San José State University  
POLS/MPA Program  
PADM 217, Organization Theory, Spring 2021

Course and Contact Information

Professor: Leonard L. Lira  
Office Location: On Zoom (Click this Hyperlink)  
Telephone: 408-924-5565  
Email: Preferred by Canvas Message; leonard.lira@sjsu.edu  
Office Hours: Tue & Thur @ 4:00-5:00 PM or by appointment  
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays, 6-8:45 pm  
Classroom: On Zoom (Click this hyperlink)  
Password is: 247511

Course Description:

Public organizations face a uniquely demanding political, legal and economic environment often filled with organized opponents, zealous supporters, reluctant clients and ambiguous laws. This course examines the impacts of such factors on basic management functions, including leading, designing organizational structures, motivating employees, and innovating. This course goes beyond analyzing the forces which influence public management to examine alternative responses available to administrators and how they can influence society.

This course is, as the title implies, about organizations and the theories that help us understand them. Organization theory is not a single theory. Rather, "there are many theories that attempt to explain and predict how organizations and the people in them will behave in varying organizational structures, cultures, and circumstances." (Shafritz, Ott and Jang, 2016) The field is multidisciplinary in nature with contributions from sociologists, anthropologists, economists, psychologists, and political scientists. Our goal is to determine what the major schools of thought can teach us about how to structure and manage complex organizations, and to develop our own theory of organizational innovation appropriate to 21st century circumstances. However, despite the term “theory” being embedded in the course title, the aim of the course is to introduce professional practitioners to some of the foundational ideas about organizations: how they work, how people and groups behave within them, why they change and why they sometimes do not change when they should, etc.

We will cover some of the classical readings of organization theory, as well as delve into examples of latest research in organizational theory. Theory is not an end in itself. Rather
we use theory as a way to explain the world, and in turn, we use empirical research to extend theory and develop a more complete picture of that world. The hope is that by the end of the course you will come to know many of the core concepts of the field, the basic-building blocks – used to explain why organizations behave as they do – to help you become what is known in the field as a “pracademic,” which is someone who is both an academic and an active practitioner in their subject area. After all, this is the essence of public administration – constant learning for constant improvement of action.

The course is organized as a seminar. Students will be responsible for completing all of the assigned readings and being prepared to lead general discussions about the session topic as well as in-depth discussion about assigned articles and readings. In class exercise will reinforce the concepts discussed, and maximum participation is expected.

Prerequisites
PADM 210

Units 3

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

GOAL:
To educate public administration and non-profit professionals in the critical use of theory as it applies to their practitioner and professional careers.

OBJECTIVES:
Through the material in this course students will continue to build capacity in the National Association of Schools of Public Administration and Affairs Core Competencies as a part of their overall goal achievement for the SJSU MPA program.

COURSE CONTENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

University Learning Goals (ULGs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) & Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)
The overall course goal is to educate public administration and non-profit professionals in public budgeting, theory, processes, and procedures so they achieve the SJSU University Learning Goals (ULGs) and demonstrate mastery of the NASPAA/SJSU MPA program learning outcomes. Upon graduation, San José State University students will have developed:

ULG 1: Social and Global Responsibilities
ULG 2: Specialized Knowledge
ULG 3: Intellectual Skills
ULG 4: Integrative Knowledge and Skills
ULG 5: Applied Knowledge

Upon completion of the Master of Public Administration program, the student will be able to:

PLO 1: Lead and manage in public governance;
PLO 2: Participate in and contribute to the policy process;
PLO 3: Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
**PLO 4**: Articulate and apply a public service perspective;
**PLO 5**: Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

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

**CLO1**: In line with Lead and manage in public governance: Students will understand core theories necessary for helping to shape the organizations in which they operate and manage. This is assessed through class discussion, the assigned analysis memo, and research project proposal.

**CLO2**: In line with Participate in and contribute to the policy process: Students will understand how to diagnose and affect positive change within an organization (organizational development). This is assessed through participation in class discussion, analytical memos, and individual research project.

**CLO3**: In line with Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions: Students will understand how organizations make decisions as a collective of individuals and institutionally. They will be familiar with the tools and strategies and the conditions which improve overall organizational effectiveness during decision, development, implementation, and change of organization strategies. They will also demonstrate familiarity with different theoretical constructs commonly used to analyze organizations. This is assessed through analysis memos and Team research project.

**CLO4**: In line with Articulate and apply a public service perspective: Students will understand how public, private, and nonprofit organizations are similar and different from one another. Students will know how to diagnose problems and develop feasible solutions through the application of theories and frameworks to “real world” problems. This is assessed through student presentation of current events and analysis using theories discussed in class, and through the research project.

