

Bar-Ilan University  
Graduate School of Business Administration  
Ramat-Gan, 52900- Israel

**Selected Issues in Organization Theory 70-741-01**

Instructor

Professor Abraham Carmeli  
Tel: +972-3-531 8908  
Cell: +972-50-48 11 88  
Fax: + 972-3-738 4040  
[carmelia@mail.biu.ac.il](mailto:carmelia@mail.biu.ac.il)

**Course Overview and Goals**

This course is designed to be a multiple research project and is aimed at enabling you to formulate and reflect on theoretical issues and identify those areas where research needs further development. I believe that students take away the most by actually engaging in research through which they acquire a deeper understanding of the dynamics of organizational life.

Over the years, research has tended to focus on the negative outcomes, processes and attributes of organizations and their members. However, there is much to learn and study about the bright side - both the positive issues and the hidden advantages of difficulties. We will be looking at how people thrive and become extraordinary at work, the role of positive relationships/connections, how leaders build positive relational contexts, the nature of resilience and why it is important and other key questions. .

My hope is that you will leave this course with an in-depth knowledge on positivity in organization theory research.

**Required Materials**

Package of articles (course package).

**CLASS FORMAT:**

There will be 13 weekly sessions, each lasting 1 and 1/2 hrs. Each will cover a specific topic (see below).

For each session you will be asked to prepare specific assignments that will help you put theory into practice and should lead to fruitful class discussions.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

Attendance, reading materials, class participation	10%
Individual assignments [(reaction papers (15%), learning logs (15%)]	30%
Final exam	60%

### Attendance, reading materials, class participation:

You are expected to read the material assigned for each session, and participate actively in class. You will be evaluated with respect to: (1) relevancy—the degree to which your input is relevant to the topic being discussed; (2) content-based—the extent to which your comments are well grounded in theory and facts; (3) challenging—the extent to which your observations present a challenge; (4) developmental—the extent to which your comments develop other students' ideas / observations .

As the course progresses, it will become clear which students do or do not read the material, participate or contribute. The students who attend assiduously, and stand out as major contributors to class discussions will be graded accordingly. The others will be graded as a function of their contribution.

### Individual assignments:

**Weekly reaction papers** (15%): To facilitate learning, you will be asked to submit an analysis of the reading material I assigned for each session. These papers should deal with the following three questions:

1. What are the most (up to three) powerful and generative ideas covered in the session's readings?
2. In what ways have these ideas influenced you (how have they changed your perspectives and way of thinking)?
3. How can you incorporate, leverage, and reconfigure these ideas in your workplace?

**Learning logs** (15%): Each session will be devoted to a specific topic. To enhance your learning experience, the learning log is designed to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the issues and concepts discussed in the reading material and raised in class concern you, your role in the workplace, and the organization you work for. In addition, you will have an opportunity to apply some of the concepts we will learn during the semester. The questions for each of these logs as well as the exercises can be found in the syllabus at the end of this document (note that additional material I will be handed out in class). You are required to answer all sets of questions and submit them on time.

All work must have the following format: single-sided, 12 point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins.

You will be asked to distribute a copy of your completed assignment to all class members at least 48 hours before each class meets. My suggestion is to do so via e-mail as a WORD RTF attachment.

Please note that you are required to submit all work both as hard copy and via e-mail to the instructors at least 48 hours before each class meets. A hard copy of each assignment is to be placed (or sent to) the instructor's mail box (#70).

**Final exam:** (60%) At the end of the course, you will take a final exam. The exam will cover the subjects studied in the course. The exam will be open, in which you will be asked to answer 2 out of 3 general questions (each general question consisting of several sub-

questions). The questions will be integrative in nature, requiring a thorough understanding of the reading material and a capability to integrate and produce theoretical and practical insights.

To do well on this type of exam, you will need to read all the material carefully, attend all classes, and understand the supporting material (e.g., PPT slides).

**How to contact the instructor:**

The best way to contact us is via e-mail. In any inquiry, please e-mail instructor (e-mail address is listed above). On the message line, write "Bar-Ilan—MBA- Selected Issues in Organization Theory." Any message without this message line will be deleted automatically to avoid viruses and no reply will be sent.

You can also call me on my cell phone (972-50-648-1188). I will be happy to respond to your inquiries, questions and requests to the best of my abilities.

