

Description

183 - The Psychology of Work, Spring 2026

Time: Tuesdays 09.15-12.15

Instructor: Sophia Appelbom

Email: sophia.appelbom@swedishprogram.org

Office hours: by appointment

Course description

During this course we will examine selected topics in health and social psychology with a main focus (and application to) work and organizational psychology. In our discussions throughout the course, we will be moving from a person-oriented to an organization-oriented perspective. The course consists of two modules:

1. *A person and a situation:* work environment, stress, burnout, motivation and goals of an individual, and how are these influenced by the work environment.
2. *A team and an organization:* leadership, teamwork, climate, culture, organizational processes, and how to initiate a change.

The goal of this course is to examine and reflect on questions about human behavior at work and in the organizational context. You will become familiar with current research findings in 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 science (teamwork, leadership, culture, climate, intervention) to describe organizational processes;
- compare different leadership styles and their suitability for distinct contexts;
- critically analyze and evaluate an intervention program;
- outline a change process taking into consideration the multilevel complexity of an organization;
- present an evidence-based argument in a clear and concise way.

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. If a student is considerably late for class, this may be counted as an absence. Excused absences can include illness or an unexpected emergency such as the death of a family member, but not leisure travel. Students should always contact their instructors to request permission for any excused

absence as early as possible. In case of doubt, also contact the Director. 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. An unexcused absence will negatively affect your final grade. The instructor might also lower a student's grade in case of frequent excused absences.

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) are only part of in-class activity 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 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.

A statement on academic honesty

Any form of academic dishonesty is a violation of our code of conduct, and as such, may result in further disciplinary actions. Plagiarism or other forms of cheating will result in an automatic F for the

assignment, and may also result in an immediate F for the course as a whole, based on the assessment of the Director of Studies and the Executive Director. While we expect the policy on AI-assisted writing to evolve further, the Program's current policy is as follows. Just as with outside sources, AI-assisted writing is permissible as long as its use is properly documented and does not substitute for students' doing the actual writing work. For all written take-home assignments, students who have used AI to assist them are required to submit a summary describing how they have used AI to help them complete the assignment (producing text, proofreading, finding citations, etc). In addition, students also have to clearly indicate which passages have been produced or assisted by AI, for example in a footnote that details how AI was used in that particular instance. Failure to acknowledge one's use of AI to complete an assignment will count as academic dishonesty and be subject to the same penalties as outright plagiarism or other forms of cheating. AI must never be used for "creative" work, like generating ideas, comparing theories, etc.

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 welcomed 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 structured as follows:
 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.

Syllabus

Session 1

January 20th, 09.15-12.15

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 (Potential study visit at Karolinska Institute **OFF CAMPUS**)

January 27th, 09.15-12.15

Seminar: What stresses us at work?

Stressor. Strain. Well-being. Recovery.

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 3rd, 0909.15-12.1512-15

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 10th, 09.15-12.15

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 17th, 09.15-12.15

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 24th, 09.15-12.15

Presentations of Assignment 1

Session 7

March 3rd, 09.15-12.15

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

Session 8

March 10th, 09.15-12.15

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 17th, 09.15-12.15

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

March 24th, 09.15-12.15

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

Climate. Culture. Structure.

Reading: 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 14th, 09.15-12.15

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

Change and fairness in organizations.

Reading: Cropanzano, R., Bowen, D. E., & Gilliland, S. W. (2007). The management of organizational justice. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21(4), 34-48.

Session 12

April 21st, 09.15-12.15

Integration seminar, Assignment 2

Have you been granted educational support because of a documented disability? If so, please contact the course director as soon as possible so that adequate accommodations can be made. Contact specialneeds@hhs.se if you have questions about being granted educational support or need a copy of your educational support certificate. Read more at [Special Needs on the Portal](#).

Literature

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Required readings

Readings include book chapters, scientific articles, as well as popular science articles and podcasts. 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.

Examination

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Course requirements and examinations

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

Active participation	30%
Homework, Case studies, Quizzes and Peer reviews	
First paper and presentation	35%
Based on an interview of an employee in Sweden	
Second paper and presentation	35%
Critical review of an organizational change/intervention	

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 rubrik. Presentations are required but not graded.