We live our lives in an organizational environment. Most of us are born in hospitals, educated in schools, employed by companies, provided with services by our local and federal governments, pay taxes to those governments, and end our days in the hands of a church or a funeral home. Our dependence on organizations is one of the signal features of modernity.

In this course, we will analyze how organizations have become so prolific and so powerful. Themes of the class will include:

- How organizations evolved historically from the church and the military
- How organizations relate to and affect one another
- The ways organizations can be structured internally, and how this affects their outputs
- How public and private sector organizations differ and interact
- New organizational forms that fall into none of the established categories, but which are being used increasingly to accomplish some of society’s most important tasks, such as technological innovation and grassroots movements for social change

The objective of the course will be to integrate a variety of organizational theories, presented through readings and lectures, to develop a toolkit for analyzing empirical evidence. Thus, class materials will include a balanced mix of theoretical works and case studies. The class format and performance measures will be geared toward these goals.

While the class will draw primarily on evidence and theories from the United States, about 25 percent of the material will involve international perspectives. At the end of the course, students should have a highly developed ability to understand and think critically about the variety of organizations that affect their lives and shape world events.
Course Requirements and Grading

The course has a fairly heavy reading load, roughly 100 to 150 pages per week. Many of the readings are uploaded to Canvas already; in addition to the required readings, you’ll find on Canvas a number of optional articles and book excerpts intended for those interested in pursuing topics in greater depth. Regarding the books: two of the required texts are on reserve at the library, but the others are not in the library’s collection, so please buy your books as soon as possible. The books are:

- Useem, Michael (1984), The Inner Circle, New York: Oxford University Press
- Piore, Michael and Charles Sabel (1984), The Second Industrial Divide, New York: Basic Books

The syllabus is organized by general topic; the dates given are the last day by which you should have read the material. The lectures will not recapitulate the reading, but build upon it. It is essential to your success in this class that you keep up with the reading.

Your final course grade will be based on a simple 100-point scale, as shown below:

- A = 94.00-100
- A- = 90.00-93.99
- B+ = 87.00-89.99
- B = 84.00-86.99
- B- = 80.00-83.99
- C+ = 77.00-79.99
- C = 74.00-76.99
- C- = 70.00-73.99
- D = 60.00-69.00
- E = < 60.00

In keeping with the overall objectives of this course, your ability to integrate theory and applications will be measured in the following ways:

Midterm Exam — 30 points: Short essays, choice of questions; in-class, closed book. 18 April.

Class Participation — 20 points: Points for participation are awarded throughout the term based on attendance, quality of comments (not just quantity!), and quality of listening to/engaging with other students in discussion. Your skill at engaging in evidence-based discussions and critical analysis is the focus here, and listening is a crucial component. Other useful contributions might include: bringing in news articles about current events relevant to the theories we are studying in class (along with your short analysis linking the news to the theories); or making a short presentation to the
class on a topic of your experience that makes a good case study for the class theories. If you’re interested in doing a presentation, please send me an email and we’ll discuss.

Final Exam — 50 points: Essay format; choice of questions. Scheduled for Saturday, 1 June, 3-6pm.

**Expectations and Policies**

People come to elite liberal arts colleges with a variety of purposes, but everyone ought to leave smarter: meaning, equipped with a broad knowledge base and a suite of critical thinking skills that will enable them to cope with the vast range of challenges they must make in their future lives. With sociology in particular, the practical value of learning this material and mode of analysis is immense, and can make your life better.

How do you acquire those skills? Contrary to popular belief, they aren’t delivered by faculty. The skills can be modeled by faculty, but each person must learn by doing, and the doing occurs in interaction. It’s kind of like a team sport—and as with a team sport, you can’t learn unless you show up and engage fully. The following three expectations stem from this simple proposition:

1. **Show up and be punctual:** Regular on-time attendance is a minimal expectation. Being late by 10 minutes or more for any individual class will result in the loss of a point for participation. If you miss more than two classes without a valid excuse (see note below), each subsequent missed class will result in the loss of a step in the final grade (e.g., B to B-). If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes from another student; please do not ask me. I do not distribute my own notes.

