Sociology 302, Sociology of Complex Organizations, Spring 2008. Professor Bruce Carruthers, #203, 1808 Chicago Avenue, 847-467-1251. Office hours: Tuesday 11-12:20. Email: b-carruthers@northwestern.edu

The reading requirements for this course are three books (The Executive Way: Conflict Management in Corporations, by Calvin Morrill; Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers, by Robert Jackall; and Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs, by Rakesh Khurana) and a set of articles. The books are available at Norris, the readings can be accessed using the JSTOR search engine (www.jstor.org), through the NU Library website electronic resources. The goal of the course is to gain some understanding of the origins, structure and dynamics of complex organizations, and their relationship to their environment. We will be focusing especially upon organizational decision-making through a series of 1-2 week topics (see below). The class format is lecture/discussion, and you are responsible for doing all the readings. There will be an in-class midterm (worth 40% of the final grade, and to be scheduled later) and a final exam (worth 60%). These will both test your knowledge of readings and lecture material. The final exam will be held in class at the regularly scheduled exam time (no exceptions). This syllabus may be changed as circumstances warrant, but under no circumstances will acts of academic dishonesty be tolerated.

1: Introduction.


2: Organizations as limited problem-solvers.


3: Informal vs. informal structure.


Margarete Arndt and Barbara Bigelow, “Professionalizing and Masculinizing a Female Occupation,” Administrative Science Quarterly 50: 233-261, 2005 (on class blackboard).


Stuart Macaulay, “Non-contractual Relations in Business”, American Sociological Review 22:
55-67, 1963. JSTOR.


4: Organizations as political arenas.

   Calvin Morrill, The Executive Way

5: NeoInstitutionalist Theory:


6: Organizations as Anarchies (the Garbage-Can model):


7: Applications - Corporate Managers

   Robert Jackall, Moral Mazes.

8: Applications - High Stakes Hiring of CEOs

   Rakesh Khurana, Searching for a Corporate Savior (don’t read the appendix).

9: Reading Week. Therefore no reading.