

## DOCTORAL/POST-DOCTORAL SEMINAR ON SOCIAL-SYMBOLIC WORK

March 25-27, 2020  
Saïd Business School  
University of Oxford  
Park End Street  
Oxford, UK

### **Instructors**

Primary instructor: Professor Thomas B. Lawrence, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford (contact: [tom.lawrence@sbs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:tom.lawrence@sbs.ox.ac.uk))

Guest instructor: Professor Nelson Phillips, Imperial College Business School, London

### **Aims**

Across the social sciences, scholars are increasingly showing how people ‘work’ to construct organizational life, including the rules and routines that shape and enable organizational activity, the identities of people who occupy organizations, and the societal norms and assumptions that provide the context for organizational action. The idea of work emphasizes the ways in which people and groups engage in purposeful, reflexive efforts rooted in an awareness of organizational life as constructed in human interaction and changeable through human effort. Studies of these efforts have identified new forms of work including emotion work, identity work, boundary work, strategy work, institutional work, and a host of others. Missing in these conversations, however, is a recognition that these forms of work are all part of a broader phenomenon driven by historical shifts that began with modernity and dramatically accelerated through the twentieth century.

In this seminar, we will explore the social-symbolic work perspective, which addresses this broader phenomenon. The social-symbolic work perspective integrates diverse streams of research to examine how people purposefully and reflexively work to construct organizational life, including the identities, technologies, boundaries, and strategies that constitute their organizations. The social-symbolic work perspective revolves around three broad categories: self work, organization work, and institutional work.

Social-symbolic work highlights people’s efforts to construct the social world, and focuses attention on the motivations, practices, resources, and effects of those efforts. The seminar will explore eight distinct streams of social-symbolic work research. It will provide participants with an integrative theoretical framework useful in understanding social-symbolic work, a survey of the main forms of social-symbolic work, a rich set of theoretical opportunities to inspire new studies, and practical methodological guidance for empirical research on social-symbolic work.

### **Seminar Elements and Structure**

Discussions of key social-symbolic work literatures. Seminar participants will leave with an understanding of the key ideas and issues in the study of emotion work, identity work, career work, strategy work, boundary work, technology work, practice work, and category work.

Discussion of theoretical and methodological opportunities. Seminar participants will explore new issues, topics, and research questions, as well as novel research methods, that are opened up in the study of social-symbolic work.

Participant presentations. Seminar participants will present their submitted papers in a conference format, but with greater opportunity for discussion and constructive feedback from seminar faculty and other participants than at a regular academic conference.

Networking and social interaction. Seminar participants will be given the opportunity to connect with other new scholars interested in issues connected to social-symbolic work.

### **Readings:**

#### ***Wednesday afternoon***

##### ***Required readings***

- 1) Constructing Organizational Life: How social-symbolic work shapes selves, organizations, and institutions. Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. 2019. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- 2) Emirbayer, M., and Mische, A. 1998. What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4): 962-1023.
- 3) Sewell, W. H. 1992. A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1): 1-29.

##### ***Optional readings***

- 4) Berger, P. L., and Luckmann, T. 1966. The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge. New York: Anchor.
- 5) Gergen, K. J. 2009. An invitation to social construction (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- 6) Cooper, R., and Burrell, G. 1988. Modernism, postmodernism and organizational analysis: An introduction, *Organization Studies*, 9(1) 91-112.
- 7) Spottiswoode, R. 1993. And the band played on. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaSRrxvfVJU>

#### ***Thursday morning***

##### ***Required readings***

- 8) Constructing Organizational Life: Chapters 3-6
- 9) Tizon, A. 2017. My family's slave. *The Atlantic*. June. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/06/lolas-story/524490/>
- 10) Hochschild, A. R. 1979. Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3): 551-75.
- 11) Snow, D. A., and Anderson, L. 1987. Identity work among the homeless: The verbal construction and avowal of personal identities. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(6): 1336-71.

- 12) Vaara, E., and Whittington, R. 2012. Strategy-as-practice: Taking social practices seriously. *Academy of Management Annals*, 6(1): 285-336.
- 13) Gieryn, T. F. 1983. Boundary-work and the demarcation of science from non-science: Strains and interests in professional ideologies of scientists. *American Sociological Review*, 48(6): 781-95.

