimistic in regards to managers and their behavior. Indeed, managers are not considered trustworthy. Sadly, this ignores the idea that these individuals may indeed act in the best interests of their employer. Second, an assumption that may be incorrect is the role of the market as the natural medium of the transaction. Third, transaction cost theorists may over simplify the challenges facing organizations. Indeed, in a knowledge-based economy, one might ask how important transaction costs are for corporate prosperity. Fourth, the theory is ill equipped to deal with a major corporate concern of the new millennium - a corporate desire for ongoing employee learning or continuous improvement. Indeed, what a contracts perspective fails to address is the question of how one contracts for learning. Fifth, this perspective suggests that organizations are formed in response to a problem. This thinking ignores the role of historical development or ongoing actions by the corporation and its managers to prosper and grow. (Source: Vibert, 2004: P.)

## Course Materials

The textbook for this course is:

G.R. Jones, 2013 Organizational Theory, Design and Change, Seventh Edition, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc. ISBN 13: 978-0-13-272994-9.

See the [student handbook](#) for ordering information.

Suggestions for Additional Reading:

Vibert, C.: Theorizing on Macro-Organizational Behaviour: A Handbook of Ideas and Explanations 2004, Armonk: New York: M.E. Sharpe.

## Evaluation

Assignment	Readings	Mark
Assignment 1	Chapter 1	5%
Assignment 2	Chapter 2	5%
Assignment 3	Chapter 3	5%
Assignment 4	Chapter 4	5%
Assignment 5	Chapter 5 and 6	5%

Assignment 6	Chapter 7	5%
Assignment 7	Chapter 8 and 9	5%
Assignment 8	Chapter 10	5%
Assignment 9	Chapter 11	10%
Assignment 10	Chapter 12	10%
Assignment 11	Chapter 13	10%
Assignment 12	Chapter 14	10%
Assignment 13	Final Timed Essay	20%

## Assignments

The assignments are delivered to the instructor via assignment drop-boxes. Please remember to put your name, student number, course number, and assignment number on the assignment and keep a copy in the event the original is lost.

The files must be readable by Excel 2003 or Word 2003.

Please note you must complete assignment 1 and receive feedback on it before submitting assignment 2. You must complete assignment 2 within two weeks of receiving feedback on assignment 1. You must also complete both assignments within one month of starting this course. For the remainder of the course, you must follow the order of the assignments when submitting them. There is no proctored exam in this course. There are 13 assignments. Assignment 13 is a Timed Essay that you may access and write once the first 12 assignments are submitted.

## Course Schedule

**Click to download the suggested schedule for this course:** [BUSI 2743 CIN3 - Suggested Schedule](#)

Fill in your start date and use the recommended timeline to plan out when you will do readings and assignments. This is a tool to help you time manage this course. If you get off-track, make sure to revisit your schedule and re-evaluate the dates you've set for yourself.

You have 6 months to complete this course. You may set your own schedule, but if you intend to complete the course in less than 3 months, you should let me know so that we can arrange a schedule.

Please do not leave all of your course work until a few weeks before your completion date. Although I will make every effort to accommodate your schedule within reason, I need time to grade assignments and mark the timed essay.

### Quick Overview:

Week	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Organizations and Effectiveness	Assignment 1

Week 2	Managers, Ethics and Stakeholders	Assignment 2
Week 3	Management and Globalization	Assignment 3
Week 4	Organizational Design and its Challenges	Assignment 4
Week 5	Organizational Structure	Assignment 5
Week 6	Organizational Culture	Assignment 6
Week 7	Organizational Design, Strategy and Technology	Assignment 7
Week 8	Organizations and Change	Assignment 8
Week 9	Organizational Transformation	Assignment 9
Week 10	Learning, Knowledge Management and Decisions	Assignment 10
Week 11	Innovation, Intrapreneurship and Creativity	Assignment 11
Week 12	Managing Conflict, Power, and Politics	Assignment 12
<b>Assignment 13 - Final Timed Essay on ACORN</b>		

## References

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## Student Handbook

You are responsible for becoming familiar with the contents of the Student Handbook. It contains important information about scheduling examinations (if applicable), applying for extensions, withdrawing from your course, ordering books, and computer and library services available to you. If you have questions about the policies outlined in the handbook (<https://courseware.acadiau.ca/openacadia/studenthandbook.html>), contact:

### Open Acadia

- 21 University Avenue (Rhodes Hall)
- Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6
- Phone: 1-800-565-6568
- Fax: 1-902-585-1068
- Email: [openacadia@acadiau.ca](mailto:openacadia@acadiau.ca)

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity demands responsible use of the work of other scholars. It is compromised by academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism. A student who is uncertain whether or not a course of action might constitute cheating or plagiarism should seek in advance the advice of the instructor involved.

- Cheating is copying or the use of unauthorized aids or the intentional falsification or invention of information in any academic exercise
- Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. Students are required to acknowledge and document the sources of ideas that they use in their written work.
- Self plagiarism is also a form of plagiarism. It is the presentation of the same work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved.
- A student who knowingly helps another to commit an act of academic dishonesty is equally guilty.
- Penalties are levied in relation to the degree of the relevant infraction. They range from requiring the student to re-do the piece of work, through failure on that piece of work, to failure in the course, and to dismissal from the university.

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◀ Course Introduction Video

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