Rutgers – the State University of New Jersey

School of Labor and Management Relations

Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations

38:578:605:90 ACTION RESEARCH
Preliminary Syllabus
Fall 2017

Instructor: Susan Schurman
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Office hours: by appointment
Class days/time: online Wednesday-Tuesday.

Course Description

This course covers theoretical and practical issues in organizational leadership and change management, including the rationale for change, why change succeeds or fails, leadership competencies including the management of change, and ethical concerns.

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 change initiatives; examine some successful and unsuccessful initiatives; increase their personal skills at initiating and managing change; and apply theory regarding the role of leadership in change initiatives at both the organization and the team level.

Student Learning Outcomes (LO)

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

LO1: Demonstrate ability to use the Action Learning methodology.

LO2: Demonstrate an understanding of major concepts and theories related to action research.

LO3: Demonstrate and the ability to develop an action research proposal.

LO4: Demonstrate the teamwork skills necessary to conduct an action research project.

Performance Expectations

There are four types of performance requirements in this course:

1.   Posing powerful questions based on weekly course material on the course questions page.

2.   Journal entries documenting reflections and learning throughout the course.

3.   Participation in on-line discussions of course material with a team of class colleagues and providing feedback to peers on their action research project proposals.

4.   Design of an action research project proposal.

In addition, 10% of the grade will be awarded based on students' contributions to others' learning through timely submissions on discussions and thoughtful feedback and interaction

This course involves a high level of participation and interaction with other students. Students are expected to prepare, participate and complete assignments on time so that class colleagues have time to read and respond. Expect to spend at least 3 hours per week on these types of assignments. Together with watching (or reading) the professor's weekly presentation these assignments are the equivalent of in-class time in a traditional face-to-face course.

Required Readings

The primary text for this course is Action Research by Ernest T. Stringer. Sage Publications, 2014. 4th Edition. There are very few texts on action research. This one is not perfect but does the best job of covering all aspects of action research and is designed for practitioners rather than academics.

In addition there will be supplementary course readings and case studies that will be available on the course site. Students should expect 2-3 hours of reading per week.

Action Learning Methodology

The instructional method used in this course is called "action learning." Action learning is an approach to solving real world problems by taking action and reflecting on the results in a team environment. 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. Action Learning (AL) is very compatible with Action Research (AR). Indeed the primary difference, at least in an educational setting, is that AL is focused on individual level learning and AR is geared toward collective learning by groups or organizations. In addition, the AR approach requires a more rigorous research design than the typical AL project. For purposes of this class, the major value and benefit of using the AL methodology is its focus on learning to ask powerful questions which will inform the research projects since all research starts with a question or questions.

Communication

The course will use the Rutgers Canvas site for communication and group work. You should familiarize yourself immediately with the workings of Canvas and arrange with the on-line learning helpdesk for instruction if you are not already familiar. The course will start officially on **January 18, 2017** and you should arrange to be familiar with the platform by this date.

I will communicate all official course correspondence via Canvas for the whole class, or by email for subgroups or individuals. Students are responsible for all information communicated to them via email. Feel free to contact me via email with questions or concerns about the course. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

When emailing the instructor, always include the course number (38:578:605) and assignment number (if relevant) in the subject line of your email.

Grading Policy

The Grading scale for this course is based on the MEd in Adult and Continuing Education:

92-100 = A
88-91.9 = B+
83-87.9 = B
78-82.9 = C+
73-77.9=C
72 .9 and below = F

Assignment type	% of grade	Point value	# of assignments	Notes
Journal entries	20	200		
Team Discussions	20	200		
Weekly Questions	20	200		
Action Research Proposal	30	300	3	Proposal, draft, final version, presentation, and group feedback & critique
Individual assessment	10	100	Ongoing throughout the semester	Based on collegiality: contribution to others learning through timely participation in discussions
Total		1000		

Types of assignments and point value of the assignments may change. Students will be advised of changes.

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.

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings and Assignments
1	Sept 6-12	Course overview and Introductions Read: Voice Thread introductions to class colleagues Week 1 Questions Week 1 Journal Assignment – Sharpening your listening skills
2	Sept 13-19	Evidence-based Approaches to Policy and Practice **Read** Stringer, Chapter 1: Research in Professional and Public Life **Assignments** Week 2 Questions Week 2 Journal – Sharpening your observation, descriptive writing and inferential skills Discussion: Reflections on Listening Exercise

3	September 19-26	Theoretical Foundations of Action Research **Read** Stringer, Chapter 2: The Theory Behind the Practice **Assignments** Week 3 material Discussion: Reflections on Observation/Inference Exercise
4	September 27-Oct 3.	Research Design **Read** Stringer, Chapter 3: Setting the Stage **Assignments** Week 4 questions Journal Case Study Discussion
5	Oct 4- 10	Case Study Analysis
6	Oct 11 - 17	Collecting Data **Read** Stringer, Chapter 4: Look – Gathering Data **Assignments** Week 5 Questions Journal – Interviewing Skills
7	Oct 18 - 24	Case Study Analysis
8	Oct 25 - 31	Data Analysis – What Does it Mean? **Read** Stringer, Chapter 5: Think: Reflection and Analysis **Assignments** Week 6 Questions Team Exercise: Focus Group Interviews
9	Nov 1 - 7	Case Study Analysis – The Stress and Wellness Project
10	Nov 8 - 14	Planning an AR Intervention
11	Nov 15 - 21	First Draft of Action Research Proposals
12	Nov 22 - 28	Thanksgiving Week
13	Nov 29 – Dec 5	Sustaining Action Interventions Read Stringer, Chapter 7: Strategic Planning Journal Proposal Presentations and Feedback on VoiceThread

14	Dec 6 - 12	Course wrap-up and evaluation Final Questions and feedback Final journal assignment
Finals week	Dec 15-22	No final exam. Final research proposal due