



UK

## SYLLABUS 2025-2026

### Sociology and Organisational Theories

#### MODULE SPECIFICATION

<b>Module Code</b>	2526_RHO_1_EN_012
<b>Campus</b>	Oxford
<b>Department(s)</b>	HR and Organisations
<b>Level / Semester</b>	Undergraduate Year 2 (U2); Equivalent to FHEQ level 5 Semester 04
<b>Language of Instruction</b>	English
<b>Teaching Method</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person (face-to-face) <input type="checkbox"/> Distance learning (live online) <input type="checkbox"/> e-Learning (asynchronous) <input type="checkbox"/> Hybrid: _____
<b>Pre-requisite(s)?</b>	None
<b>ECTS</b> <i>Reminder: 1 ECTS = between 20 and 30hr- student workload</i>	5
<b>Equivalent FHEQ credits</b>	10
<b>Study Hours</b>	80 hours which comprise of 30 directed learning and 50 independent learning/assessment hours

#### MODULE DESCRIPTION

<b>Module Aims</b>	This module explores how organisational structures and cultures are shaped by internal dynamics and external influences. Students apply sociological concepts to real and media-based case studies, gaining insights into leadership, communication, and decision-making in organisational contexts.
<b>Teaching Arrangement</b>	The module is built on three pillars:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Online courses giving students the conceptual foundations of the organisational gaze (15 hours). These lessons will be devoted to notions essential to the apprehension, approach and understanding of organisations (organisational culture and structure, communication and power plays)</li> <li>2. The study of an organisation through a TV show (continuous assessment and final evaluation). The series must absolutely depict an organisation in a rich and detailed manner – this could be a company, but also a startup, an NGO or a gang. The series will then allow, based on at least one entire season, to "see" the organisational dynamics unfold over time, in a longitudinal manner)</li> <li>3. Seminars in class (15 hours). The aim of the seminars is to support the development of students’ organisational gaze, both individual and collective, through illustrations of the concepts seen in online courses. Questions will be prepared by the students for each session. Tutorials will also be organised to support each group in their analysis of the chosen TV series</li> </ol>
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>By the end of this module, students should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyse the internal dynamics and external influences shaping organisational structures, cultures, and power relationships.</li> <li>2. Apply sociological theories and concepts to critically examine organisational practices in real-world and media-based case studies.</li> <li>3. Evaluate organisational issues by considering contextual factors and managerial phenomena such as communication, leadership, and decision-making.</li> <li>4. Develop a reflective and critical perspective on organisational behaviour through qualitative analysis and group-based research projects.</li> </ol>
<b>Competency Goals</b> <i>(Knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills)</i>	<p>PGE_U_CG01 - To be equipped with efficient business skills</p> <hr/> <p>PGE_U_CG02 - To be entrepreneurially-minded</p>
<b>Alignment with Programme Learning Goals</b>	<p>PGE_U_CG01_LO06 - To apply knowledge in order to meet the expectations of the professional world</p> <hr/> <p>PGE_U_CG02_LO01 - To understand the environment of a company whatever the activity sector</p>

**SESSION TOPICS / MODULE SCHEDULE**

*(Please note, a session/sequence may be more than one scheduled class)*

<p><u>Session 1: Introduction to the Pedagogical Logic and Structure of the Module</u></p> <p><i>Content:</i></p> <hr/>
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- Two main questions will be addressed:
  1. What is organisation theory?
  2. How to observe and understand organisations?
- The whole session will be organised around the analysis of excerpts from series and films to illustrate the logic of what will be asked to the students later in their group work

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### Session 2: Methodological Introduction

*Content:*

- Introduction and presentation of the speaker, the module and the tutorial sessions
- Three main topics will be covered:
  1. Principles of organisational analysis
  2. Developing one's organisational vision
  3. What is reflexivity?
- Opportunity for students to form groups (5 people max) and decide on series students wish to study

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### Session 3: The Cultural Dynamics of an Organisation

*Content:*

- Materiality
- Buildings and offices examples:
  - Socialisation
  - Organisational culture as relational dynamics
  - Sub-cultures
  - Organisational culture in its diversity
- Study of the different levels of analysis of organisational culture:
  - Culture, values, and artifacts
  - Culture, power, and artifacts
  - Organisational culture in constant evolution
  - Organisational culture as a power issue
- Illustrations of students' chosen fields
  - Case study of engineers
- Hofstede's approach (1998)

*Assignments:*

- Read: Sprogøe, J. and Elkjaer, B. (2010) 'Induction – organizational renewal and the maintenance of Status Quo', *Society and Business Review*, 5(2), pp. 130–143. doi:10.1108/17465681011055550.

