



Culture, Organization and Management (MSc)

VU University Amsterdam - Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen - M Culture, Organization and Management - 2015-2016

In the one-year Master's programme in Culture, Organization and Management (COM), students learn to approach organizations first and foremost as processes of organizing, that is the way groups of people interact in specific organizational settings. Organizing is seen as a meaning-making process taking place between members in organizations, and between organizations in local as well as transnational contexts. Given this focus on meaning-making, culture is considered the principal dimension of any organization. Academically, the programme rests upon a long-standing ethnographic tradition, offering a unique niche in organizational research and enabling students to critically study organizational processes with the help of ethnographic research methods.

[Objective and attainment levels](#)

[Year schedule](#)

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Master's programme in Culture, Organization and Management

Programme components:

- [Master's programme in Culture, Organization and Management elective courses](#)
- [Master's programme in Culture, Organization and Management compulsory course](#)

Master's programme in Culture, Organization and Management elective courses

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Changing Organizational Culture	Period 2	6.0	S_COC
Culture and Identity in Organizations	Period 2	6.0	S_CIO
Transnational Organizations in a Global World	Period 2	6.0	S_TOGW

Master's programme in Culture, Organization and Management compulsory course

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Master's Thesis in Culture, Organization and Management	Ac. Year (September)	24.0	S_MTcom
Organization Sciences	Period 1	6.0	S_OS
Research Lab	Period 4+5	6.0	S_RL
Research Proposal	Period 1+2+3	6.0	S_RP
Sensemaking in Organizations	Period 1	6.0	S_SOZ

Changing Organizational Culture

Course code	S_COC ()
Period	Period 2
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. A.H. van Marrewijk
Examinator	prof. dr. A.H. van Marrewijk
Teaching staff	prof. dr. A.H. van Marrewijk, drs. S. Merkus
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

Level	500
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Course objective

- Acquiring basic knowledge on organization cultural change
- Understanding theories on organization cultural change and interventions
- Connecting theories and change work
- Being able to make intervention designs for cultural problems in organizations

Course content

The course discusses recent academic theories and prescriptive approaches to change. The focus of many change studies is based upon traditions of 'top-down planned change'. This course criticizes this approach and emphasizes the dynamic character of organization cultural change. Alternatively, 'bottom up' change approach, process oriented concepts, and intervention methodologies are presented.

Form of tuition

Interactive lectures and work groups (compulsory).

Type of assessment

The course will be assessed through a group case (50%) and individual exams (50%).

Course reading

Alvesson, M. and S. Sveningsson (2015). Changing Organizational Culture. Cultural change work in progress, Routledge, London.
Furthermore: 15 e-journal articles.

Entry requirements

Participation in Organization Sciences (S_OS)

Recommended background knowledge

Students are expected have some prior knowledge on organizational culture and change. E.g. Bate, P. 1994. Strategies for Cultural Change. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann or Alvesson, M. 2002 Understanding Organisational Culture. London: Sage

Target group

Students choose this course in a combination with one other course: Culture and Identity in Organizations, or Transnational Organizations.

Remarks

Participation in working groups is obligatory. Students have to participate in the intervention simulation.

Culture and Identity in Organizations

Course code	S_CIO ()
Period	Period 2
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. H. Ghorashi

Examinator	prof. dr. H. Ghorashi
Teaching staff	prof. dr. H. Ghorashi
Teaching method(s)	Lecture
Level	500

Course objective

The aim of this course is to provide the necessary knowledge and reflection to enable critical understanding of the processes of exclusion and inclusion within organizations. By reflecting upon different approaches to identity, culture and power in organizations, this course contributes to creating an academic foundation to contextualize organizational practices related to cultural diversity within broader theoretical and societal frameworks. In addition, the course will stimulate a rethinking of oft-employed concepts and approaches, such as power and diversity, in order to deal with the new challenges of the present and the future.

