Rutgers – the State University of New Jersey
School of Management and Labor Relations
Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Creating and Sustaining a Learning Organization
38:578:544:91
Fall 2017
Syllabus

Instructor:	Susan Schurman
Email:	sschurma@smlr.rutgers.edu
Office Hours:	By appointment
Class Days/Time:	On-line. Course week is from Wednesday, 12:00 am to Tuesday, 11:59pm.

Course Description

This course covers theoretical and practical issues in creating and sustaining a learning organization. Organizations that have developed the structure, systems and workforce capabilities to learn from their experience and adapt to changing environments and new opportunities are considered the most likely to succeed in the global economy – especially in knowledge-intensive sectors.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

Departmental Learning Outcome IV: Theoretical Perspectives - Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation.

Students will identify and assess key theoretical aspects of organization learning;

Student Learning Outcomes (LO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

LO1: Demonstrate an understanding of the major concepts and issues in organizational learning theory.

LO2: Demonstrate an ability to apply the concepts and skills of organizational learning in order to contribute to helping their own organization become a learning organization.

LO3: Demonstrate the ability to participate effectively using the Action Learning Methodology

Performance Expectations

There are four types of performance requirements in this course:

1. Regular journal entries documenting reflections and learning throughout the course.
2. Participation in on-line discussions and/or team exercises.
3. Preparation of an Action Learning Change Project based on applying the course material over the course of the semester.
4. Posing thoughtful questions that stimulate personal and team learning.

Course Readings:

The readings for this course will include a mix of research/theory from leading scholars published in well-respected journals along with practitioner-oriented books and articles from top practitioners in the field. Course reading is heavily front-loaded during the first five weeks of the course in order to provide students with the necessary background for designing and conducting an Action Learning Change project. During the second half of the course the required reading requirements will be less and students will be encouraged to do their own search for research related to their projects.

Required Books:
Peter M. Senge. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.* Doubleday. 2006 revised edition. Senge is considered the "father" of the learning organization idea. This book contains much wisdom but, even this revised edition, is an insufficient "how to" guide.   Although it contains most of the elements, it lacks a clear explanation of how individual and team learning can lead to organizational learning. It needs to be supplemented with more recent contributions that benefit from research conducted since Senge's first publication.

Michael J. Marquardt. *Building the Learning Organization: Achieving Strategic Advantage Through a Commitment to Learning*. Harvard Business, 2011. Marquardt is one of the best known scholar/practitioners of the Action Learning methodology. Here he makes the link between Action Learning and the Learning Organization.

Russell Sarder. *Building an Innovative Learning Organization: A Framework to Build a Smarter Workforce, Adapt to Change and Drive Growth.* Wiley, 2016. This is one of the few contributions that explicitly discusses in detail the need to develop a "learning plan" that links individual employee learning to organizational learning. It will be valuable to anyone in the field of Adult Education seeking to practice organizational development and change work.

Optional Books You May Want to Consider:

Peter M. Senge. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization.* Crown Business. 1994. A useful addition to anyone's toolbox.

Or

Peter M. Senge et. al. *Schools that Learn: A Fieldbook for Educators, Parents and Everyone Who Cares About Education.* Crown Business. 2012 One of the few "how to" offerings that focus outside the private for-profit sector.

All required and optional books are available in paperback and some in kindle. There are also good used book options that are quite inexpensive. And each of them will be important additions to your organizational learning and change leadership library.

Articles:

Readings from the research literature on organizational learning and the learning organization as well as case studies will be available on the course site. **Additional readings may be added later in the semester, depending on students' projects, and students will be encouraged to do their own literature searches for research related to their own work**.

Action Learning Methodology

The instructional method used in this course is called "action learning." Action learning (AL) is an approach to solving real world problems by taking action and reflecting on the results in a team environment. It is therefore an excellent adult learning approach especially for professional education. The action learning process requires (1) a real problem that is important and complex; (2) a diverse problem-solving team; (3) a requirement that "talk" be converted to action; (4) a commitment to learning. This approach means that students are expected to play an active role in their own and others' learning. It also means that designing and implementing an action case is the focal point of the course.

Communication

All official course correspondence will be communicated via the course Canvas site announcements page or by the course email function. Students are responsible for all information communicated to them via email. If you normally use a personal email rather than your official Rutgers student email make sure to check the Rutgers mail regularly. Feel free to contact the instructors via email with questions or concerns about the course. We will do our best to get back to you within 24 hours.

When emailing the instructor, always include the course number (38:578:544) and assignment number (if relevant) in the subject line of your email.

Grading Policy

Grades for this course will be assigned using the Graduate School of Education's grading scale which is slightly different from the School of Management and Labor Relations which uses the standard Rutgers scale.

Grading scale for MEd in Adult and Continuing Education:

93-100 = A
88-92 = B+
83-87 = B
78-82 = C+
73-77=C
72 and below = F

Grading Philosophy.
I consider *effort* to be the major factor in determining performance in most of areas of life and work. I assume each student has the ability to earn an A in this course hence there is no grading curve. Each student who demonstrates A-level performance on the course requirements will receive an A for the course.

