



Spring Term 2026

Organization Theories

Master Lecture Syllabus

Lectures: Thursdays 14:00-15:45
Room: KOL-G-209
Lecturer: Prof. David Seidl, PhD
Webpage: www.om.uzh.ch (under "teaching") and OLAT: www.olat.uzh.ch
Language: English
ECTS: 3 Points
Exam: 11.6.2026, 14:00-15:00
Contact: For questions, please contact om@business.uzh.ch

Course overview

This course will provide an overview of central organization theories discussing their relevance both in scientific and practical terms. The field of organization studies is characterized by a plurality of different theories which offer different approaches to studying the life in and around organizations. This lecture shows that the critical assessment of organizational phenomena can benefit from going beyond merely economic approaches and acknowledging also the wide range of relevant sociological and socio-psychological paradigms. In this vein, this lecture will present and discuss the diversity of perspectives for studying organizations: The historical development of different paradigms will be reflected, the different theoretical approaches will be presented and their practical relevance will be discussed. The different theories will be illustrated with empirical examples.

Course objectives

At the end of the course, you should

1. have an in-depth knowledge of the most relevant organizational theories
2. be able to distinguish between the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underlying the different theories
3. be able to discuss the scientific and practical relevance of the different organization theories

Course prerequisites

None

Exams and Grading

- Type of exam (100%): Open questions with subquestions
- Duration: 60 minutes

Course contents

1. The Pluralism of Organization Theories
2. Max Weber and his Concept of Bureaucracy
3. Human Relations Movement
4. Contingency Theory
5. Resource Dependency Theory
6. Organizational Ecology Theory



7. New Institutionalism
8. Managerial and Organizational Cognition
9. Critical Management Studies
10. Partial Organization Approach
11. So Many Theories: Now What?

Course material

- Academic readings signed during the lecture

WWF statutory course policies

- According to WWF study regulations, all exam dates are final as published in the VVZ. This means that the (midterm and) final exam date(s) and time(s) are not negotiable. It will not be possible to take any exams on different dates.
- Check your class schedule for possible exam conflicts at the beginning of the semester, as this is your own responsibility. If you want to avoid heavy workload and taking multiple exams in one day you will have to rearrange your class schedule accordingly before the semester begins.
- Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating or engaging in unethical behavior will be reported to the Dean's office.
- Don't forget to officially register using the registration tool of the University of Zurich.

Note: The information in this syllabus supports the official information in the electronic university registration tool (VVZ – Vorlesungsverzeichnis). In case of doubt, the official information at the VVZ is decisive.

Reading and other requirements

- The material covered in the classroom will generally correspond to the material assigned in the textbook, although the lectures may present the material from a different point of view. The lectures and the readings are complementary rather than substitutes.
- Note that reading the slides are not a substitute for the readings.
- You are responsible to keep yourself informed about changes or additions that may be announced during the lecture.

Behavior during the lecture

- Please turn off your cell phones during the lecture.
- No computers allowed during the lecture.
- Please do not eat in class.

Class communication

- Documents for this lecture are available via OLAT: www.olat.uzh.ch
- E-mail is the official method of communication for this lecture. If we send an e-mail to your registered address we consider you to have been informed.

Grading policies

- Grading will be on a curve.
- Your final grade will depend on your rank in the class at the end of the semester.
- Grades are not negotiable.

Students with disabilities

- Students with disability should contact the lecturer and the disability office as early as possible to make the necessary arrangement.