Introduction

Complexity, speed, span of operations, rapidly forming consciously contrived teams as well as self-organizing groups, organizational porosity, heightened vulnerability, proliferation of information, expanding systemic uncertainty, ephemerality, and constantly reassembling structures are just some of the features that mark the world of the modern organization. It can, then, come as little surprise that traditional approaches to organizational theory are in danger of breaking apart on the shoals of the contemporary world. What remains of the “traditional” organization is sped up to the pace of modernity, where that acceleration in-and-of-itself makes the old new and largely unrecognizable. Managers and the managed now find they must be ready to remake themselves, retrain, adapt at rapid pace, and keep attachments to structure at only the level of necessity in order to meet organizational needs and challenges with appropriate agility and application of resources.

Even organizations oriented to small niches or organizations small in resources and numbers of personnel are required to have a degree of complexity that would have been unimagined a decade ago. With the rise of complexity comes the rise of uncertainty and a more redolent possibility of catastrophe and failure. This course is designed to introduce you to some of the problems that face modern organizations and how to organize, control, and generally manage these problems in complex environments. The goals of the course are to 1) Familiarize you with the means for leaders to manage organizational complexity; 2) Provide a rich background of examples that will provide practical guidance for you when you find yourself in difficult organizational situations; and 3) Help you plot and prepare for organizational change that will be upon us in the coming months and years.

Course Description

This course examines leadership in complex situations and operating environments, e.g., situations with multiple contexts, constituencies, and functions. Organizations of all sizes, government agencies, military organizations, and corporations face a variety of complex problems, some of which cross organizational boundaries. These situations may involve contending with rapid change in markets or technology, downsizing/rightsizing, or leading collaborative work in a shared-power world.

This course will study the nature of these unique and complex problems that organizations face and the ways in which they have been addressed. Principles from texts and articles on
organizational learning and collaboration will be applied to cases of current and previous public and private sector problems.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will:

- Understand the nature of the unique and complex problems and operating environments faced by organizations.
- Analyze the strategies that organizations have used to address these problems.
- Understand and apply the principles of learning organizations to complex problems.
- Identify the habits of mind and behaviors of successful leaders in these situations.
- Develop integrative and collaborative leadership approaches to complex organizational challenges.

Assigned Material

Required texts:


Various readings available in electronic format.

Course Requirements

The course is composed of three modules, with each module divided into two lessons. Refer to the schedule below.

Examinations

There will be three examinations; each exam corresponding to its matched module. The exams are essay format and will ask you to engage in analysis and explanation of the assigned readings and discussion posts. Your examinations each count 25% of your total grade and are graded on a 100 point scale. The third question in each exam is an optional extra credit question worth 10 points. Late examinations will not be accepted.

Discussion Posts

Each module will have a series of discussion topics. You are required to make at least three substantive posts for each module. As you will see, Module Three contains more than three forums. The requirement of at least three substantive posts per module, however, remains the same. A substantive post is one that: 1) Makes me see that you have done the readings; 2) Demonstrates that you have thought about the material; 3) Analytically applies ideas and elements from the readings to some problem described in the readings or that you have encountered in organizations you participate in; and 4) Entices your fellow students to engage in further discussion and continue your analysis. Your discussion responses/posts make up the remaining 25% of the grade.
Grading
The course has a total of 400 possible points. Final grades are reflected as follows:

360 points and above: A
320-359: B
280-319: C
240-279: D
Less than 240: F

Course Policies

Accommodations
If you have or suspect a disability and need accommodations, you should contact UTEP’s Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 915.747.5148 or at cass@utep.edu or stop by Union Building East Room 106.

Class Environment
I will strive to provide a class environment appropriate for academic instruction and discussion. For this to occur, make sure you read the assignments and complete the discussion postings, as scheduled. We will welcome and encourage different ideas and viewpoints. Some topics are controversial and students should feel comfortable expressing their thoughts. We will respect what others have to say – we do not have to agree with them – and avoid personal insult, interrupting, and rudeness. We will avoid becoming politically charged when discussing sensitive topics.

