MO 455/555: Foundations in Positive Organizational Scholarship
Class 1 (1/12/16)
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Intro Session:
Why Care About Flourishing at Work and the Power of Positive Images?

Videos and materials needed:
- Video: Dosomething.org
  (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEn3G0j5VDQ#t=91)

Description and flow of the class:

Slide 1
Slide 2

Slide 1: Foundations of POS
- This is the introductory slide. One of the primary goals of this class is to learn about, learn to identify strategies for, and practice ways of thinking and behaviors that foster flourishing for individuals and collectives. This slide provides an opportunity to set the tone for the class, and to generate enthusiasm for the class. The following areas can serve as guiding topics for the introductory slide.
• **Personal Connection:** With the expectation that students will be academically and personally invested in the course and its content, we modeled this by sharing why we are interested in POS and our passion for this work.

• **Impact:** Share with the class how the material in this class has global relevance. This is a point where sharing one or two examples of this could help make this work more concrete for students (e.g., efforts in Australia to redesign schools to foster student flourishing and training in the law profession to increase well being given high levels of depression and suicide). These fields of positive psychology and POS are rapidly expanding, but we also need more research and work to be conducted for greater impact.

• **Purpose:** The purpose of POS is to equip leaders to create workplaces that are replenishing and generative. Whereas most of the framing for our workplaces is problem-centered, POS focuses on opening up wider range of opportunities for knowing how to prevent problems and to generate opportunities that foster flourishing. It is also about creating healthier work, home, school, etc. environment where people can grow and develop.

Slide 2: Goals for Today
• This slide serves a prompt to discuss the goals and agenda for the day. One goal in the selection of readings it to expose students to thought leaders who are prominent in the field (i.e., Cooperrider). Also, with flourishing as a foundational concept for the class, taking extra time during this slide to discuss the meaning of and conceptualization of flourishing is important.

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Slide 3: Jane, Betsy, and Aurora
• We asked students to introduce themselves and share what they will contribute to the class. This slide provides an opportunity for us (the instructor and support team) to introduce ourselves, and our intended contributions to the class.

Slide 4: Introductions
• This slide provides an opportunity for the first class activity and serves as the icebreaker. In a class where all students are expected to contribute, we are trying to encourage rapid connecting and creating a co-learning environment.

• **Activity:** Students pair off to introduce themselves to each other. In this introduction they share their name and the contribution they hope to make to class. Provide the students a couple of minutes for this. Also prepare them for the following part, where they will have 30 seconds to introduce their colleague by the contributions they hope to share with the class. (The slide says 1 minute, but you 30 seconds worked and was clear in the presentation of this activity.)
  - **Tip:** If other team members are available to support, invite one of them record the students’ names and contributions/gifts.

• **Debrief:** Ask the students to go around the room their pair-share partner. While the students are introducing each other, affirm their contributions and note how they connect to POS.

• **Key concepts:**
  - This activity helps to model surfacing of the collective strengths that the class has (as a group) but also allows for individual strengths and contributions to become quickly visible.
  - Encourage students to look for energy, compassion, resources flowing, etc. POS capacities all around them.
  - Remind students that the boundary between personal and professional life is very blurry, and they are encouraged to begin to explore how the two interconnect through POS.

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Slide 5: What are some of the impacts of appreciative introductions?

• This slide stems from the previous activity. This is an opportunity to ask the students to reflect on their individual-level impact and collective-level impacts. The following are some prompt questions to begin a *large group discussion* (generally solicit 2-4 responses):
  - “What’s the impact of this practice on you? What did it do to you to be asked what your contributions will be to the class? And what is the impact of having appreciative introductions to the class?”

• **Key concepts:**
Multiple benefits of inquiring into the positive, importance of giving people a chance to narrate themselves as a contribution or a giver (this will be touched on later in the course when we talk about the power of positive identity construction.

- Ask students to connect themselves as individuals to the group as a collective and the resources/capacities that the collective has. This can possibly develop after a follow up question, such as: “What about the impact of the introductions on the collective capacity of the class?” This theme is also a theme of the class—that small practices, especially if enacted early in the life of the group, can enhance the capacities of the group and unlock resources.

- In wrapping up this slide, close with the major theme for how this activity connects to the class: “first moves matter” – what we do in the first minutes of a group meeting is consequential.

Slide 6: The power of positive images of ourselves and organizations

- **Activity: Video** – Dosomething.org

- **Prompt:** “What do you find life-giving in this video? Imagine that you are going to work for the organization in the video, think about -- what do you find life-giving?” (This is an example of trying to tune students into what they find energy or vitality –producing in work organizations). Part of the goal in the course is to increase students’ self-awareness of their how certain contexts can be life-giving or strengthening, and that this kind of attunement to the context can help them find workplaces in which they are more likely to flourish.