SESSIONS	Reading Material
<p><b>Session 1:</b> Course overview. Invitation to the positive side in organizations (Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS)).</p>	<p>Dutton, J. E. &amp; Glynn, M. A. (2007). Positive Organizational Scholarship. In C. Cooper &amp; J. Barling (Eds.) <i>Handbook of Organizational Behavior</i> (Ch. 36, pp. 693-712). Sage Publications.</p> <p>Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. E., &amp; Quinn, R. E. (2003). Foundations of Positive Organizational Scholarship. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, &amp; R.E. Quinn (Eds.) <i>Positive Organizational Scholarship</i> (pp. 3-13). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.</p>
<p><b>Session 2:</b> Being Extraordinary at Work</p>	<p>Spreitzer, G. M., &amp; Sonenshein, S. (2003). Positive deviance and extraordinary organizing. In K. Cameron, J. E. Dutton &amp; R. E. Quinn (Eds.) <i>Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline</i> (pp. 207-224). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.</p> <p>Spreitzer, G. M., &amp; Sonenshein, S. (2004). Toward the construct definition of positive deviance. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>, 47, 828-847.</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify forms of positive deviant behaviors that members of your organization have displayed. Which contexts did they emerge in and why?</li> <li>○ What was the impact of these positive deviant behaviors on other employees and the organization as a whole?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>
<p><b>Session 3:</b> Creative and innovative behaviors</p>	<p>Amabile, T. M. (1997). Motivating creativity in organizations: On doing what you love and loving what you do. <i>California Management Review</i>, 40 (1), 39-58.</p> <p>Paulus, P. B. (2008) Fostering creativity in groups and teams. In J. Zhou &amp; C. E. Shalley (Eds.). <i>The Handbook of Organizational Creativity</i> (pp. 165-188). New York: Taylor &amp; Francis Group.</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How does your organization facilitate and/or impede employee creativity in the workplace? (use narratives).</li> <li>○ How does your organization evaluate and measure creativity? (give an example)</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>

<p><b>Session 4:</b> Finding Positive Meaning at Work</p>	<p>Pratt, M.G., &amp; Ashforth, B.E. (2003). Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton and R.E. Quinn (Eds.) <i>Positive Organizational Scholarship</i> (pp. 309-327). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.</p> <p>Baumeister (1991). <i>Meanings of life</i>. New York: Guilford Press. (Chap 6 &amp; Appendix A) [pp. 116-144; 371-387].</p> <p>Cohen-Meitar, R., Carmeli, A., &amp; Waldman, D. A. (2009). Linking meaningfulness in the workplace to employee creativity: The intervening role of organizational identification and positive psychological experiences. <i>Creativity Research Journal</i>, Forthcoming.</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What gives you special meaning in your work?</li> <li>○ Discuss ways in which you find meaning at work.</li> <li>○ How has meaningfulness in working and meaningfulness at work shaped your self-identity and your capacity to make a difference in your workplace?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>
<p><b>Session 5:</b> Positive Work Relationships</p>	<p>Dutton, J. E. (2003). <i>Energize your workplace: How to build and sustain high-quality connections at work</i>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers (Ch. 1).</p> <p>Dutton, J. E., &amp; Heaphy, E. D. (2003). The power of high-quality connections at work. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton and R.E. Quinn (Eds.) <i>Positive Organizational Scholarship</i> (pp. 263-278). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.</p> <p>Ragins, B. R., &amp; Dutton, J. E. (2007). Positive relationships at work: An introduction and invitation. In J. E. Dutton &amp; B. R. Ragins (Eds.) <i>Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation</i> (pp. 1-25). Mahwah, NH: Lawrence Erlbaum.</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discuss your relationships with your direct supervisor. Detail two positive experiences in which you felt your work relationships were positive and reinforcing.</li> <li>○ How did these experiences help you become extraordinary at work and in your personal life?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>