Course content

In this time of ubiquitous cultural diversity, which some refer to as the context of super-diversity, we are witness to contradictory processes. On the one hand there is an increasing demand for culturally sensitive measures and cultural recognition in different social spheres. On the other, we see a growth in culturally exclusionary practices in a variety of domains. The same paradox is visible within organizations. While it is believed that the organizations of the future will be inclusive organizations embracing all available talent and reaching diverse target groups, there is an increasing sense that they are driving around in circles never reaching a destination. The main focus of this course will be on the ways that organizational processes are shaped and reshaped through the interface with societal discourses that construct particular images of otherness. These images contribute to processes of inclusion or exclusion within organizations, affecting access to (power) positions. These images of otherness concern not only a horizontal division of identities but have a normative aspect by presenting the other as deviation of the norm. By contextualizing organizational processes within societal discourses this course will provide an understanding of explicit and subtle processes which contribute to the prominence of certain identities above others along with the ways in which the intersection of identities becomes a source of dominance or exclusion.

Form of tuition

Lectures and group presentations

Type of assessment

The assessment is based on a final take-home exam (70%) and a group presentation (30%) during the course. The students need to pass both parts.

Course reading

Will be announced on Blackboard

Entry requirements

Participation in the Organization Sciences course

Target group

Remarks

Students choose this course in a combination with one other course: Changing Organizational Culture course, or Transnational Organizations.

Master's Thesis in Culture, Organization and Management

Course code	S_MTcom ()
Period	Ac. Year (September)
Credits	24.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coordinator	drs. T.A. Onderdenwijngaard
Examinator	drs. T.A. Onderdenwijngaard
Teaching staff	dr. F.J. Companjen, dr. I.H.J. Sabelis, dr. S.B. Ybema, dr. H. Wels, dr. F.H. Kamsteeg, drs. T.A. Onderdenwijngaard, dr. ir. F.K. Boersma, dr. ir. S.F. Kingma, prof. dr. H. Ghorashi, dr. C.H. Roessingh, dr. H. Koerten, prof. dr. I. Drori, prof. dr. A.H. Marrewijk
Teaching method(s)	Study Group
Level	600

Course objective

By writing their Master's Thesis, students demonstrate their ability to carry out independent academic research. In the thesis, formerly acquired theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as empirical field research are combined, analyzed and presented in a coherent manner.

Course content

The Master's thesis is the final subject of the Master COM, combining a period of fieldwork period and actual thesis writing (analysis and written presentation). The thesis is assessed with respect to the following: use of academic writing conventions; problematization of theme and theoretical concepts; critical use of theory, data and methods; quality of analyses, and reflection on academically and socially relevant debates related to the chosen theme.

Form of tuition

Individual and group supervision; students join a thematic thesis group, or in some cases opt for individual supervision, depending on the topic and supervisor availability. In October, some lecturers start 'advertising' for their research projects (via BlackBoard).

Type of assessment

Assessment form for the COM Master's thesis

Course reading

To be approved by the thesis supervisor

Entry requirements

Participation in the courses of period 1, period 2 and Research Proposal is required. If Research Proposal is not passed in the resit, continuation of the thesis trajectory may be not be allowed.

Target group

MSc COM students

Remarks

In practice, the preparation for the thesis starts in September / October with the "Master's Thesis Fair", in which students contact possible supervisors. From then on, students start preparing for the theoretical and methodological parts. The process of thesis supervision ultimately starts with the Research Proposal in period 3. In period 4 students also take parallel courses in the module "Research Lab" (online course, to enable combination with –foreign- field work).

Note: pay attention to announcements during the first semester, e.g. about Thesis Market, supervision groups, and lecturers involved, under 'Research Proposal' in BB.

Organization Sciences

Course code	S_OS ()
Period	Period 1
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. ir. F.G.A. de Bakker
Examinator	dr. ir. F.G.A. de Bakker
Teaching staff	dr. ir. F.G.A. de Bakker, dr. ir. F.K. Boersma
Teaching method(s)	Lecture
Level	400

Course objective

- Knowledge of processes of organizing within different organizational settings;
- Understanding of different approaches and perspectives on the analysis of organization;
- Analysis of academic texts, and the application of theoretical debates to case studies.