*Optional readings*

- 14) Curtis, A. 2002. The century of the self. London: BBC Two. <https://freedocumentaries.org/documentary/bbc-the-century-of-the-self-happiness-machines-season-1-episode-1>
- 15) Heehs, P. 2013. Writing the self: Diaries, memoirs, and the history of the self. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- 16) McCloskey, D. N. 2000. Crossing: A memoir. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- 17) Schrag, C. 0. 1999. The self after postmodernity. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- 18) Storr, W. 2018. Selfie: How the west became self-obsessed and what it's doing to us. London: Picador.
- 19) Goffman, E. 1959. The presentation of self in everyday life. Garden City, NY: Anchor Doubleday.
- 20) Arthur, M. B. and Rousseau, D. M. (Eds.) 2001. The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Chapter X)
- 21) Hochschild, A. R. 1983. The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- 22) Ibarra, H. 2004. Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- 23) Orlowski, W. J., and Scott, S. V. 2008. Sociomateriality: Challenging the separation of technology, work and organization. *Academy of Management Annals*, 2(1): 433-74.
- 24) Leonardi, P. M., Nardi, B. A., and Kallinikos, J. 2012. Materiality and organizing: Social interaction in a technological world. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 25) Bijker, W. E., Hughes, T. P., and Pinch, T. J. 2012. The social construction of technological systems: New directions in the sociology and history of technology (Anniversary). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

*Thursday afternoon*

*Required readings*

- 26) Constructing Organizational Life: Chapters 7-8
- 27) Hardy, C., and Maguire, S. 2010. Discourse, field-configure events, and change in organizations and institutional fields: Narratives of DDT and the Stockholm Convention. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6): 1365-92.

- 28) Zietsma, C., and Lawrence, T. B. 2010. Institutional work in the transformation of an organizational field: The interplay of boundary work and practice work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55(2): 189-221.
- 29) Schatzki, T. R. 2001. Introduction: Practice theory. In T. R. Schatzki, K. Knorr Cetina, and E. Von Savigny (Eds.), *The practice turn in contemporary theory*: 1-14. London: Routledge.
- 30) Khaire, M., and Wadhwani, R. D. 2010. Changing landscapes: The construction of meaning and value in a new market category-modern Indian art. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6): 1281-304.

*Optional readings*

- 31) Geertz, C. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books. (Chapter X)
- 32) Douglas, M. 1986. *How institutions think*. New York: Syracuse University Press. (Chapter X)
- 33) Loach, K. 1994. Bread and Roses. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0212826/>
- 34) Lawrence, T. B., and Suddaby, R. 2006. Institutions and institutional work. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. B. Lawrence, and W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (2nd ed.): 215-54. London: Sage.
- 35) Munir, K. A., and Phillips, N. 2005. The birth of the "Kodak Moment": Institutional entrepreneurship and the adoption of new technologies. *Organization Studies*, 26(11): 1665-87.
- 36) Nicolini, D. 2013. *Practice theory, work, and organization: An introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 37) Bowker, G. C., and Star, S. L. 1999. *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

*Friday morning*

*Required readings*

- 38) *Constructing Organizational Life*: Chapters 9-11

*Optional readings*

- 39) Weick, K. E. 1988. Enacted sensemaking in crisis situations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 25(4): 305-317.
- 40) Hardy, C., & Phillips, N. 1999. No joking matter: Discursive struggle in the Canadian refugee system. *Organization Studies*, 20(1): 1-24.
- 41) Callon, M. 1986. Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay. *Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, 32: 196-223.
- 42) Callon, M., & Latour, B. 1981. Unscrewing the big leviathan: How actors macrostructure reality and how sociologists help them to do so. In K. Knorr Cetina & A. V. Cicourel

(Eds.), *Advances in social theory and methodology: Toward an integration of micro and macro-sociologies*: 277–303. Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- 43) Lawrence, T. B. 2017. High-stakes institutional translation: Establishing North America's first government-sanctioned supervised injection site. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(5): 1771–1800.
- 44) Wortham, J. 2016, July 17. When everyone can be 'queer,' is anyone? *The New York Times Magazine*, MM13.
- 45) Locke, L. F., & Silverman, S. J. 2007. *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals*. SAGE.
- 46) Hassard, J., & Parker, M. 1993. *Postmodernism and organizations*. London ; Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- 47) Gergen, K. J. 2009. *An invitation to social construction* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- 48) Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. 2004. From Moby Dick to Free Willy: Macro-cultural discourse and institutional entrepreneurship in emerging institutional fields. *Organization*, 11(5): 689–711.
- 49) Davis, M. 1971. That's interesting: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1(4): 309–344.
- 50) Tracey, P., Phillips, N., & Jarvis, O. 2011. Bridging institutional entrepreneurship and the creation of new organizational forms: A multilevel model. *Organization Science*, 22(1): 60–80.

*Friday afternoon*

Constructing Organizational Life