<p><b>Session 6:</b> Positive Work Relationships : Three Ways to Build Positive Relationships: Respectful Engagement, Task Enabling, and Trusting.</p>	<p>Dutton, J. E. (2003). <u>Energize your workplace: How to build and sustain high-quality connections at work</u>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers (Ch. 2-4).</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<p>(Source: Jane E. Dutton)</p> <p>Think of two people, one you trust, and one you don't trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ List the reasons that have led you to trust or distrust each person (no need to identify the real person -- can use disguised names).</li> <li>○ How do you let someone else know that you trust/distrust them? (i.e. what are the behaviors that you manifest that show trust or distrust)?</li> <li>○ What, if anything, could the person you distrust do to earn your trust?</li> <li>○ What do you have to do to enable this to happen?</li> <li>○ What are the managerial implications of your analysis for turning around distrustful connections?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>
<p><b>Session 7:</b> Relational Leadership</p>	<p>Fletcher, J. K. (2004). The paradox of postheroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change. <i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>, 15, 647–661.</p> <p>Fletcher, J. K. (2007). Leadership, power, and positive relationships. In J. E. Dutton &amp; B. R. Ragins (Eds.), <i>Exploring positive relationships at work: Building a theoretical and research foundation</i> (pp. 347-371). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.</p> <p>Goleman, D. (1998). What Makes a Leader. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, (November-December): 93-102.</p> <p>Graen, G.B., &amp; Uhl-Bien, M. (1998). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. In F. Dansereau and F.J. Yammarino's (Eds.) <i>Leadership: The multiple-level approaches</i>. Volume 24, Part B. Stanford, CT: JAI Press (pp. 103-155).</p>

<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<p>Think of two managers you work with: one manager with whom you have developed a positive relationship, and another manager with whom you have not developed a positive relationship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What type of leadership style do these two managers display and how have their behaviors shape/d your relationships with them (no need to identify the real person -- can use disguised names).</li> <li>○ Can you cite specific events to illustrate the ways their behaviors affect/ed your work relationships?</li> <li>○ If you are a manager of at least 4 people, specify ways you use to form positive relationships with your followers.</li> <li>○ If you currently do not hold a leadership position, imagine you are the manager of at least 4 people. What types of leadership behaviors would you embrace (and avoid) to establish positive work relationships with your followers?</li> <li>○ What do you believe are the implications of relational leaders (compared to other leadership forms such as visionary leadership)?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>
<p><b>Session 8:</b> Managing your relationships with different stakeholders</p>	<p>Open discussion on pathways for managing your work relationships with your boss, co-workers, followers, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Session 9:</b> Play to your strengths</p>	<p>Roberts, L. M., Spreitzer, G., Dutton, J.E., Quinn, R., Heaphy, E., &amp; Barker, B. (2005). How to play to your strengths. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 83 (1), 74-80.</p> <p>Roberts, L. M., Dutton, J.E., Spreitzer, G.M., Heaphy, E.D., &amp; Quinn, R.E. (2005). Composing the reflected best-self portrait: Building pathways for becoming extraordinary in work organizations. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 30(4), 712-736</p>
<p><b>Session 10:</b> Play to your strengths</p>	<p>Open discussion.</p>

<p><b>Session 11:</b> Resilience</p>	<p>Coutu, D.L. (2002). How resilience works. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 80, (5), 46-55.</p> <p>Fredrickson, B.L., Tugade, M. M., Waugh, C.E., &amp; Larkin, G.R. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crises? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 84, (2), 365-376.</p> <p>Hamel, G., &amp; Valikangas, L. (2003). The quest for resilience. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 8, 52-63.</p> <p>Sutcliffe, K. M., &amp; Vogus, T. J. (2003). Organizing for resilience. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, &amp; R. E. Quinn (Eds.), <i>Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline</i> (pp. 94-121). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<p>Think of two people you know quite well. Both have experienced a major setback (e.g., layoff). Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have they bounced back from their setbacks?</li> <li>○ What enabled them to bounce back from a setback (personality, workplace support, family support)?</li> <li>○ What were the implications of the setback? Are they flourishing and thriving in their current career? In what ways? If not, why?</li> <li>○ What do you believe you can do to enhance your own resiliency?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>
<p><b>Session 12:</b> Positive organizing</p>	<p>Weick, K. E. (2003). Positive organizing and organizational tragedy. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, &amp; R. E. Quinn (Eds.), <i>Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline</i> (pp. 66-80). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.</p>
<p><b>Learning log</b></p>	<p>Think about the way your organization responded to the tragedy of employees who were direct or indirect victims of terrorism. Use, if possible, examples of victims you know and their reactions to the organization's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What did the organization's managers do to respond to the pain of the employees who experienced this tragedy?</li> <li>○ What did co-workers do to support the victims and alleviate their pain?</li> <li>○ What do you believe you would have done differently to respond to the victims' pain?</li> <li>○ What are the implications of positive organizing in times of hardship to the organization as a whole?</li> </ul> <p>Write a 3-page paper and submit it following the instructions above.</p>

**Session 13:**

Concluding remarks

Reflecting on ideas and insights provided by this course.