

International Summer University^{WU} 2022

WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business)

Course outline

Course title	Leading People via Sensemaking
Instructors	<p>Stephan Klinger stephan.klinger@wu.ac.at WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business)</p>  <p>This course will be co-taught with the HR-Expert/Consultant, Mr. Harald Posch.</p>
Language of instruction	English
Course level	Graduate
Contact hours	25 contact hours (45 min. each)

Aim of the course
<p>“Change is the only constant in life” – from the early days of globalization onwards managers and consultants quoted this line of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus to demonstrate that change in people, organizations, markets or even the world is a natural part of life. Despite these dynamics, people strive for stable meanings in life and in work.</p> <p>Organizations state their meanings in documents like mission statements, code of conducts or sustainability reports. Shared meanings are not created via managerial decisions or said documents alone, but socially constructed. One way to shift the focus from decision making to meaning is to look more closely at sensemaking in organizations. Sensemaking can be triggered by events, new CEOs, threatened identities or crises for which the meaning is ambiguous, or the outcome is uncertain. Such occurrences, when noticed, interrupt people’s ongoing flow, disrupt their understanding of the world and create uncertainty about how to act. The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs.</p> <p>“From vulnerability to resilience” - In this course we are going to take a deep dive into the mechanism and processes of sensemaking in organizations. And how leadership can influence this process of “Negotiation of Strangeness”, via sense-giving or sense-breaking – with the aim to create meaningful enabling organizations.</p>

Learning objectives	
<p>Students will gather knowledge about the concepts of sensemaking in organizations and its interaction with primary organizational principles like role structures, virtual role systems and resilience.</p> <p>This knowledge will be applied to actual organizations facing global changes, which the US-American think-tank "Foreign Affairs" has identified.</p>	
Application requirements	
<p>Application requirements for the Graduate Program are current enrollment in a master's or MBA program (or equivalent), with a focus on business administration/economics, and / or a bachelor degree in a business major by the time of participation in the ISU^{WU} program.</p> <p>Applicants interested in participating in the International Summer University^{WU} need an excellent command of the English language. The English language requirements can be found at ISU^{WU} Language Requirements.</p> <p>Application requirements for WU students can be found on our application website.</p>	
Teaching methods	
Lectures, presentations, discussions, simulations, group work, interventions	
Pre-course assignment	
<p>For the pre-course assignment students will deal with the course literature and prepare examples of sensemaking in organizations. (Deadline: TBA)</p> <p>Students will receive the material and appropriate instructions by the end of May 2022.</p>	
Course Contents	
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and Overview • Results of Pre-Course Assignment • Sensemaking and the Organization
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensemaking and Perception • Case study
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR-systems: Exploration vs. Exploitation • Consequences of unipolar organizations
Day 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation • Sensemaking and Leadership
Day 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student project presentations • Conclusion
Comments	
"Reality backs up while it is approached by the subject who tries to understand it. Ignorance and knowledge grow together." (John A. Meacham)	
Criteria for successful completion of the course	
<p>Grading Scale</p> <p>100-90% excellent (1) 89-80% good (2) 79-70% satisfactory (3) 69-60% sufficient (4) 59-0% fail (5)</p>	
Assessment	
<p>Pre-course assignment: 25%</p> <p>Students project: 45%</p> <p>Active participation/contribution in class: 30%</p> <p><i>Please note: students' attendance and punctuality are mandatory in all classes except in cases of illness.</i></p>	

Course literature (cases, papers, online material...)

Busby, Joshua (2018). Warming World – Why Climate Change matters more than anything else – Foreign Affairs, July/August 2018.

Chua, Amy (2018). Tribal World – Group Identity is all! – Foreign Affairs, July/August 2018.

Drum, Kevin (2018). Tech World – Welcome to the Digital Revolution – Foreign Affairs, July/August 2018.

Maitlis, Sally; Christianson, Marlys (2014). Sensemaking in Organizations: Taking Stock and Moving Forward - The Academy of Management Annals, Vol 8, No 1, p. 57-125, 2014

Wallace, David Foster (2009). This is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about living a compassionate Life (Commencement speech); YouTube (<https://youtu.be/8CrOL-ydFMI>)

Weick, Karl (1993). The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster - Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol 38, No 4, p. 628-652, 1993

Further readings suggested by the lecturer(s)

Anders, Günther (1956). The Outdatedness of the Human Species.

Mills, Jean; Thurlow, Amy; Mills, Albert (2010). Making sense of sensemaking: the critical sensemaking approach. Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 182-195(14) 2010

Watzlawick, Paul (1993). The situation is hopeless, but not serious: The pursuit of Unhappiness. Norton & Company

Please note the following information on the total workload of the respective course:

Course level	ECTS-credits	Pre-course workload	In-class activity	Outside of class workload during the program
Graduate	3	approx. 20 hours	19 hours (= 25 teaching hours)	approx. 20 hours