- **Debrief:** Following the video ask students to write down “something that lit you up” from the video on a sheet of paper. Give the students about 1 minute to write, then open up to a large group discussion. Invite students to share their written reflections.
  - One possible **take away:** _Tune into what aspects of contexts help you feel authentic or more connected to who you are and want to be._

- **Wrap up:** Reinforce that we draw inferences from small bits of data all of the time. In this instance, from this very short video of one workplace, we can start to see how we attune to different indicators of life in a system. These can be important guides for discerning places where we are likely to grow and flourish.
  - A possible follow up question in this wrap up could be: “If you were leading an organization, how would you communicate the positive image that you would like to bring to life?” (This question connects to the Cooperrider reading that they have done for this class.)
  - The concept of heliotropic (meaning: all living things lean toward light) can be intertwined into the discussion. (Cooperrider writes about the heliotropic effect in his explanation of why appreciative inquiry is so powerful.)
  - Reinforce that we need to be very mindful about creating life-giving workplaces, and part of the goal of this class is to increase their
familiarity with workspaces that foster their own and other people’s flourishing we should be in.

Slide 7: Imagination creates future reality… (from Cooperrider)
- In an effort to emphasize the significance of this quote, we read Cooperrider’s quote to the class.

Slide 8: Why are positive images so potent for organizations?
- **Activity (pair-share): Prompt**—“Think about an organization you have been a part of or would like to be a part of that has a positive image for itself in the future. What was that image? Why/how did it impact you?”
  - Give students 4 minutes to talk about these questions.
- **Debrief:** “What was the image? How did it impact you?”
- **Key concepts:**
  - What would it mean to only be exposed to positive examples as an antidote to the negative examples that are always drawing our attention toward “what’s broken” as compared to “what’s working.”
  - Asking appreciative questions can change the energy of any meeting or group. This positive energy lifts the capabilities and competencies of the group to do the work.
  - Positive doesn’t always equate with happy. It is more closely aligned with flourishing (which implies and optimal state of functioning and includes a variety of emotions).
  - At every move we can do things that lift people up, even during challenges. This is a great opportunity to infuse an example. One example can be during layoffs, how the organization can restore people’s dignity in such a difficult process?
Slide 9: What does Dave Cooperrider tell us about why and how positive images are potent and important?

- In this slide, we covered the main 3 concepts outlined.
- 1. Share expectations (placebo effect).
  - We asked for a volunteer/student to define “placebo.”
  - We shared a personal example of a placebo from our life to help create a concrete understanding.
  - We reinforced that people can use placebos, which shape the expectations that we have of the impact of something (e.g., a drug, an experience etc.) in themselves.
- 2. Tune us into possibilities in others (Pygmalion effect).
  - We asked someone to define/describe Pygmalion effect.
  - Where placebo can be used to expect the best in ourselves, Pygmalion effect can used to expect the best in others.
  - People learn by monitoring how we are doing in completely different tasks.
  - Positive images are very potent, and very powerful, in this monitoring process.

Slide 10: “Imagery as a powerful agent” (Cooperrider)

- In this slide, we read the three quotes out loud and asked for examples of current events that related to these quotes.
- **Key concepts:**
  - We, as people, are constantly monitoring how we are doing in completely different ways.
  - POS is about unleashing positive images within organizations about what is possible.
Slide 11: Using positive images to unlock greatness

- In order to create emphasis on the power of positive images, we read the quote regarding appreciative intelligence to the class.

- **Activity: Prompt**—“What is your current rate of appreciative intelligence (this idea is written about by Tojo Thatchenkery)? From a score of 1-10. How easy is for you to see the positive possibilities in a situation or in other people?
  - “Think about the people you spend the most amount of time with daily, rate what their appreciative intelligence is.”
  - “What do you believe has been most potent in shaping your ability to see the positive in people and situations?”

- **Key concept:**
  - We can override how we’ve been trained as children, but it takes a lot of work. Therefore, we have to overcompensate with positive images to override our trained tendencies to focus on more negative images (which from an evolutionary point of view capture more of our attention and energy).
  - Another goals of the class is to open up our capacity to imagine the positive potential in people, situations, or groups.

General questions:

- At this point in the first class, we chose to stop to ask if students had any questions. Since many of these concepts are so new to students, yet are so foundational to POS, we wanted to provide them a chance to ask questions.

- **Student question:** You mentioned a 3:1 ratio that is necessary for flourishing. Can you talk about that a bit more?
  - **Response:** POS is about people/organizations ability to grow to their full potential. We need a disproportionate amount of positivity to deal with the negativity around us. But POS requires a certain amount of negativity to grow and flourish. We need a ratio of at least 3:1 of positivity:negativity to be able to flourish. It’s called the positivity ratio, which will be discussed further in class at a later time.