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### Session 4: Understanding Cultural Dynamics

*Content:*

- Study of cultural dynamics in the film "Too Big to Fail"

*Assignments:*

- Assignment: 750 word group essay (+/-10%)
  - Sources:
    - Bazin, Y. (2015) 'On the issue of stability of Wall Street CEOs, while hoping for cultural changes in the financial sector', *Society and Business Review*, 10(1), pp. 91–98. doi:10.1108/sbr-12-2014-0057.
    - Film "Too Big to Fail"

- What is organisational culture?
- Present in detail the links between culture and leadership using Bazin (2015)
- Use "Too Big to Fail" to illustrate the previous points. Analyse how an extremely strong organisational culture may have made actors "blind" to the consequences of their actions

### Session 5: Deciphering Organisational Language

#### *Content:*

- Re-enchanting communication
  - What is communication?
  - Communication, a difficult art
  - Communication at the heart of managerial activity
- Deciphering signals
  - Voluntary and involuntary communication
  - Communication channels
  - Formal communication (e.g. e-mails), informal communication (rumours), mixed communication
  - Non-verbal communication: application to smiles or to clothing (Bazin & Aubert-Tarby, 2012)
- Organisational language acts
  - Language: constative and performative statements
  - Deciphering communication: the different levels of performative statements
  - A detour through the literature

#### *Assignments:*

- Read: Leonardi, P.M., Neeley, T.B. and Gerber, E.M. (2012) 'How managers use multiple media: Discrepant events, power, and timing in redundant communication', *Organization Science*, 23(1), pp. 98–117. doi:10.1287/orsc.1110.0638.

### Session 6: Understanding Communication in Organisations (Tutorial)

#### *Content:*

- Observe and understand communication in organisations and its empirical manifestations in the film "The Big Short"

#### *Assignments:*

- Assignment: 750 word group essay (+/-10%)
  - Sources:
    - Bazin, Y. and Aubert-Tarby, C. (2013) 'Dressing professional, an aesthetic experience of professions', *Society and Business Review*, 8(3), pp. 251–268. doi:10.1108/sbr-04-2013-0031.
    - Film "The Big Short"
  - Structure:
    - What are the different types of communication? Detail in particular the non-verbal and performative elements of speech acts (see CM Session 5)
    - Detail how dress can make organisational issues visible using Bazin & Aubert-Tarby (2013)
    - Use "The Big Short" to illustrate the above points. In particular, analyse how the aesthetic aspects of communication between actors refer to dynamics related to organisational culture (and sub-cultures)

### Session 7: Analyse Organisational Structures

#### *Content:*

- The bureaucratic revival
  - The classical model
  - Bureaucracy, a current model
  - Modern applications:
    - Post-bureaucracy
    - Kafkaesque
    - Managerial
- Work and organisational structures
  - Technical and social aspects of bureaucracies
  - Hierarchies and control of work
  - Work communities
  - Applications to illegal organisations (Sorreda & Philippe, 2020)

#### *Assignments:*

- Read: Sorreda, T. and Philippe, X. (2020) “Business is business”: A journey into a French suburban drug-dealing bureaucratic gang’, *Society and Business Review*, 15(3), pp. 145–163. doi:10.1108/sbr-09-2018-0102.