Withdrawal Policy
To be withdrawn from the class, students must take appropriate actions on or before UTEP’s deadlines. Automatic withdrawals will not be made by the instructor. A student may officially withdraw from this class with an automatic ‘W’ at any time before February 3, 2017. According to UTEP policy, no withdrawals will be allowed after this date. You will receive a failing grade if you simply stop coming to class and do not take appropriate actions to withdraw from the course.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Examinations and Cheating
Unless I indicate otherwise, you may not use any notes or aids during the examinations, nor may you discuss the exam during the exam period with other students. You may not copy off another student’s exam or otherwise submit writing or answers that are not original to you.

I am required by the Handbook of Operating Procedures for The University of Texas at El Paso to report “all alleged acts of scholastic dishonesty…to the Dean of Students for disposition.” (See Section III of the Handbook of Operating Procedures for UTEP (Academic Policies and Faculty Personnel Matters 4.14a.)

As stated in the Handbook of Operating Procedures for UTEP (Student Conduct and Discipline 1.2.2.1): “Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline.
Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.”

**Plagiarism**
To provide a definition that may help you understand the nature of plagiarism, the Indiana University at Bloomington’s definition of that offense is especially clear: “Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else’s work, including the work of other students, as one’s own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered ‘common knowledge’ may differ from course to course.

- A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, or pictures of another person without acknowledgment.
- A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever:
  - Directly quoting another person’s actual words, whether oral or written;
  - Using another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories;
  - Paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written;
  - Borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; or
  - Offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment.”

**Schedule**

**Module One**

*Lesson One*
Required Reading:

- **Senge, Peter**: The Fifth Discipline: Chapters 1-3
  - Chapter 1: Give Me a Lever Long Enough
  - Chapter 2: Does Your Organization Have a Learning Disability
  - Chapter 3: Prisoners of the System, or Prisoners of Our Own Thinking?

- **Kettl, Donald**: The Next Government of the United States: Chapter 1
  - Chapter 1: Mildred and Katrina


Lesson Two
Required Reading:

- Senge, Peter: *The Fifth Discipline*: Chapters 4-6
  - Chapter 4: The Laws of the Fifth Discipline
  - Chapter 5: A Shift of Mind
  - Chapter 6: Nature’s Templates: Identifying the Patterns That Control Events

- Kettl, Donald: *The Next Government of the United States*: Chapter 2
  - Chapter 2: Network Challenges

- Tim Harford: “Trial, Error and the God Complex,”


Module 1 Discussion Board: Opens January 22, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time
Module 1 Discussion Board: Closes January 29, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time

Examination 1: Opens January 25, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time
Examination 1: Closes January 30, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time

Module Two

Lesson One
Required Reading:

- Senge, Peter: *The Fifth Discipline*: Chapters 7-9
  - Chapter 7: Self-Limiting or Self-Sustaining Growth
  - Chapter 8: Personal Mastery
  - Chapter 9: Mental Models

- Kettl, Donald: *The Next Government of the United States*: Chapter 3
  - Chapter 3: Irresponsible Government

- Audio (Warning – 60 minutes long): “This American Life,” “NUMMI”:


Lesson Two
Required Reading:

- Senge, Peter: *The Fifth Discipline*: Chapters 10-11
  - Chapter 10: Shared Vision
  - Chapter 11: Team Learning
| Module 2 Discussion Board: Opens January 29, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time |
| Module 2 Discussion Board: Closes February 5, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time |
| Examination 2: Opens February 1, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time |
| Examination 2: Closes February 6, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time |

### Module Three

**Lesson One – Complexity Revisited**

**Required Reading:**

- **Kettl, Donald: The Next Government of the United States: Chapters 5-6**
  - Chapter 5: Tectonic Nation
  - Chapter 6: Rocket Science

**Lesson Two**

**Required Reading:**

- **Kettl, Donald: The Next Government of the United States: Chapter 7**
  - Chapter 7: The Political Future
- **Case Study: Hank Crumpton**
  - 60 Minutes Piece: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdqoqem9s1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdqoqem9s1Y)

**Module 3 Discussion Board: Opens February 5, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time**

**Module 3 Discussion Board: Closes February 12, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time**

**Examination 3: Opens February 8, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time**

**Examination 3: Closes February 13, 2017, at 11:59pm Mountain Time**