

FA 252 Introduction to Organizational Learning: Principles and Practices Syllabus

DePaul University - School for New Learning
Spring Quarter 2008

(Note: Syllabus may change based on the needs and interests of the class.)

Instructor

Paula Bartholome

Email: parallaxpb@comcast.net

Available by phone: 9 AM – 2 PM Central time, Mon. – Thu. and by appointment at 269.469.1120 (this is a home office in the **Eastern** time zone. Please take the time difference into consideration when calling.)

Course Description

Today's organizations operate in a fast-paced, complex, interdependent environment. Employees expect and must facilitate constant change and are urged to be flexible and innovate. To survive and grow as individuals and organizations, it has been argued that learning must occur constantly so that knowledge can be created, used and shared effectively. In other words, unlike when technology or financial strength allowed organizations to have an advantage in their markets, the only long-term advantage today may be the capacity to learn and change faster and more adeptly than the competition.

What does it mean to say that an organization learns? What is necessary for learning to occur? What inhibits organizational learning? Why do organizational change initiatives often fail to live up to their potential? This course addresses these questions using theory set forth by Peter Senge. The *Journal of Business Strategy* named Senge a "Strategist of the Century," one of twenty-four men and women who have "had the greatest impact on the way we conduct business today" (September/October 1999). The class also considers three topics through the lens of the competencies:

- organizational considerations to promote effective collaboration and learning, (L7)
- exploring and shifting underlying assumptions that can impede learning and change (FX);
- and addressing organizational issues with a long-term rather than quick-fix perspective (H2C).

Course Objectives:

After completing this course you will be able to:

- Define organizational learning
- Explain Senge's disciplines of organizational learning
- Discuss a specific organizational situation in the context of organizational learning

Course Competencies

L7 – Can learn collaboratively and examine the skills, knowledge and values that contribute to such learning.

FX – Can help individuals and groups learn by stimulating insight and facilitating changes in beliefs, behaviors or underlying assumptions.

H-2-C – Can identify an organizational problem and design a plan for change based on an understanding of change theories or models.

Specific information about demonstrating competences will be distributed and discussed in the first class.

Required Texts and Additional Resources

Required texts:

All: *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization*, Peter Senge, Currency-Doubleday, 1994 (paperback)

The following texts are specific to the competence(s); you only need the text for competence(s) you are taking.

L7: *Beyond Teams: Building the Collaborative Organization*, Michael M. Beyerlein, Sue Freedman, Craig McGee and Linda Moran, Pfeiffer, 2003 (paperback or Books24/7)

FX: *The Thin Book of Naming Elephants* by Sue Annis Hammond and Andrea B. Mayfield, Thin Book Publishing Company, 2004 (paperback)

H-2-C: *Systems Thinking Basics: From Concepts to Causal Loops*, Virginia Anderson and Lauren Johnson, 1997 (paperback)

The following may also be useful depending on your interests.

- *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* by Peter Senge, Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ross and Bryan Smith (New York, NY: Currency/Doubleday, 1994)
- *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 2001)
- *Process Consultation Revisited: Building the Helping Relationship*, Edgar H. Schein, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1999)
- *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* by Sue Annis Hammond, (Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Company, 2nd edition, 1998)
- *Dialogue and the art of thinking together* by William Isaacs (New York, NY: Currency/Doubleday, 1999)
- Society for Organizational Learning www.solonline.org
- Informal Education website <http://www.infed.org/>

Learning Experience:

Classes will include lecture, discussion and group work and reading is **front-end loaded and requires discipline to complete your competence-specific work**. The general reading covers the theory of organizational learning. The competence-specific reading looks at three concepts in more depth.

You will work in a small group Weeks 1 through 8 where you will discuss, synthesize and document your learning. Your group will collaboratively create a concept map to visually represent your **shared understanding** of how course concepts (from both general and competence-specific readings and class presentations) relate to each other. Each group will discuss its **map and experience** on Week 9. Members of each group will assess the contributions of each fellow member.

Concurrently you will, in consultation with the instructor, create an individual learning project for each competence(s). You will meet in competence-specific groups three times during the quarter to stimulate ideas, discuss and support each other’s learning. You will post your learning project publicly on Blackboard. Each student will be assigned to read two other students’ projects and lead a substantive discussion with the author on Week 10. NOTE: Some projects may need to be discussed on Week 9 if there based on the number of project to be discussed.