**CLO5**: In line with Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry: Students will learn how to effectively summarize, appraise, and communicate through both oral and written media communications, how organization effect ethics, culture, diversity and citizen engagement. They will demonstrate an understanding of how gender, race, nationality, and other cultural diversity dimensions influence organizational behaviors and outcomes. This is assessed presentation of analysis memos, and research project proposals.

### Required Texts/Readings

**Textbooks**

Required:


Recommended:


**Other Readings as assigned by the professor will be posted to Canvas or available at King Library.**

**Library Liaison**

Paul Kauppila.  [Paul.kauppila@sjsu.edu](mailto:Paul.kauppila@sjsu.edu) If you need research help.

**CANVAS Messaging**

Canvas will be used extensive in this course. Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through the Canvas to learn of any updates.

**Course Requirements and Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>DUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Contribution to Class Learning</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Points and Questions 10 of 11 (10 points each)</td>
<td>100 Points</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to class discussion &amp; learning &amp; responses to Online Discussions</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>12 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Memo x 2 (Just one)</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>29 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Research Project:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography on Organization Theory Literature</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>21 Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the Organizational Field of Study Presentation</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>21 Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Research Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Idea submission</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25 Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>28 Apr &amp; 5 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Research Proposal/Paper</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>19 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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## Mapping Assessments to CLOs, PLOs, & ULGs in PADM 218

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Program Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>University Learning Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Contribution to Class Learning</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Memos</td>
<td>1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Research Project</td>
<td>4 &amp; 5</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Research Project</td>
<td>1, 2, 3 &amp; 5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, &amp; 5</td>
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### Discussion Points and Questions:

For each class I want you to think of one or two comments critiquing assigned readings, one or two questions you have about the assigned readings that you would like to discuss and ask in class. Also, provide one example of how the readings relates and/or connects to current-day organizational leaders. You will then post them to the course’s discussion board (on the Canvas site) **the night before class**. You should even submit questions if you plan on missing class. We will use those questions to aid our class discussion that day. You do NOT need to submit discussion questions the first week of class. Your comments should be critical in nature (but not a criticism) of the articles posted. E.G., what and why you agreed or disagreed with the author. Or point out where the author may have gotten it wrong and why, etc. Or how you connected the ideas of the article to another experience you had. Your discussion questions need to be thought-provoking. Avoid questions that would simply require someone in the class to summarize something from the reading. “Why” or “how” questions are good. Try to make connections between the current reading and something we’ve discussed in an earlier class, or to your professional experience, or to your previous courses.

Prior to each session students will break up the divide articles equally among each other and prepare to lead a discussion on their selected article/chapter during the class meeting.

### Analytical Memos:

Each student will choose two article readings on which he or she will write an analytical memo. Analytical memos are one to two pages long and provide an opportunity for the student to concisely discuss an interesting implication of the reading and to discuss how to apply the theory to practice. I suggest the following format for a memo. 1) Begin by stating a theoretical proposition from the article/chapter. A proposition is a statement about a causal relationship between two concepts. A very specific proposition is a hypothesis. 2) Discuss how that proposition might be extended or applied to a different case, another context, or a different theoretical perspective. By choosing a new context, you are attempting to stretch the viability of the theory – see how far you can take it without breaking the theory. You might talk about how a theory might not apply to certain situations. You might also talk about how a different theoretical perspective makes us question the original proposition. 3) Talk about the implications of extending the
proposition for use by practitioners. Does a different context challenge the premises of the theory? Can you build on the proposition and make it more general/more specific? What interesting implications does this have for a different theory and for practitioners? In an excellent memo you will come up with a new proposition/hypothesis to test and connect to pragmatic uses of this theory. You should not treat memos as summaries of the readings. The point of doing memos is to force you to think critically and creatively. Rather than learning theories and spitting them out in summaries, the purpose of the memo is to challenge you to think beyond what you read and try to create something new. Ideally, you will use the memos as sounding boards for ideas that you might explore further in a research project such as your master’s thesis.

**Team Research Project: Annotated Bibliography**

On the first day of class student will form into 4 groups. Each group will be responsible for conducting a comprehensive annotated bibliography the field of organizational theory. An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. For guidance in critically appraising and analyzing the sources for your bibliography, see How to Critically Analyze Information Sources. For information on the author's background and views, ask at the reference desk for help finding appropriate biographical reference materials and book review sources. Another good source is at the King Library, What is an Annotated Bibliography: [https://libguides.sjsu.edu/c.php?g=230322&p=1528212](https://libguides.sjsu.edu/c.php?g=230322&p=1528212)

Annotated bibliography will be in CMS format and consist of books and articles not assigned in class. Each group is responsible for identifying 4-5 books on organization theory published after 2015, 4-5 articles from top 4-5 public administration, and 4-5 articles from top 4-5 organization theory journals each is listed on the following links:

**Top Public Administration Journal Rankings:**

**Top Organization Theory Journals**

Confirm journal rankings here:
Thomson Reuters, Thomson Reuters,; Institute for Scientific Information, issuing body.
[https://sjsu-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1cue0e3/01CALS_ALMA71385068600002901](https://sjsu-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1cue0e3/01CALS_ALMA71385068600002901)

Essentially, each member of the groups will find one book, one PA journal article, and one Org Theory Journal, write an annotated bibliography for each, and merge it with the other annotated bibliographies provided by your group members.