   **Note:** The only excused absences will be illness (documented with a doctor’s note), a major religious observance (with my permission—please see me within the first week of class), or a catastrophic event (such as the death of an immediate family member, documented with a Dean’s note). Otherwise, schedule conflicts resulting from extracurricular activities, holidays, weddings, etcetera will result in an unexcused absence. This is especially important to keep in mind for examinations: the midterm and final are sit-down exams, on fixed dates; **there will be no make-up exam dates** except in cases of genuine emergency, documented by a physician or a Dean. Rationales for lateness, absence and exam conflicts are subject to the Dartmouth Academic Honor Principle: that means dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated.

2. **Be prepared for class:** At a minimum, you must do the assigned reading no later than the date shown in the syllabus. In a small class where participation counts for a lot, it will be very obvious who has not done this.

3. **Be engaged and help others engage:** At a minimum, engagement means immersing yourself in the readings, and thinking through their implications; listening carefully to your professor and fellow students; and grounding your own claims in evidence and sound reasoning. To facilitate these aims, students will not be permitted to use laptops, tablets, phone or other electronics in class. This is due to the seeming
impossibility of keeping people off the internet. Web browsing, emailing and other online activities during class not only degrade each students’ educational experience, but that of everyone around them. They also distract your professor.

A word about grading: I don’t “round up” grades; that means if you earn a 79.8 as your final class grade, it won’t be rounded up to an 80. If you believe I have made a mistake in grading your work, please write a short, well-reasoned explanation (no longer than one page) articulating your rationale; your graded work should be attached. Please keep in mind that grading is based on the information you make available on the page and its relationship to the question(s) you were asked to answer; thus, comments such as “but I know the material” or “I worked really hard” or “what about that other student who got a higher grade” are not compelling rationales. Whenever you submit work for re-grading, that work may be given a lower grade than was originally assigned; the grade might also go up, or stay the same. For any graded item, you have one week from the time it is returned to you to request re-grading.

About correspondence and questions: If you have a question about the class, you should first consult the syllabus—it’s highly detailed. Second, ask another student in the class. Only if you’ve been unable to find a solution in those ways should you contact me, preferably via email. Please write a proper letter, with a salutation (“Dear Professor Harrington,”) followed by words assembled into sentences. Emails written in SMS shorthand (“r” for “are,” “u” for “you,” etc.) will be consigned to flames of woe and never spoken of again. If you don’t get a response from me, that may well be because you’ve asked a question answered in the syllabus.

Writing in English: It’s important for anything you’ll do later in life, and most people can improve. Fortunately, Dartmouth has resources to help with that—notably RWIT (the Student Center for Research, Writing and Information Technology). There, you can meet one-on-one with an undergraduate tutor to discuss your work. If English is not your native language, I am very sympathetic—feel free to come talk with me about any challenges you face. I’m happy to chat with you in French or German, or even a bit of Danish, Italian or Turkish.

Disability-Related Accommodations: Students who require accommodations must register with SAS—the Student Accessibility Services office. This includes not only learning disabilities, but chronic diseases and psychiatric issues. Once SAS has authorized accommodations, the student must show the original, signed SAS Services and Consent form and/or a letter on SAS to the professor. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential. Call 603-646-9900 to start the SAS process.

Students from Low-Income Backgrounds: If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, please let me know. Some resources on campus might be useful for you.
Part I—Organizations: The Big Picture

The readings in this section respond to three implicit questions underlying the study of organizations: what are organizations?; where do they come from?; and why should we care? Each author addresses this question from a somewhat different standpoint; some discuss all kinds of organizations, while others address only the private or public sector. While none of these readings offers a complete answer to the basic questions, together they form a bigger picture—a mosaic of perspectives that will be useful in situating subsequent readings in a larger context.