### Session 8: Analyse Organisational Structures (Tutorial)

#### *Content:*

- Observe and understand organisational structures and its empirical manifestations in “Margin Call”

#### *Assignments:*

- Assignment: 750 word group essay (+/-10%)
  - Sources:
    - Sorreda, T. and Philippe, X. (2020) “Business is business”: A journey into a French suburban drug-dealing bureaucratic gang’, *Society and Business Review*, 15(3), pp. 145–163. doi:10.1108/sbr-09-2018-0102.
    - Film "Margin Call"
  - Structure:
    - What is an organisational structure? (see Session 7)
    - Present in detail how organisations can adopt a bureaucratic structure with Sorreda & Philippe (2020), in particular how it influences the relationships between actors and the rules put in place.
    - Use "Margin Call" to illustrate the above points. Analyse how an organisational structure can manifest itself through communication between actors and how power and influence games are organised around it

### Session 9: Understanding Power Relationships in an Organisation

#### *Content:*

- Power and domination
  - Power as freedom: actor, system and rule
  - Power as authority: autonomy, control and domination
- Resistance
  - Received ideas on resistance to change

- The “productive resistance” (Courpasson et al., 2012)
- Resistance, territory and boundaries

*Assignments:*

- Read: Courpasson, D., Dany, F. and Clegg, S. (2012) ‘Resisters at work: Generating productive resistance in the workplace’, *Organization Science*, 23(3), pp. 801–819. doi:10.1287/orsc.1110.0657.

**Session 10: Understanding Power Relationships in an Organisation (Tutorial)**

*Content:*

- Observe and understand power in organisations and its empirical manifestations in the documentary “Inside Job”

*Assignments:*

- Assignment: 750 word group essay (+/-10%)
  - Sources:
    - Film "Wall Street II - Money never sleeps"
  - Structure:
    - What is power in an organisation? What are its sources? (see CM Session 9)
    - Introduce in detail how actors can resist power and domination with Minchella & Sorreda (2020) and the CM in Session 9. Use "Wall Street II" to illustrate the previous points. In particular, analyse how actors use rules, structures, and speech acts to influence, gain power, or counter each other

**Session 11: Group Dynamics**

*Content:*

- Groups and work teams
- Leadership and followership
- Role and diversity
- Group dynamics

*Assignments:*

- Read: Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2005) ‘The discipline of teams’, *Harvard Business Review*.

**KEY TEXTS**

1. Leonardi, P.M., Neeley, T.B. and Gerber, E.M. (2012) ‘How managers use multiple media: Discrepant events, power, and timing in redundant communication’, *Organization Science*, 23(1), pp. 98–117. doi:10.1287/orsc.1110.0638.
2. Sorreda, T. and Philippe, X. (2020) “‘Business is business’: A journey into a French suburban drug-dealing bureaucratic gang’, *Society and Business Review*, 15(3), pp. 145–163. doi:10.1108/sbr-09-2018-0102.
3. Courpasson, D., Dany, F. and Clegg, S. (2012) ‘Resisters at work: Generating productive resistance in the workplace’, *Organization Science*, 23(3), pp. 801–819. doi:10.1287/orsc.1110.0657.
4. Katzenbach, J.R. and Smith, D.K. (2005) ‘The discipline of teams’, *Harvard Business Review*.
5. Sprogøe, J. and Elkjaer, B. (2010) ‘Induction – organizational renewal and the maintenance of Status Quo’, *Society and Business Review*, 5(2), pp. 130–143. doi:10.1108/17465681011055550.

6. Cunliffe, A.L. (2008) *Organization theory*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

## SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

1. Bazin, Y. (2015) 'On the issue of stability of Wall Street CEOs, while hoping for cultural changes in the financial sector', *Society and Business Review*, 10(1), pp. 91–98. doi:10.1108/sbr-12-2014-0057.
2. Bazin, Y. and Aubert-Tarby, C. (2013) 'Dressing professional, an aesthetic experience of professions', *Society and Business Review*, 8(3), pp. 251–268. doi:10.1108/sbr-04-2013-0031.

## MODES OF ASSESSMENT

<b>Continuous Assessment (40%)</b>	Group presentation
<b>Final Exam (60%)</b>	Report

## MODULE DESIGN TEAM

- Author: *Louis Vuarin*
- Reviewer: *Kolawole Yusuff*
- External Reviewer: *Andreia Guerra Areal*