NEW PARADIGMS IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT (MGPO-702)

Fall 2016
Wednesdays, 11:30 – 14:30,
Bronfman Building 310

Dror Etzion

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course we will build on students’ knowledge of strategy and organization theory to explore contemporary management research that is focused primarily on problems and issues, as well as theory advancement. What does this mean, and how might it differ from other PhD seminars? In many other courses, students are asked to study theories – institutional theory, resource based view, and the like – tracking their evolution from seminal texts through to recent advances. In this course, our primary efforts will revolve around how strategy and organizational theory can help understand 21st century organizations and the world they inhabit, covering such issues as shifting labor practices, financialization and grand societal challenges. Moreover, we will be faithful to the word “new” in the course title, meaning that almost all papers will have been published within the past decade.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH: The course is organized as a seminar. To make the classes successful, you must read the material assigned for each session, and be prepared to discuss it in detail. You will be expected to engage each other in developing a critical understanding of each paper. The success or failure of this class rests significantly on you. How much you learn will depend primarily on the degree to which you engage with the material and the classroom discussions.

READINGS: Readings are available online, e.g. via Google Scholar, when using a McGill IP address.

EVALUATION - OVERVIEW
Class participation: 30 %
Discussion questions: 20 %
Term paper: 50 %
Total 100 %

EVALUATION - DETAILS
1. Class participation (30%): Regular attendance and class participation are critical to your successful completion of this course. You should complete the assigned readings prior to each class and be fully prepared to discuss them. You should also be able to outline the topic that readings address, describe the core points of the readings, and offer your analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of central arguments.

Students will share the responsibility for discussing materials and for raising questions. All students should arrive at class with questions, topics, and issues to be vetted and debated. Class participation requires your active, thoughtful participation throughout the term. A good seminar should have active dialog and debate. If someone proposes an idea that is contrary to your view, speak up. Your task is to engage one another in an assessment of the readings.
1. **Motivation:** What problem or issue is the paper addressing? How clear is it? What mechanism is proposed to explain key relationships? Is there one? What framing is used to position the work with respect to other research?
2. **Argumentation:** What arguments are used to make the work convincing? What assumptions underlie the work? How valid are they? What “hook” does the paper use to get you into it? What data and methods are used? Do they fit the question?
3. **Analysis:** Is the data adequate to the task? What research design was used? Which methods were applied? Was the analysis competent? What are the scope conditions? What, if any, alternative explanations could account for the empirical findings? How would you test these?
4. **Implications:** What new findings does the paper offer? What next steps does this work suggest or require? What problems, if any, did you find with the paper’s findings or conclusions? What implications for theory or practice arise from this research?
5. **Creative Critique:** How could this work be extended or refined? If you disagree with the argument, what would it require to persuade you? Can these differences be adjudicated through further empirical study?

2. **Discussion questions (20%):**
Once or twice during the course (depending on registration) you will prepare a set of critical discussion questions, 2-3 per reading plus 1-2 across the readings (Max: 10 in total). These questions should go beyond a basic reading of the material and should attempt to identify problems with the readings that are not already acknowledged by the authors (the intention is to develop your skills as critical readers). In addition to the questions listed above, you might consider posing some broader questions relating to the importance of the research question, how it fits with other research streams and papers, important things the paper ignored or glossed over, and complementarities or contradictions between the papers as a group. This is just a partial list.

3. **Individual papers (50%)**
Participants will write a research paper that relates one or more topics covered in class to their own research interests. The paper should define a research question, review and critique relevant literature, and develop an original theoretical argument that leads to testable propositions or hypotheses. In completing the requirements for this course you can submit either a theoretical or an empirical paper. The goal is to work on a paper of publishable quality.

- A theoretical paper should review extant literature and propose a theoretical extension. Both a thorough and integrated literature review, and an interesting, well-argued extension will be required.
- An empirical paper should propose a research question and design a study to address it. You do not need to have collected the data, but the design should be based on data that can be collected with reasonable effort. Developing research ideas that take advantage of existing databases is encouraged. Both quantitative and qualitative studies are welcome.

The body of the paper (excluding title page, references, figures and so forth) should not exceed 15 page, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins. The paper should otherwise follow the submission guidelines of AMR for theoretical papers and AMJ for empirical papers. The final paper is due December 15, 2015.
Coordinates and communications

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 14:30 – 15:30 and by appointment

I am generally good, though not exceedingly quick, with email. In other words, you can expect me to respond to all emails, and I can generally promise a 48 hour turnaround time, but don’t assume anything better than that.

You are most welcome to drop in unannounced at office hours, but if you stop by some other time I may or may not be able to accommodate you right away. But I will try.

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures
(see http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest for more information).
**Reading schedule:**

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*Academy of Management Journal*.  
Kristensen, P.H. 2016. Constructing Chains of Enablers for Alternative Economic Futures: Denmark as an Example.  