

# The Psychology of Work

**Time:** Thursdays 14.00 – 17.00

**Instructor:** Constanze Eib

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**Office hours:** appointment

## Course description

During this course we will examine selected topics within work and organizational psychology. In our discussions throughout the course, we will be moving from the individual employee perspective to the perspective of the employee in an organizational context. The course consists of two modules:

1. *The employee perspective:* motivation and goals of employees, stress, health and well-being and how individuals shape and are shaped by their work environment.
2. *The employee in an organizational context:* leadership, teamwork, organizational cultures, and the complexities of organizational interventions.

The goal of this course is to examine and reflect on questions about human behavior at work and within an organizational context. You will become familiar with current research findings in work and organizational psychology, and based on this knowledge, you will be asked to form your own evidence-based opinions and recommendations for solving real-life problems. We will work with case studies and practical examples that will give you an opportunity to apply your knowledge.

## Learning outcomes

During this course you will learn how to:

- characterize a work environment in terms of risk factors and protective factors for workers' well-being;
- explain basic mechanisms of work-related stress and motivation;
- define and apply key concepts of organizational psychology (teamwork, leadership, culture, climate, intervention) to describe organizational processes;
- critically analyze and evaluate an intervention program taking into consideration the multilevel complexity of an organization;
- present and discuss research findings and make evidence-based arguments.

## Important notes

### *Attendance*

Regular attendance is mandatory. This course assumes an interactive approach which requires engaged participation from all students. Your presence is essential to the liveliness of this course. An unexcused absence will negatively affect your final grade. However, your grade will not be affected if you miss a class due to illness or in the case of a (documented) emergency situation. If you have a personal or family event that conflicts with a class, and cannot be rescheduled, you may

ask your instructor for an excused absence. Such a request should be made at least one week prior to the class in question.

### *Active participation*

The course requires not only attendance, but also an active and constructive participation in discussions and group assignments. To facilitate active participation, you will be given a small preparatory homework prior to each class. Homework assignments will be related to the course literature, and their aim is to help you prepare for class and facilitate our discussions during class. Homework is obligatory (even when a student will not be present during class!). Apart from preparatory homework, each class ends with a quiz or a case study to solve.

Active participation (e.g., case studies, quizzes) is part of in-class activity only and cannot be substantiated by different activity outside of class, even in case of excused absence.

### *First assignment*

This assignment requires conducting a short interview with a working adult of your choice regarding their work environment in Sweden. In the first paper you will analyze the information you gained from the interview. You will focus on identifying risk and protective factors in your interviewee's work environment and reflect on it based on relevant theory and research findings.

### *Second assignment*

This assignment requires reading and critically reviewing a case of organizational change and/or intervention. You will discuss possible short- and long-term consequences of such change/intervention taking into consideration the multilevel structure of organizations and dynamic organizational processes, using theories/models that we cover during the course.

### *Google Classroom*

The Swedish Program uses the Google Classroom platform for all its courses (we will NOT use Canvas). On the course Classroom page, you will find the readings, assignments, and lecture notes, as well as links to useful resources for further study. The course platform is also where you will submit your homework and assignments. It is your responsibility to follow the deadlines and announcements placed on Google Classroom.

### *Classroom rules*

We are all expected to behave respectfully in the classroom. This includes, but is not limited to, coming to class on time, giving speakers your undivided attention, addressing your classmates and the instructor with respect, and refraining from academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, taking credit for the work of others, etc.).

### *Laptops/Tablets/Phones*

It has become increasingly clear that many students use electronic devices in class in improper ways, i.e., e-mailing or browsing the internet. Such behavior undermines student learning and can

be a distraction for other students. Therefore, student usage of electronic devices in the classroom is limited to note taking and solving group assignments.

### Required readings

We will analyze recent publications that review topics of our interest and present important studies. The selected research articles and other scientific resources will be available online during the course (no hard copies will be distributed). The articles are listed in the syllabus, but they might be subject to change.

### Course schedule

Students are expected to read course materials before each session and prepare for active involvement. You are welcome to look for, and present during class, any additional information that will help you discuss the topic. Total time for each session is expected to be 3 hours. The course consists of three types of in-class activities:

1. **Thematic seminars** which cover specific topics. Reading course materials and preparation for discussion is required before the seminars. Each seminar is typically structured as follows (subject to change):
  1. Short lecture complementing the readings connected to the specific topic;
  2. Reflection on homework assignments and discussion based on the course materials;
  3. Practical assignments (case study, real world example, etc.);
  4. Summary and feedback.
2. **Students' presentations**. Students' work will be presented and discussed twice during the course.
3. **Integration seminars/study visits**. During these sessions you will work on integrating the knowledge you've acquired in the first and second parts of the course.