The format of the Annotated Bibliography should be in essay format and follow the following structure:
Introduction = @ 150-250 words total
Book AB (4-5 Books) = 600 to 750 words total (150 words per book)
4-5 x top Org Theory Journals each (2 article from each journal per group member) = 150 words per annotation (1200 - 1500 words total)
4 x top PA Journals each (2 article from each journal per group member) = 150 words per annotation (1200 - 1500 words total)
Conclusion=150-250 words

Total word count 2,500 to 3,500’ish words. Total word count should be divided by the number of members is in research group

The introduction will introduce the titles of the books and journals and reason for selection. It will provide a description of the leading theme found in synthesis of the references used (be sure to include the ranking of the journal publication the article comes from). Each book and article annotation should include a concise summary of its thesis and key points. The conclusion will describe what the group thinks that the latest trends in research & practice on organization theory are and what affect this will have on public administration practice.

Each group will present and discuss the results of their annotated bibliography research. Groups should plan on taking no more than 15-20 minutes to present their take on the state of organization theory. The discussion should describe how the literature that teams included in their bibliographies relate to the topics discussed in class and how they affect or related to the practice of public administration. Books and articles selected should not be articles or books already assigned in class. If groups select overlapping books or articles (ie more than one group selects the same book/article) the group that follows should only discuss the differences they found.

Individual Research Project:

At the end of the course each student should finish a 10-12-page research project. You have two options depending on where you are in your MPA studies and what your interests are in studying Organization Theory. Your first option is to conduct a research proposal. The research proposal should be more than just an essay. You should seek to confirm theory in the proposal and come up with a plan for carrying out the research and an empirical analysis. The ideal proposal would suggest hypotheses or come up with ways to test theoretical propositions discussed in class, and, more generally, demonstrate a theoretical understanding of the use of organizational theory. Moreover, you should use the proposal to develop an empirical test of your theoretical argument. Lastly, you will need to describe how your proposal will apply to the field of public Administration practice.

Although I don’t require you to gather data or do an actual analysis, I expect you to think seriously about the kind of data you need, about operationalizing constructs, and about the kind of evidence you need to substantiate your argument. You should not use the research proposal to summarize the material covered in class. Lay out your theoretical argument in the first 5-7 pages of the proposal, and then spend the rest of the proposal discussing details of how you plan to conduct a research project. Some of the readings for the class you will notice include both purely theoretical pieces and empirical studies that test hypotheses. These serve as good examples as you craft your own research ideas. This assignment may be useful to begin thinking about your master’s thesis requirement to complete the MPA program. This is not a research paper.
The second option is a research paper. You will take a theme from course (e.g. Organizational Design, Development, Change, Values, Ethics, or Culture – list not exhaustive) and develop a research question that you will then apply to an organization. The organization can be your own that you work for, or it can be one that you select from a deliberate internet search. The task will be to apply the lessons from the course themes to analyze that organization. The research must include (at a minimum) the context and background of the organization, a literature review that depicts the general application of an organization theory to your organization, why you selected the organization, the organizational theory that you will apply in your analysis, your methodology, results, and a discussion of your findings.

On the last 2 days of the course you will present and talk about your research projects. Each student will have time to discuss their work and field questions from the class. The individual research assignment will represent the culminating assessment in lieu of an exam. It will be due on the date that is scheduled this course’s final exam.

**Grading Policy**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Values</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A plus</td>
<td>97 and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 to 96.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minus</td>
<td>90 to 93.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B plus</td>
<td>87 to 89.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 to 86.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B minus</td>
<td>80 to 83.99</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>75 to 79.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>70 to 74.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>69 and below</td>
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Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See [University Policy F13-1 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) for more details. On time submissions will receive the opportunity for thorough feedback. Late assignments may receive little to no feedback.

