

Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences



SCOM2110 Theory of organisations

[30h+15h exercises] 6 credits

Teacher(s): Matthieu de Nanteuil-Miribel
Language: French
Level: Second cycle

Aims

This course aims at guiding students towards a qualitative and critical view over organisational behaviours, in profit or non-profit organisations. It takes support from contemporary research developments in management science, sociology of work and organisations, as well as philosophy or epistemology. Disputing the utilitarian conception of rationality, the course disseminates practical and theoretical reflections that underline the existence of several rationalities within organisational systems. It also insists on the interactions that exist between such rationalities. As such, the course's main objective is to provide students with comprehensive analytical frameworks on organisations, as well as reflexive tools that allow a better dialogue between different disciplinary perspectives.

Within such a perspective, the dissemination of knowledge should not be regarded solely. This course aims at educating students to a certain scientific and methodological approach. The scientific approach is based on qualitative and critical analysis of human action. The methodological approach is based on a good balance between practical examples and theoretical perspectives, up-to-date information and radical questioning, individual and collective apprenticeships. Globally speaking, the course's process should support students in their effort to better understand the social and economic world they live in. It does not seek to deliver ready-made solutions, but is to be considered as a reference for students aiming at developing their own thought.

Main themes

This course aims to explain, on the basis of theories and research in behaviour sciences, what organisations are and how they work; it will also seek to develop students' abilities to analyse and transform structures and organisational processes.

Content and teaching methods

The course is organised around one main question, serving as a "red link" for all presentations and collective works. Within the course, sessions combine examples, theoretical analysis, presentations of scientific articles, collective discussions, and support of collective works.

(a) Main question

Sessions are organised around one main question : "In what way can profit and non-profit organisations be considered as rational ?"

(b) Theoretical contributions, with possible practical examples

Such sessions aim at helping students to get analytical references that appear to be necessary to better understand the global notion of "organisation". Such references should allow them to understand how this notion has progressively become a "scientific" topic, the socio-economic realities it refers to, as well as the critics that can be made about it. Therefore, three paradigms are subject of in-depth presentations, in relation to a key-notion :

- o the utilitarian paradigm (key-notion : "utility")
- o the structural paradigm (key-notion : "structure")
- o the strategic paradigm (key-notion : "power")

In order to illustrate or criticize each of those paradigms, theoretical sessions focus on some major authors' theoretical contributions (A. Smith, F.-W. Taylor, H. Mintzberg, M. Foucault, M. Crozier, E. Friedberg, J.-D. Reynaud, R. Sainsaulieu, M. Lallement, L. Boltanski). Such contributions are not comprehensive : they only aim at underlining each paradigm's most important dimensions, the possible links between them as well as their limits.

By stressing the relationships between different types of rationality, such sessions contribute to better analyse the real functioning of (profit or non-profit) organisations, in the past as well as today. That is the reason why some sessions might also focus on some examples (max. duration of 30 mn, including reading time).

(c) Presentations of scientific articles

At the end of each paradigm, one or two sessions are dedicated to the presentation of scientific articles. Such articles aim at making students familiar with different forms of organisation (SME's, industrial organisations, bureaucracies, prisons, hospitals, non-profit organisations, etc.), and also with a few issues in the domain of human resource management (recruitment, firing, career development, organisational change, etc.) The teacher also underlines the ethical and political challenges of "total organisations", after a century that gave birth to totalitarianism.

Methodology

This course is based on a strong interactive methodology, combining theoretical contributions by the teacher and oral presentations by the students. It also sets up two specific actions :

- a collective discussion with one or several outside guests, coming from private firms or non-profit organisations ;
- case-studies, achieved collectively, that allow students to get familiar with organisational diagnostic.

Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

Prerequisite : none

Evaluation : oral presentation (by group), written work (en groupe), final exam (individual).

Support : syllabus, notes on i-campus, methodological note

References : cf. support

Pedagogic team : one teacher, one assistant

Other credits in programs

ECAP21	Première licence en sciences de gestion	(6 credits)	Mandatory
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