# Schedule

*This is a preliminary version, changes to topics, topic order and readings can happen.*

## Session 1

January 23, 14.15 – 17.00

*Seminar:*        **Why do we work?**

Latent and manifest functions of work. Just a job – a career – a calling.

+ overview of the course, discussing the rules of participation, assessment, etc.

*Readings:*    Wrzesniewski, A., McCauley, C., Rozin, P., & Schwartz, B. (1997). Jobs, careers, and callings: People's relations to their work. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31(1), 21-33.

## Session 2

January 30, 14.15 – 17.00

*Seminar:*        **What stresses us at work?**

Stressor. Strain. Well-being. Recovery. Study Visit KI Health Hub.

*Readings:*     Kecklund, G., Beckers, D. G., Leineweber, C. & Tucker, P. (2017). How Does Work Fit with My Life? The Relation Between Flexible Work Arrangements, Work–Life Balance and Recovery from Work. In An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (eds N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli and M. Sverke). doi:10.1002/9781119168058.ch23

**Session 3**

February 6, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*        **How does work environment affect employee well-being?**

Demands. Resources. Engagement. Burnout.

*Readings:*     de Jonge, J. and Dormann, C. (2017). Why Is My Job So Stressful? Characteristics, Processes and Models of Stress at Work. In An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (eds N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli and M. Sverke). doi:10.1002/9781119168058.ch5

Eurofound and EU-OSHA. (2014). Psychosocial risks in Europe: Prevalence and strategies for prevention (**Chapter 1**). Luxembourg. doi:10.2806/70971

**Session 4**

February 13, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*        **What makes work motivating?**

Basic needs. Work motivation. Work Meaning.

*Readings:*     Van den Broeck, A., Carpini, J., Leroy, H. and Diefendorff, J. M. (2017). How Much Effort Will I Put into My Work? It Depends on Your Type of Motivation. In An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (eds N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli and M. Sverke). doi:10.1002/9781119168058.ch19

**Session 5**

February 20, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*        **How can I make my job fit me better? Job crafting and integration seminar**

Job crafting as bottom-up job redesign.

*Readings:*     Wrzesniewski, A., Berg, J. M., & Dutton, J. E. (2010). Turn the job you have into the job you want. Harvard Business Review, 88(6), 114-117.

**Session 6**

February 27, 14.15-17.00

**Presentations of Assignment 1**

### **Session 7**

March 6, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*       **What can organizations do to help employee well-being?**

Organizational interventions: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation.

*Readings:*    Day, A. and Nielsen, K. (2017). What Does Our Organization Do to Help Our Well-Being? Creating Healthy Workplaces and Workers. In An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (eds N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli and M. Sverke). doi:10.1002/9781119168058.ch16

von Thiele Schwarz, U., Nielsen, K., Edwards, K., Hasson, H., Ipsen, C., Savage, C., & Reed, J. E. (2020). How to design, implement and evaluate organizational interventions for maximum impact: The Sigtuna Principles. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 1-13.

### **Session 8**

March 13, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*       **Are we better off in teams?**

Groups. Information sharing. Decision making.

*Readings:*    Lantz Friedrich, A. and Ulber, D. (2017). Why Are We in a Team? Effects of Teamwork and How to Enhance Team Effectiveness. In An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (eds N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli and M. Sverke). doi:10.1002/9781119168058.ch12

### **Session 9**

March 20, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*       **Does it matter who leads us?**

Power. Status. Leadership. Influence.

*Readings:*    Kelloway, E. K. and Gilbert, S. (2017). Does It Matter Who Leads Us?: The Study of Organizational Leadership. In An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (eds N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli and M. Sverke). doi:10.1002/9781119168058.ch11

### **Session 10**

April 10, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*       **What is the culture of your workplace?**

Climate. Culture. Structure.

Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., & Macey, W. H. (2013). Organizational Climate and Culture. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64(1), 361–388. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143809>

### **Session 11**

April 17, 14.15-17.00

*Seminar:*       **How to manage organizational change?**

Change in organizations.

### **Session 12**

April 24, 14.15-17.00

**Integration seminar, Assignment 2**

# Literature

## **Required readings**

Readings typically include book chapters that summarize the literature and scientific articles and other resources can be included as well. The selected research articles and other resources will be shared online during the course (no hard copies will be distributed). The articles listed in the syllabus might be subject to change.

# Examination

## **Course requirements and examinations**

The final grade for the course is based on the following:

Active participation (Homework, Case studies, Quizzes and Peer review): 30%

First paper and presentation (Based on an interview of an employee in Sweden): 35%

Second paper and presentation (Critical review of an organizational change/intervention): 35%

## **Grading**

You will be required to present your work in front of the class for both the first and second assignment. Papers will be peer-reviewed. You will review papers written by your classmates. Your paper will be graded according to a rubric. Presentations are required but not graded.