**Make-up Policy**

Serious personal or dependent family illness that can be documented is the only acceptable excuse for not turning in work on time. If you are ill, you will be given a reasonable extension for submission of missing work. **There are no make-ups for missed presentations or in-class case work.** Incompletes are discouraged. If you know you will be absent during a presentation or when an assignment is due, coordinate with your workgroup to make your contribution complete, make a video recording of your individual presentation, or complete the assignment in advance and submit prior to the absence. As with all policies, extreme circumstances may beg for exceptions. Please see me in advance before you miss an assignment. Request afterward, serious personal or dependent family emergency notwithstanding, will not be approved.
Participation

Students may be called upon by name to address concepts from the readings. Students should take the time and effort to read the materials when they are assigned and be prepared to actively participate in discussion of the topics, using both citations of the readings and their own defended views. Small group discussions during class will only enhance learning if each participant is prepared to contribute to the group’s learning. Regular attendance is expected and will enhance your grade simply because you will have knowledge necessary to complete assignments that might not otherwise be available except from class discussion.

Classroom Protocol

It is expected that when you come to class you will give the material your undivided attention. Please ensure that communication devices are on vibrate, and quietly leave the learning space if you need to take a call during class. Do not engage in any behavior that will detract from a positive learning environment for other students. It is expected that when you come to class you will give the material your undivided attention. Please ensure that communication devices are on vibrate, and quietly leave the learning space if you need to take a call during class. Do not engage in any behavior that will detract from a positive learning environment for other students. To develop a collegial working environment, students may address me by my go-by name, Len.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/”. More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found from the following two university policies:

- University Syllabus Policy S16-9 (http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf)
- University Attendance and Participation Policy F15-12 (http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf)

Please peruse these policies at the links, as they apply to issues such as accommodations for students with learning or other challenges, religious holidays, and what is considered cheating or plagiarism.

Workload and Credit Hour Requirements

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practice. Other course

Disclaimer

All information in this syllabus, including due dates for evaluation instruments such as exams or papers may be subject to change with fair notice by the instructor, the Department of Political Science or San Jose State University.
## PADM 217 / Organization Theory, Spring 2021 Course Schedule

*This schedule is subject to change with fair notice through Canvas Announcements.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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</table>
| 1    | Jan 28 | Welcome & Course Introduction!             | **All Read:**
|      |        |                                             | 1. Tolbert & Hall, Thinking about Organizations  
|      |        |                                             | 2. Frederickson “Why do we need Theory in Public Administration?” in *The Public Administration Theory Primer*  
|      |        |                                             | 3. Kelman, “Public Administration and Organization Studies” *The Academy of Management Annals* |
| 2    | Feb 4  | First Working Group Meeting                | No Class Meeting; Groups meet to discuss Group Bibliography Assignment (The professor is attending a conference) Students will post results of group work and questions as discussion thread. |
| 3    | Feb 11 | Introduction to Theories of Organizations  | **All Read:**
|      |        |                                             | 1. Daft Chap 1  
|      |        |                                             | 2. Rainey Chap 2 (on Canvas)  
|      |        |                                             | Group Divided Readings:  
|      |        |                                             | 1. Rainey 1984 – Organization theory and Political Science  
| 4    | Feb 18 | Multi-Disciplinary Views of Organization Theory | **All Read:**
|      |        |                                             | Pearce & Sowa Chap 1  
|      |        |                                             | Group Divided Readings:  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Organization Theory</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Bold = Everyone reads</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>not bolded = divided equally by class groups</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mar 10</td>
<td>Team and Individual Research Day</td>
<td>Students will use this time to meet in groups for the Team Research Project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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| 9    | Mar 24 | Organization Technology, Big Data, Innovation and Change | *Bold = Everyone reads  
not bolded = divided equally by class groups  

*The “a” Readings deal with Innovation and change.  
*First Analytical Memo Due. = Sunday 29 Mar 11:59  

All Read:  
Daft, Chap. 8 & 11  
Group Divided Readings:  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td><strong><strong>SPRING BREAK NO CLASS MEETING</strong></strong></td>
<td><em><strong>Extra credit for anyone that starts a new discussion board discussion that has multiple responses</strong></em>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11   | Apr 7  | Power, Sensemaking, Strategy and Decision-Making Processes | **All Read:**  
**Pearce & Sowa 10**  
**Daft 12 & 13**  
**Group Divided Readings:**  
1. Simon, “Bounded Rationality and Organizational Learning” in Organization Science 1996, 2(1);  
| 12   | Apr 14 | Organizational Culture, Values, Diversity, & Ethics | **All Read:**  
**Pearce & Sowa 9**  
**Daft, Chap. 10**  
**Group Divided Readings:** |
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Readings</th>
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Note: ASPA Conference |
| 14   | Apr 28 | Student Research Proposal Presentations | All Read:  
1. Bennis “Organizations of the Future” on Canvas  
Team presentations and discussion of Annotated Bibliographies themselves and how they relate to the assigned reading. (In Team order 1-5 – 25 minutes each) |
| 15   | May 5  | Student Research Proposal Presentations | Students 11-20 |
| 16   | May 12 | Dead Day No more Meetings | Students 1-10 |