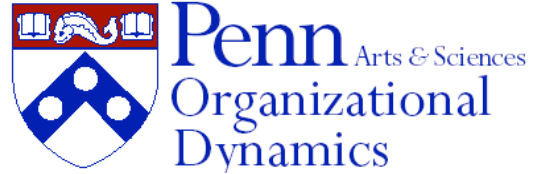

Organizational Resilience



Professor Steven F. Freeman

Wednesdays, 6:30- 8:30 pm

DYNAM 672

Description

All organizations face adversity; increasing numbers may expect to face crises. This course will explore how to avert, mitigate, or confront them. Towards that end, we will draw on a variety of approaches and disciplines including psychology, organization theory and systems theory.

The course is experimental both in content and method:

- To the best of our knowledge, no course has ever been offered before on organizational resilience; very few people have systematically studied it.
- The course will be conducted as a collaborative investigation, in which you will experience how to develop a new area of knowledge and expertise.

Educational Objectives

- Learn current state of knowledge and theory on Organizational Resilience
- Develop expertise in one facet of Organizational Resilience
- Learn, generally, how to research and develop a new area of knowledge.

Content

- Organizational resilience: why important, how to understand it, what we know about it, and how to learn more.
- Planning so as to avoid, mitigate, or, if necessary, manage a crisis.
- Building the general capabilities of adaptation and resilience.
- Learning to anticipate crisis, and the limits of anticipation.
- Designing resilience into a system
- An introduction to positive psychology
- An introduction to positive organization scholarship
- An introduction to systems thinking
- Inoculation to protect against demise
- auditing vulnerabilities (and crisis preparedness)
- Finding strength from adversity

Process & Experience

- Experience how knowledge is developed in the social sciences.
- Develop expertise in a new area of knowledge.
- Examine and experience the relationship between theory, empirical investigation, and practical application
- Participate in the research and further development of knowledge and theory on Organizational Resilience
- Observe response to organizational crisis or adversity or attempt to practice applications to help an organization generally prepare for adversity/crisis.
- Protocols and practical considerations of field research
- Visit an extraordinarily resilient firm that has recovered from the September 11th attacks.
- Participate in a joint class with students and professors conducting related research at Columbia University and the White Institute

Supplemental Content Areas:

- Modeling response to adversity and resilience.
- How to advise organizations on planning for adversity developing resilience.

Reading materials

Readings will be assigned in the weeks before a class, based in part on student suggestions.

Grading / Assignments

Class participation (40% of grade)

Class Attendance is mandatory. If you must miss a class, please let me know in advance. You are expected to read the assigned materials and come to class ready to make a useful contribution. Think about how does that material relate to your interests or concerns; ask yourself: What insights did you get? What was unclear, wrong, or pointless? What might have been done better? What more would you like to know?

Topic leadership: Summarize and present readings on a domain (20% of grade)

You will volunteer to help lead one of the class sessions through selection of readings, development of discussion questions, and summary presentation of related readings on the same or a related topic. I will help you select the readings and develop a lesson plan.

(Topics to be selected the second class meeting; may be done, with instructor approval, in teams.)

Field research (40% of grade): Written projects due: December 3

Option A: Case study on response to adversity

Find an organization that has suffered significant adversity or crisis. Use field research, as we discuss in class, to document: (1) losses and direct effects (2) the organizational response (3) indirect effects and outcomes.

Are these losses, responses and outcomes what you would predict? Were you surprised by any findings?

Option B: Crisis management consulting project

Find an organization that will allow you to conduct a crisis preparation audit. Use the techniques and reading materials discussed in class and drawn principally from *Essential Guide to Managing Corporate Crises* by Ian I. Mitroff.

Class schedule

1. Sept 17th Introductions: What is (organizational) resilience? Why is it important? How do we study it?

The nature of the course: a collaborative investigation to develop a new area of knowledge

Discussion questions:

- What is your interest in the subject?
- Would or should your organization be interested in the subject?
- How do we think about, define, and study it? How do we develop theory?
- How do you imagine it can be explained, measured or predicted?

2. Sept 24th Organizational Resilience I: Current Research, Theory and Practice

Reading:

Hamel, Gary and L. Valikangas (Sept. 2003). The Quest for Resilience, *Harvard Business Review*.

Freeman, Steven F; Larry Hirschhorn, and Marc Maltz (2003). Moral Purpose and Organizational Resilience: Sandler O'Neill & Partners, L.P. in the Aftermath of September 11, 2001. Academy of Management Best Papers.