Course content

Organizational Science sets the stage for researching, analysing and theorising processes of organizing in a variety of contexts. In this course we conceptualise organizations not as fixed entities but as ongoing processes of organizing. We combine a focus on organizational actors' sensemaking practices and their day-to-day (inter)actions with developing a sensitivity to particular situational and institutional contexts in which these interactions emerge or are embedded. Through an analysis of classic, contemporary and critical texts as well as exemplary case studies students develop knowledge of and insight in themes such as power and institutions, structure and culture, control and resistance, collaboration and conflict, and identity and identification. Taking a distinctly social scientific approach, we explore various theoretical and methodological debates in the field of organization science in order to develop an understanding of different perspectives to studying organizations and organizing.

Form of tuition

Lectures

Type of assessment

Combination of multiple choice exam and written examination.

Course reading

To be announced.

Target group

Master students BCO and COM.

Research Lab

Course code	S_RL ()
Period	Period 4+5
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Examinator	dr. I.H.J. Sabelis
Level	500

Course objective

This course serves to support the Research Proposal, and the Master Thesis with a solid methodological base.

Course content

In close connection with the methodological part of 'Organizational Sense-making', students read additional methodological texts, and integrate these in the Research Proposal. Furthermore, students receive training in appropriate research instruments for their fieldwork (interview protocols, observation skills, tools for analyses, etc.).

Form of tuition

Two general lectures, individual supervision – online assignments

Type of assessment

Methodology section and research instruments need to be approved by the supervisor; online assignments.

Course reading

Reading is part of the assignments – further reading to be established in consultation with the supervisor.

Entry requirements

Participation in courses of period 1 and 2 of the Master's programme COM as well as participation in Research Proposal.

Target group

MSc COM students

Remarks

Students who intend to do fieldwork abroad should make such known to the course coordinator via the thesis supervisor; their course schedule may be organized alternatively.

Research Proposal

Course code	S_RP ()
Period	Period 1+2+3
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Examinator	dr. F.J. Companjen
Teaching staff	dr. F.J. Companjen
Teaching method(s)	Lecture
Level	500

Course objective

To prepare the student for writing a Proposal (Problem, Goal, Question, Literature Review) for his/her fieldwork research.

Course content

Before students write a research proposal guided by their Supervisors, we offer three general (guest) lectures in which overall themes and topics are addressed. How to formulate a problem, goal and research question (mostly qualitative), a literature review? Handling theories, styles of argument, and composition and compulsory parts of the Research Proposal and the Thesis. The general lectures are followed by sessions in the thesis groups organized by the Supervisors. The Research Proposal needs to be accepted and marked by the supervisor and the second reader before a student can begin his/her field research.

Form of tuition

Lectures, self-study, individual and/or group supervision

Type of assessment

Assessment of the research proposal by the thesis supervisor and the second reader.

Course reading

Part of the reading is focused on the individual Research Proposal, and to be established in consultation with the supervisor (i.e. from the formation of the thesis groups in October on). For the course itself, in any case:

Alvesson, M. & J. Sandberg (2011). Generating Research Questions through Problematization, AMR 36/2: 247-27.

Corley, K.G. & D. A. Gioia (2011). Building Theory about Theory Building: What constitutes a theoretical contribution? AMR 36/1: 12.-32.

Target group

MSc COM students

Remarks

In practice, the preparation for the thesis starts in October with the Master's thesis fair, in which students contact possible supervisors. From then on, students begin preparing for the theoretical and methodological parts of the Proposal. The process of thesis supervision and writing takes off with the Research Proposal in period 3. In period 4 students also take parallel courses (online) in the module "Research

Lab" (online course).

Sensemaking in Organizations

Course code	S_SOZ ()
Period	Period 1
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. S.B. Ybema
Examinator	dr. S.B. Ybema
Teaching staff	dr. S.B. Ybema, dr. F.H. Kamsteeg
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Study Group
Level	400

Course objective

Introduction to a constructivist or 'COM' approach for studying organizations and processes of organizing. Analysis of academic texts, and the application of theory to case studies. Training in methods of organizational ethnography and related methods for critical management studies.