March 26:

  A basic introduction to organization theory by one of the elder statesmen of the field.

  Stinchcombe argues that organizations arise from historically-specific opportunity structures, including inventions, demographic changes, and other “social technologies” that permit of new ways of solving problems.

March 28:

  This classic article advances the transaction costs thesis: that organizations exist because markets fail. Typically, this framework has been applied to explaining the genesis of private sector organizations; in fact, this article uses General Motors’ “vertical integration” with Fisher Body as its primary empirical example.

  Like Williamson, Downs argues that organizations arise because markets fail. But while Williamson is focussed on transaction costs, Downs claims that there are certain functions that markets are inherently unable to perform (like regulation of monopolies) and that specifically necessitate public organizations.

**Part II — Organizations and Their Environments**
This segment of the course is dedicated to exploring the key external relationships that shape organizations in form and function.

**April 2:**


**April 4:**

- Baron, James, Frank Dobbin and P. Devereaux Jennings (1986), “War and Peace: The Evolution of Modern Personnel Administration in U.S. Industry,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92: 350-383. This is one of the most celebrated empirical research articles ever published in the
sociology of organizations, and for good reason: it follows a compelling real-life case of institutional “isomorphism” in action.

Part III—Organizational Form: Or, Bureaucracy and Its Discontents
Theorists of all stripes agree that organizations exist to accomplish a task. These readings explore how organizations are designed to accomplish such objectives, with special reference to bureaucracy. This section will move us from a focus on external conditions surrounding organizations to issues of internal structure and its consequences.

April 9:

This is the classic sociological statement about organizational function and form. Weber’s well-known point is that bureaucratic structure is the most efficient and effective means of organizing to accomplish a task.

Organizational theory comes full circle from Weber in this article, in which Ouchi argues that the ultimate “efficient” organization (at least under some conditions—which strongly resemble the modern global info-tech economy) is the family, also known as the “clan.” His claims are in fact well-supported by the evidence: organizations are increasingly replacing the family as the atom of social structure—whether through public school systems replacing parents, or corporations offering on-site daycare.

This book is an extended response to Weber, noting the flaws in the efficiency perspective while at the same time mounting a rousing defense of bureaucracy as an organizational form. Particularly important, Perrow thoroughly reviews the key post-Weberian literatures, including human relations, decision theory and the power perspective.

April 11:

These chapters from Perrow put the debate over organizational form into a wider
historical context, giving us occasion to review how organization theory has
developed over time. Perrow argues that Weber and his followers have overlooked
the single most important and obvious thing about organizational structure: its use
as a tool for consolidating and exercising power.

April 16:

Case Study — Varieties of Organizational Forms in Asia
Whereas the Perrow readings offer a conceptual challenge to Weber, this set of readings
offers an empirical challenge: successful Asian firms which do not conform to the
bureaucratic efficiency model. The ways in which these organizations deviate from
Weber’s predictions shine light on interesting limitations and new directions for
organization theory.

• Orru, Marco, Nicole Woolsey Biggart and Gary Hamilton (1991), “Organizational
  Isomorphism in East Asia,” in Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio (Eds.), The New
  361-389.
  The authors examine data on organizations in Taiwan, South Korea and Japan to
  show that the conception of efficiency in business organizations is culturally-
  specific. The forms and procedures necessary to get things done in East Asia are
  quite different from the requirements facing organizations in the U.S. and Europe.

• Dore, Ronald (1973), “Four Factories: A First Look” and “Two Employment
  Systems,” Chapters 1 and 10 of British Factory, Japanese Factory, Berkeley: University
  of California Press.
  These two short chapters show how the legendary quality and efficiency of Japanese
  production is actually based on the family model of organizing. That this work was
  conducted on factory floors—the traditional “turf” of the rational bureaucracy
  school—makes the findings even more remarkable.