Sutcliffe, Kathleen and Tim Vogus (Sept. 2003). Organizing for Resilience by Chapter 7 of *Positive Organizational Scholarship* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler). Cameron, K., Dutton, J.E., & Quinn, R.E. (eds.)

Discussion questions:

- What is organizational resilience? How has it been conceptualized? Why is or isn't it important?
- According to Sutcliffe and Vogus, what factors affect resilience?
- According to Freeman, et. al., what key factors affected Sandler O'Neill's resilience?
- What would happen in your organization if it faced the situation that Sandler O'Neill did?
- According to Hamel and Valikangas, what do firms need to do better? What are the obstacles to doing so?

3. Oct 1st Organizational resilience II: Foundations

Reading:

Meyer, Alan (1982) "Adapting to environmental jolts" *Administrative Science Quarterly* **27**: 515-37

Wildavsky, Aaron (1988). *Searching for safety*. London, Social Philosophy & Policy Center and Transaction Books. Chapters 4 and 5 (pgs: 77-123)

Weick, Karl E. and Kathleen M. Sutcliffe (2001). *Managing the unexpected: assuring high performance in an age of complexity* (pgs: 67-83)

Discussion questions:

- What are the three ways that the hospitals in Meyer's study responded to the physicians strike? Have any of your organizations faced a comparable adversity or had to prepare for it? What kind of approach was taken? What were the results?
- Summarize the two approaches Wildavsky presents for securing safety. What approaches have you observed in your organizations?
- What do Weick and Sutcliffe claim that we can learn from high reliability organizations (HROs)? Do you think these practices can and should be observed in your firm?

4. Oct 8th Work on adversity experience projects

Reading:

Protocol for conducting organizational field research. Steven F. Freeman (2003).

Assignment:

Work through the Project Protocol for your term projects. Develop an interview protocol; try to conduct the first interview.

5. Oct 15th Individual resilience:

Reading:

Masten, A.S., & Reed, M.J. (2002). Resilience in development. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), Handbook of Positive Psychology, 74-88. New York: Oxford U Press.

Discussion questions:

- How has resilience in individuals been studied? What factors affect individual resilience?
- How do these factors relate to your personal experience?
- How do these resilience factors apply to the work environment? What kinds of workers or work groups show resilience or maladaptation?
- Can any analogies be drawn between individual resilience and organizational resilience?

6. Oct 22nd Positive psychology and Positive organization scholarship

Reading:

Seligman, M.E.P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55: 5-14.

Cameron, K., Dutton, J.E., & Quinn, R.E (2003). Foundations of Positive Organizational Scholarship. Chapter 1 of *Positive Organizational Scholarship* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler). Cameron, K., Dutton, J.E., & Quinn, R.E. (eds.)

Discussion questions to be announced

7-8. Oct 29th New York City trip:

9:30 am: Visit to World Trade Center site

11:00 am: Visit and tour of Sandler O'Neill.

3:00 pm: Joint class at Columbia University with co-teachers, George Bonanno, Columbia University, and Marc Maltz, The William Alanson White Institute.

Reading:

Bonanno, George "Trauma Loss and human resilience"

Maltz, Marc "Interpersonal Psychodynamics of resilience"

Freeman, Steven F. "Factors affecting individual and organizational resilience"

Discussion questions to be announced

No class Nov 5th Work on adversity experience/crisis management projects

9. Nov 12th Systems thinking:

Reading:

Mitroff, Ian I. (1996). *The Essential Guide to Managing Corporate Crises* (Oxford University Press). Chapters 1-3

Additional reading and discussion questions to be announced

10. Nov 19th A systems approach to crisis management

Reading:

Mitroff, Ian I. (1996). *The Essential Guide to Managing Corporate Crises* (Oxford University Press). Chapters 4-end

Discussion questions to be announced

No class Nov 26th : Thanksgiving

11. Dec 3rd Beyond resilience: Drawing strength from adversity

Reading:

Armstrong, Lance (2001) *It's not about the Bike: My Journey Back to Life*. Berkeley Books: New York

Frankl, Viktor E. (1959/ 1984) *Man's Search for Meaning*. Pocket Books: New York

Discussion questions to be announced

12. Dec 10th * Optional session * Modeling resilience (System Dynamics)

Readings and preparatory assignment to be announced

13. Dec 17th * Optional session * How to advise businesses on resilience / crisis management.

Readings and preparatory assignment to be announced

Attendance for all classes and the New York City trip is mandatory.

If you must miss a class, please let me know in advance.