Performance Requirements

The course requires four types of performance:

On-line discussions and team exercises 20%
Contributing insightful questions to stimulate others' learning: 20%
Action Learning Project design and implementation 30%
Journal recording reflections, insights and learning   20%

In addition to these four, I have reserved 10% of the total points to award based on my assessment of overall effort and contribution to the class's learning over the course of the semester.

Students are expected to prepare, participate and complete assignments on time. Because this course is heavily interactive both with peers and the instructor, it requires everyone meeting deadlines. Points will be deducted for failure to complete assignments on time.

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint efforts are legitimate only when the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged and permitted by the assignment. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the University community and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of the course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit. Students are expected to be familiar with all Rutgers University policies regarding academic integrity. These can be found on the website www.rutgers.edu

From the Office of Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Confidentiality of Students' Course Contributions.

During this course students will be discussing their own organizations and work roles. All such contributions to the course are confidential and may not be quoted or otherwise shared outside the course site.

Course Schedule

Schedule and assignments are subject to change. Always check the latest instructions on the Canvas site.

Table 1 Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	September 6-12	Course Introduction, Overview and Expectations; Student introductions and expectations via Voicethread; Read (all are available on the course site): • Senge, Fifth Discipline. Intro to the Revised Ed and Chapt 1: pp. xi-16 • Wenger, Communities of Practice, Prologue and Intro: pp. 3-15 (available on the course site). • Marquardt, Chapter 1 (from a different book than the required text) Questions from Week 1 Material Complete Student Orientation to Canvas
2	September 13-19	Organizational Learning versus The Learning Organization: the gap between research and practice Read: • Senge Chapters 2-3: pp. 17-54 • Easterby-Smith et. al. "Organizational Learning Debates, Past, Present and Future" (available on course site) • Marquardt, Chapter 1: pp.1-20 • Sarder, Chapter 1: pp. 1-26 Questions from week 2 Material Journal Assignment: Your Reflections on Weeks 1 and 2 Material
3	September 20-26	Individual Learning, Group Learning and Organizational Learning: the evolution of theoretical frameworks toward a Systems View Readings: • Senge, Chapter 9 and 11 • Isaacs, Dialogue, Collective Thinking and Organizational Learning (available on course site) • Crossan et al An organizational Learning Framework (available on course site) • Marquardt Chapter 2 Questions from Week 3 Material Discussion: Getting acquainted, sharing your thoughts about your organization's learning ability Journal Assignment: Reflections on Week 3
4	September 27-October 3	The Politics of Organizational Learning Readings:

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		• Senge, Chapters 4&5 • Lawrence et al. The Politics of Organizational Learning (available on course site) • Marquardt, Chapter 3 • Sarder, Chapter 2 Questions from Week 4 material Journal Assignment: Reflections on Week 4
5	October 4 - 10	The Role of Leaders in Creating a Learning Organization Readings: • Berson et al. Leadership and Organizational Learning (available on course site) • Mohrman, Designing team-based organizations chapt 2 • Senge, Chapter 15 • Marquardt, Chapters 4 and 5 • Sarder, Chapter 8 Questions from Week 5 Material Team Discussion: Preparing to develop case study proposals
6	October 11-17	Develop an Action Learning Project Proposal Readings: • Sarder, Chapters 3,4,5 • Questions from Week 6 material
7	October 18-24	Project Proposal Review Readings: • Sarder, Chapter 6 • Marquardt, Chapter 7 • Team members' proposals Questions on Week 7 material Team Discussion: feedback on AL project proposals Journal Assignment: Reflections on Weeks 5-7
8	October 25-31	Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management Readings:

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		• Marquardt Chapter 6 • Sarder, Chapts 7,8 • Collinson, Cook and Conley, Organizational Learning in Schools Questions on Week 8 material Journal Assignment
9	November 1-7	Organizational Learning and Crisis Management Readings: • Kayes and Yoon The Breakdown and Rebuilding of Learning During Organizational Crisis, Disaster and Failure Questions on Week 9 material Team Discussion: TBD
10	November 8-14	Sustainable Change Reading: • Sackman et al., Sustainable Change: Long term efforts toward developing a learning organization • Marquardt Chapter 9 First Draft AL Projects Due Questions on week 10 material
11	November 15-21	Feedback on Projects Readings: • Sarder, Chapter 9 Questions on Week 11 material Team Discussion – Feedback on Colleagues' Project Papers
12	November 22-28	Thanksgiving Week: Journal Assignment; reflections on weeks 9-11
13	November 29-December 5	VT presentations of Revised AL Projects
14	Dec 6-12	Final Project Paper Due; Course Wrap Up and Evaluation: What did we learn Week 14: Final questions - looking ahead Journal: Summary reflection on learning from the course