Course content

Organizational Sensemaking sets the stage for the full Master Culture, Organization and Management, both theoretically and methodologically. We focus on (1) social actors' sense-making and sense-breaking (disrupting, intentionally or not) practices in (inter)organizational settings, and (2) our own sensemaking efforts as organizational researchers. First, to bring into view organizational actors' attempts to make (or disrupt) sense of everyday organizational life, we discuss concepts such as power, culture and identity, and their symbolic manifestations in (inter)actions (practices), discourse (talk and text), and materiality (artefacts). We illustrate this perspective to such fields of study as organizational change, managerial control, organizational resistance, intercultural communication, and processes of inclusion and exclusion. Second, we also zoom in on ethnographic and other interpretative methods for doing research in and between organizations. In our understanding of teaching, discussion and debate are important. Therefore, the interfaces of theoretical insights and application of methods emerge via discussion of (1) the art of observation (2) the importance of reflexivity (3) the role (and limitations) of the researcher (4) the different options for gathering data (written, pictured, filmed).

Form of tuition

Lectures and, from the second week on, group seminars, in which we will discuss literature, do research training, exercises, a role play and individual assignments.

Type of assessment

Assignments together 50% of the final mark; written exam (minimum result 6) constitutes the other 50% of the final mark. Not all assignments are open for a resit. A separate research assignment will be available as a resit for those students who need this.

Course reading

To be determined – and presented before the course begins (via Blackboard).

Entry requirements

Participation in the Organization Science (S_OS) course.

Remarks

Students are expected to read the prescribed literature before every lecture and workgroup meeting. Active participation in class and project work is required.

Transnational Organizations in a Global World

Course code	S_TOGW ()
Period	Period 2
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. I.H.J. Sabelis
Examinator	dr. I.H.J. Sabelis
Teaching staff	dr. I.H.J. Sabelis, prof. dr. I. Drori
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Study-group
Level	500

Course objective

The aim of the course is to acquire and expand knowledge and understanding of societal, professional and scientific debates addressing "organizing in a globalizing world". Contemporary debates will be differentiated according to domains of economic development, political processes, social change and cultural transformation. Specific attention is given to regions: (Southern) Africa, South-East Asia; Latin America.

Course content

In Western management literature it is assumed that processes of globalization generate ever-larger organizations stretching across national borders, and showing high levels of integration according to Western models of the Transnational Corporation (TNC). Economies of scale, the decline of the nation state as provider of both legal protection and national identity, the emergence of a homogeneous culture worldwide and the triumph of neo-liberal thinking seem to be the achievement of globalization. But the downsides, or unintended consequences of these developments loom large. Of particular interest is the emergence of a global educational industry that seems to advance the ongoing standardization (uniformity) of organizational practices and cultures. Recent literature on globalization challenges this. Coalitions and cooperative efforts in cross-border ventures generate network(ed) organizations, regionally and locally embedded organizations and organizational networks, larger diversity in (organizational) cultures and identities, and increasing interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social entrepreneurship. At the same time, governments have to rethink the reach of their policies; and new concepts of governance are taking root, affecting ideas about the management of private and public sector organizations as much as of

development organizations. New public management, public-private partnerships and partially conflicting demands for standardization of organizational processes and cultures versus ongoing diversification are challenges core themes of re-thinking globalization.

Form of tuition

Interactive lectures, guest lectures and discussion meetings.

Type of assessment

Written examination (take home exam via Blackboard) - optional: midterm assignment.

Course reading

Eriksen, T.H. (2014 [2007]) Globalization, 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury + reader / articles, videos: to be announced.

Target group

Master students COM: Culture, Organization and Management.

Remarks

Students choose this course in a combination with one other course: Changing Organizational Culture, or Culture and Identity in Organizations.