- **Student question:** How do you change the ratio to reach 3:1?
Response: Think about the small things each of us can change to allow ourselves to generate more positivity. Constantly recalling positive images that put us, individually, in a more positive state.

Negative is all around us all the time, and we can’t get rid of it. But we can shift the small things in our life that we attend to and focus on as a way to alter the positivity ratio. These ideas are related to the work of Barbara Fredrickson (we will read several papers by her). The positivity ratio has been challenged a lot and I have included on canvas a wonderful paper she has written that pulls together a variety of research that supports the existence of the positivity ratio.

Student challenge: We challenged students to try to be more generative in an interaction or situation between today’s class and the next class. We asked students to try to shift small things in a conversation to be more positive, and see what happens. We encouraged them to use appreciative questions. We asked them to think about how they can unlock resources in human communities.

Key concepts:

- Our bodies are hugely responsive to small moments that give life – through positivity. Changing small things does not take a lot of time. We each can change our actions or perspectives within 30 seconds.
- It is critical to understand how to change the structures at the organizational level. The O in POS is really important in creating change. The real potential is in the O of POS.

Slide 12: So what is POS?

Slide 13: A grounded optimistic image of life in and of organizations: Two images (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003, p. 1)
• Ask one student to read the first column. Ask a second student to read the second column. Before they begin to read aloud, prompt the students to think about what they feel while the students are reading the columns.

• Part of what POS is about understanding the conditions that differentiate the two distinct images (one positive and one negative) described in the quotes/columns read aloud.

• **Activity:** Large group discussion: Question to the class: “What can we do to move toward the more positive, not perfection, but more positive?”

**Slide 14:** POS is about seeing and unlocking possibilities in the present and the future

• This slide introduces the “zone of possibility.” We explained the significance of the graph, and how to interpret it. (The zone of possibilities is addressed in the first chapter of *How to be a Positive Leader* by Dutton and Spreitzer.)

• There is a line that describes how an organization (or team) is getting better along some measure of effectiveness or flourishing. (You click on the slide to show the flatter line.) POS introduces the idea that there is always the possibility of steeper line that says “what if the rate of improvement in how effective the organization or team is, could happen faster?” (Click to show the second steeper line.)
  - The difference between the baseline and the POS line is called the “Zone of possibility”
  - One way to understand POS tools and practices is that they are focused on unlocking the potential and resourcefulness of human communities. It is important to understand that this unlocking resources is not based on adding money or material resources, it is about making small and sometimes big changes to how people in an organization or team make meaning, feel and interrelate in ways the unlock key human-based resources.

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**Slide 15:** POS is about seeing and creating moments of individual and collective flourishing

**Slide 16:** POS is about seeing and unlocking resources to be unlocked

- **ASSUMES**
  - There are always resources to be unlocked (in individuals, in relationships, in teams and in the whole organization)

- **Why are these resources so valuable?**
  - Trust, hope, confidence, efficacy, generosity, creativity, empathy, curiosity, integrity, skills

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• POS is about believing, seeing, and knowing how to unlock these human-based resources. By unlocked we mean: expanding, releasing or amplifying resources.

• Activity: Large group discussion -- Question to students: “Why are these (point to the positive resources listed on the slide) so valuable?”

• Key concept:
  o They are valuable because they are non-substitutable, difficult to build, precious, and fragile.

• Follow up question: “How does the leadership make this unlocking possible (trying to get students to focus on the variety of ways that leaders can do this unlocking)?” (We posed this question because it is uniquely applicable to the students in class. For example, we asked students on athletic teams to speak about how their teams (at the team level) unlock the resource of confidence or optimism.)

• Key concepts:
  o Leaders making a difference by creating, everyday routines that develop and release these collective resources/goods (like trust, optimism, energy etc.).
  o Images, habits, and different forms of sharing are ways leaders can cultivate these resources.

Slide 16: POS is about seeing and creating moments of individual and collective flourishing

• Flourishing is a new term defined as “coming alive and achieving optimal level of functioning.

• Share a personal or professional example regarding a space in which you are flourishing, and how that compares to spaces where you are not. Describe for students in detail what makes these spaces different. This is an opportunity to define flourishing in a concrete way for students.

• Activity: Prompt -- “Think of yourself as a plant in two gardens, one where you are languishing and one where you are flourishing. Write down a few adjectives about how you feel in each garden.”

• Debrief: Large group share-out (ask a few students to share out loud)

• Key concepts:
  o It is important to have metrics or detectors so we can notice and understand when we are in a flourishing space.
  o We highlighted the physiological impacts that happen when we are flourishing (at work, at school or as a member of any collective).
Slide 17: Indicators of flourishing (individual and collective)

- Quickly share some of the indicators of flourishing that are outlined on this slide. If time permits, provide an example of one or a couple of these indicators.