To be successful in this class you need self-direction, the ability to apply your learning and active class participation every week. You must complete the assigned reading to be able to participate in class and you need to complete your individual work. Depending on your reading and writing skills, you may need to spend more or less time than other students. We will use Blackboard to share information, collect assignments and as a place for groups to work collaboratively between classes. Please become familiar with Blackboard if you are not. For help, see: http://www.itd.depaul.edu/website/media/blackboard_flash_tutorials/Students/ Additional ITD Blackboard information: <http://www.itd.depaul.edu/website/Students/studentblackboard.asp>

Course Map

W k.	Class Content	Assignments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual pre-assessment • Review Syllabus and expectations (presentation and discussion) • Groups get acquainted, establish ground rules and review assessment criteria • Define class terms (presentation) 	<p>FOR WEEK 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Senge Chapters 1, 2 & 3. • Download concept map software from http://cmap.ihmc.us/download/ <p>Between Weeks 2 and 5:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce concept mapping (presentation and exercise) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete competence-specific reading described below. <p>Between Weeks 2 and 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete competence-specific project described below. • Learning project(s) must be approved by Week 5.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review assigned reading (groups and class) • Dynamic complexity in action (presentation, “beer game” simulation and discussion) • Discuss learning project ideas in competence-specific groups • Work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Senge Chapters 4, 5 & 6. • Learning Project(s) must be approved by Week 5.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review assigned reading (groups and class) • Aligning personal and organizational goals (presentation, exercise and discussion) • Discuss learning projects in competence-specific groups • Work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Senge Chapters 7, 8 & 9. • Learning Project(s) must be approved by Week 5.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review assigned reading (groups and class) • Workplace conflict and learning (presentation, exercise and discussion) • Discuss learning project in competence-specific groups • Work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Senge Chapters 10, 11 & 12. • Learning Project(s) must be approved by Week 5.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-course review of ALL material (learning assessment, discussion, clarification). • Feedback in groups to promote learning (presentation and discussion) • Work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization structure, culture and learning (presentation and discussion) • Group feedback experience • Competence-specific discussions • Work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal review of concept maps
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue vs. discussion (presentation, exercise and debrief) • Concept map marketplace – practice dialogue principles • Work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to discuss your learning project in competence-specific groups
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and overview • Topic TBD • Competence-specific group discussion • Final work on Concept Map 	<p>FOR WEEK 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups present/class explores concept maps
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and overview • Concept map conversations: approximately 20 minutes per group • Group feedback discussions • Individual learning project 	<p>FOR WEEK 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post learning project(s) on Blackboard 48 hours prior to class. Read assigned papers and be prepared to lead a conversation Week 10 with authors.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual learning project conversations (time limit to be determined) • Closing conversation – Where to from here? 	

Competence Specific Work Between Weeks 2 and 9:

For each competence students will, in consultation with the instructor, identify a learning project to demonstrate each competence using the Senge text and the competence-specific text listed above. (Additional sources may be used as well.) The format of the project will be a five-page (minimum) paper for each competence that adheres to SNL's formatting and citation requirements. Students taking the same competence will have opportunities to collaborate on developing learning project ideas, reviewing each other's work and providing feedback to each other on their work. Final papers will be posted on Blackboard and discussed with the class at the end of the quarter. Competence-specific reading assignments to supplement the general text:

- L7 – Beyond Teams, Chapters 1, 2, 6 and 7 (122 pages)
- FX – The Thin Book of Naming Elephants (90 pages)
- H-2-C – Systems Thinking Basics, Sections 1-6 (94 pages)
- Articles provided in class.
- Sources identified during work on your project(s)

(NOTE: Projects must draw from the Senge text as well as the competence specific text.)

Expectations for satisfactorily demonstrating your competence(s) will be discussed in the first class and a learning project checklist will be distributed. You must obtain approval for your project(s) by Week 5.

Assignments/Evidence You Will Submit:

Individual

- A learning project draft for each competence
- Completed learning project(s)

Group

- A concept map of synthesized learning (not graded)
- A collaboration self assessment and an assessment for each group member, all with descriptive narrative

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK:

Write clearly using Standard English and cite references appropriately. If you have questions about how to write well the Writing Center can help. For information on the Writing Center services and accessing them, see:

<http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/>

Post your completed written work in the appropriate Assignment area on Blackboard. **Written work not adhering to these guidelines or submitted late without prior approval may be penalized.**

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CLASS/GROUP PARTICIPATION:

The classroom environment is expected to be open, respectful, curious and participative. Please come to each class having completed your assignments and contribute regularly and substantially to help create and maintain this environment. This may involve:

- Asking questions and examining assumptions
- Articulating, explaining and/or supporting positions or ideas by referencing readings and opinions
- Exploring and supporting issues by adding explanations and examples
- Examining the ideas and assumptions of others
- Negotiating understandings, interpretations, definitions and meanings
- Summarizing previous contributions and asking follow up questions
- Proposing actions based on ideas developed.