April 18:

• IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION
Part IV: Public and Private Sector Organizations

With a grounding in organizational theories of form, function and environment, this section of the class moves on to a taxonomy of organization types. We begin with the basic categories of public and private sector, then move into the “cutting edge” of organization theory, including the growing trend toward hybridization of public and private, and informal organization in the form of organizational networks and social movements—a perennially important public policy issue.

April 23:

The Public Sector


• Moe, Terry (1989), “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure,” in J. Chubb and P. Peterson (Eds.), Can the Government Govern?, Washington, DC: Brookings. Moe argues against Weber that public administration is anything but efficient; in fact, he uses examples such as that of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to show that bureaucratic structure is extremely vulnerable to manipulation by rival interest groups. As a result, bureaus are often bogged down in “protective” structures that prohibit them from performing their functions efficiently, and often cause them to fail in their missions entirely.


• Ripley, Randall and Grace Franklin (1980), “The Nature of Policy and Policymaking in the United States” and “Congress, the Bureaucracy, and the Nature of American Public Policy,” selections from Chapters 1 and 8, Congress, the Bureaucracy and Public Policy, Homewood, IL: Dorsey. These selections examine how public policy is made through the interaction of whole organization sets. Different types of policy (i.e., regulatory versus redistributive) involve different types of organizational coalitions. The authors provide extremely useful diagrams of the process relationships.

April 25:
The Private Sector

  Useem documents the structural arrangements linking the public and private sectors, including interlocking directorates, public lobbying groups and informal ties. This work is particularly important for this class because it shows how the lines between public and private are blurred internationally.

April 30:

- Chapters 3-5 of Useem

May 2:

Public-Private Hybrids

  This chapter argues that public sector is merging into the private sector, with more and more public administration being “run like a business,” with the result that better services are being offered with greater efficiency.

  Bendick examines the conditions under which privatization of public services works, or doesn’t work. He cautions us that the idea of running all organizations “like a business” is highly problematic.

  Excellent tables provide numerous examples of the many forms of public-private partnerships in recent history.

May 7:

Innovation: Organizational Networks and Coalitions

  Powell argues that when regulatory conditions permit, flexible organizational networks—informal, temporary coalitions such as “joint ventures”—are a more effective means of organizing than either markets or hierarchies.
• Powell, Walter, Kenneth Koput and Laurel Smith-Doerr (1996), “Interorganizational Collaboration and the Locus of Innovation,” Administrative Science Quarterly, 41: 116-145. This paper examines the informal networks of interorganizational collaboration that constitute the biotechnology industry. The authors argue that the pace of change means that flexible networks are the only mode of organization suitable to the task of developing this technology. The industry is based not on formal alliances but on a loose and ever-changing coalition of small and large private firms, venture capital, and public sector organizations such as research universities and regulatory agencies.

May 9:
• Piore, Michael and Charles Sabel (1984), Chapters 1, 2, 8 and 10 of The Second Industrial Divide, New York: Basic Books
Piore and Sabel’s innovative work charts the rise of a loose federation of Italian textile firms to industry dominance through “flexible specialization”: a mode of organizing that is neither market nor hierarchy-based, yet provides huge economic efficiency and quality production. This work demands a reexamination of the public-private split in organizational theory.

May 14:
Jenkins reviews the extensive literature on resource mobilization, which argues that social movements depend critically on organizational structures and resources. This article sets the stage for the other readings in this section.
Traugott argues that the French workers’ revolt of 1848, which toppled the monarchy, was not a phenomenon of class but of organization; the insurrection, he argues, was based on the workers’ prior association through artisanal guilds.
Morris argues that the civil rights movement was based not on spontaneous collective action but on prior networks established through the black church and college organizations.
May 16:


This fascinating international study looks at what happens when both markets and states fail to organize collective goods effectively. Ostrom provides case studies of grassroots organization in Spain, Switzerland, Japan and the Philippines to guide the use and protection of common-pool resources such as grazing land and water rights.

May 21:

- Chapters 3, 5 and 6 of Ostrom

May 23:

- Final exam review, student Q&A

June 1:

FINAL EXAMINATION, 3-6pm