Slide 18: Flourishing = Wellbeing (Rath and Harter, 2010)

- Even though flourishing is about optimal functioning it is often equated to wellbeing.
- Share an example of an organization that is working on creating flourishing environments by focusing on wellbeing. One example is the Universidad de Takemino (in Mexico).
- *Activity Prompt* -- “Each student rate for yourself: How well are you doing on these 5 components (career, social, financial, physical, and community wellbeing). Write down your responses on a sheet of paper.” (Provide students a minute to write down their response.)
- *Follow up question*: “As you think about future employment, think about how you would want to be doing in this space and how you can flourish.”

Slide 19: So what is the business case for fostering wellbeing? (flourishing)

Slide 20: In new pairs

- Share a story of something that went well for you in the last 24 hours and why it went well?
- According to Bono and Gontis (HPI, 2015) what is likely to happen if you do this kind of reflection on a regular basis?
- Why does this kind of reflection have this effect?
• **Activity:** Large group discussion – prompt question: “From the Rath and Harter reading, what did they say about why you should care about your wellbeing?”
• **Key concepts:**
  o There are financial impacts of not working in a flourishing environment.
  o We are not engaged and not productive when we are not psychologically present. Turnover increases, when individuals are not in flourishing environments.

Slide 20: In new pairs
• If time does not permit, skip this slide. However, we encouraged students to try this activity out on their own time

Slide 21 & 22:
• If time does not permit, skip these slides. Extra slides have been added as extra resources. There are more slides that any instructor will probably have time to go over, but since these are shared with students after class, it is valuable to have extra slides that the students can review on their own time.

Slide 23 & 24:
Slide 23: Conclusion #1

- If time permits, this is a place where examples drawn from research could help emphasize the concept.
- We read the bullet point and briefly connected research about the impacts of positivity.

Slide 24: Conclusion #2

- We read the concluding point from the slide.
- In addition, we reemphasized the significance of having ways to help others see possibilities and see the vitality in a system or collective. This is at the heart of appreciative inquiry and the heart of POS when applied to work contexts.

Slide 25: Conclusion #3

- We read the concluding point from the slide.
- We also reiterated examples of positive images of flourishing. One such example is the images of garden to portray the importance of fertile soil (elements of an organization’s structure and process) and how this soil facilitates human flourishing (or to ways to grow).
  - The quality of our life depends on being in a space with “good soil to grow.”

Slide 26: The course

- This slide introduces an opportunity to provide a broad overview regarding the breadth of the course.
- This course is more of a “buffet” or scan of the field of POS. Throughout the course, we are going to “taste” many perspectives from POS.
- It is important to understand POS from a scientific foundation, not just a “feel good” perspective. It is imperative that we understand the research behind each conceptualization and framework presented.
- A POS leader/change agent is aware of and knows how to cultivate flourishing at multiple levels.
We also discussed the broad goals for the class and elaborated on the ones that are extra important, from our perspective.

Slide 27: Flow and Contributors
- We briefly mentioned the importance of both individual flourishing and flourishing systems in this class, and in our lives.
- The first half of the course will provide an overview of individual flourishing, then we will move into flourishing systems in the second half of the course.
- Invited guest scholars will join us in upcoming classes to help with the learning. If guests will be attending later in the term, this could be a time to excite the students about that potential.

Slide 28: Requirements
- We shared our expectation that students should all read before class. We set this expectation from the beginning, and let the students know that we will cold call throughout the term. We invited students to think about cold calling as more of an invitation to read and participate in class.
- We briefly mentioned the assignments, but reassured students that we would go over the assignments in more detail as the time for submission approaches.
- We discussed briefly the need for the additional 12 hours of outside work. The course hours would be sufficient for a 2 credit course, but that would not work for most students. Therefore each student is required to attend 12 hours of outside content opportunities (listed in the syllabus), and students will report on these at the end of the class.
Slide 29: Warning! Opportunity!
- We invited students to send opportunities for additional hours and for additional resources to the class instructor and/or facilitator to share with the other students.

Slide 30: Images of your role in the class
- This slide allowed us to invite students to put on a new set of lenses. We also invited them to weave this content into contexts that are important to them.

Slide 31: Next class
- In preparation for the next session, we asked students to complete the VIA strengths assessment before arriving to class (The VIA is found online for free). We asked students a copy with them to the next class.

Slide 32: Feedback on Today
- Since this class is still changing and developing, we invited students to provide their insight on how to improve the class.
- **Activity:** We asked students to share on the index card provided, one side—2 or 3 bullets points about ideas or aspects of the class that were useful today;
on the other side: provide feedback about what you would like to see improve next time. Once the students have filled out the index cards, have them hand the index cards into you and/or your support team members.

- Additional prompt: We encouraged students to share ideas to help keep the energy up during the class.