NOTE: If you are unable to attend a class, notify the instructor in advance and make arrangements with your group to catch up. **Consistently arriving late and/or participating minimally will negatively impact participation points. If you miss three classes you will receive an F for the class.**

Course Grading Criteria

You may view your cumulative points at any time by logging on to Blackboard and going to the Gradebook. Each criteria (except where noted otherwise) will be assessed using a five-point scale: Very well, Well, Adequately, Not too well, Not well.

Draft for Learning Project(s) (15 possible points per plan)

This is a map for your individual work and must include:

- Clear, concise topic statement or question (5 points)
- Preliminary outline of paper (5 points)
- Additional source(s) beyond class texts (up to 5 points; 1 point per acceptable source)

Learning Project(s) (50 possible points per project)

- Competence demonstrated (20 points)
- Clearly, concisely and completely address topic/question (20 points)
- Individual learning identified and discussed (10 points)

Class Participation (110 possible points; 10/class Weeks 1-9, 20 Week 10)

- Two meaningful contributions during class in Weeks 1-9 (this is “Adequate” participation)
- Leading a substantive conversation with questions, observations and links to your understanding for each learning project in Week 10.

Concept Map (10 points for presenting learning gained in the map and discussing what your group learned about learning from the experience of creating it)

Collaborative Learning Assessment (30 possible points; 15 from self assessment, 15 from average of group members’ assessments)

- Asked helpful, relevant questions
- Provided helpful feedback in a respectful way
- Helped the group identify and examine task-related assumptions
- Helped the group assess and address process issues
- Listened actively to all group members

Grading Scale:

Examples:		
Single competence		
Draft	12 points	
Learning project	50 points	
Class participation	110 points	
Concept map	10 points	
Assessments	25 points	
Total	207 = A	
Two competences		
	1 st Competence	2 nd Competence
Draft	12 points	15 points
Learning project	50 points	43 points
Class participation	110 points	110 points
Concept map	10 points	10 points
Assessments	25 points	25 points
Total	207 = A	202 = A-

204-215 = A
192-203 = A-
180-191 = B+
168-179 = B
156-167 = B-
144-155 = C+
132-143 = C
120-131 = C-
108-119 = D+
96-107 = D
95 or fewer = F

You will receive a letter grade for each competence. To take the course Pass/Fail, you must inform the instructor in writing by the end of **Week 3**. Once P/F is elected, you cannot change to a letter grade.

Instructor's Biography

Prior to her current role as a principal in her own firm, Parallax (www.parallax-perspectives.com), she held policy-level positions in marketing and communications in several organizations over approximately 20 years. She graduated cum laude from Indiana University with a BS in business and received a MS in organization development from Loyola University Chicago. She has written on organizational communication, teamwork and leadership topics and her most recent article appeared in the Journal of the International Listening Association. She has presented on using story in the workplace at local and national conferences as well as addressed CEOs on the topic of employee engagement. She is a founding partner of CivilityWorks, an organization dedicating to helping make workplaces work for everyone (www.civilityworks.com).

Incompletes/Plagiarism

You **must** discuss your need for an incomplete with the instructor **before the last week of class at the latest**. Incomplete grades are not automatic; they must be requested in writing and a specific contract made for completing them within the next two quarters. **If you have not completed the majority of the classwork you will not qualify for an incomplete.** See the attachment for the university policy on incompletes.

Plagiarism is serious. It may ultimately result in dismissal from the University. See the attachment for the description of plagiarism as described in the SNL Student Handbook which may be viewed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook/code16.html> Questionable written work will be submitted to TurnItIn, a website that instantly identifies papers containing unoriginal material.

Attachment to Syllabus

Incomplete Policy

It is expected that students will complete course assignments and evidence by specified due dates within the quarter. In circumstances which the instructor determines to be exceptional, when a student is unable to complete required coursework by the established due dates, the student may request that a grade of Incomplete (IN) be issued. This request must be made formally, in writing, by completion of an IN Request Form that the student signs. The form specifies the final date by which all outstanding coursework must be completed. Failure to submit outstanding work by the specified due date will result in a grade change from IN to W or FX for each enrolled competence, along with serious academic and/or financial consequences. **After the final submission deadline, the student will have no further opportunities to submit work for a passing grade and the IN will change to an F.**

Policy on Plagiarism

Students are expected to observe the University's established guidelines regarding academic integrity, including the following statement regarding plagiarism, as quoted from the University's "Handbook for Undergraduate Studies":

Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- *The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.*
- *Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement.*
- *Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.*
- *The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.*

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion. Actions taken by the instructor do not preclude the College or the university taking further punitive action including dismissal from the University.