YORK UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies
School of Administrative Studies

AP/ADMS 4010 A – Organization and Administrative Theory
Fall 2026

Course Information

Course Director: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, PhD, MBA

E-mail: jrousseau@schulich.yorku.ca

Office Hours & Location: By appointment via e-mail (flexible); meetings may also be scheduled through Zoom

Course Time & Day: Tuesdays 16:00 – 18:50

Class Location: ACW 008, Keele Campus

Course platform: eClass (all materials, submissions, and announcements)

Course Overview

The goal of this course is to develop critical thinkers about organizations in contemporary contexts. Organizations constantly make claims about themselves: "we are flat," "we are data-driven," "diversity is our strength," "we are purpose-led." The intellectual habit this course promotes is to test those claims against evidence, against theoretical frameworks, and against the question of whose interests a claim serves.

The course is organized around ten contemporary problems of organizing, each framed as an arguable question and staged through a real business case and/or news story. Lectures will introduce organization theory issues, including organizational structure and design, environments, institutionalism, resource dependence, population ecology, life cycle, power and politics as tools for making sense of present-day problems: platform organizations, algorithmic management, hybrid and dual-purpose organizations, the diversity debate, ESG, distributed work, and organizational change and even decline.

The required textbook (Daft & Armstrong) supplies the core theoretical foundation, chapter by chapter; the business cases are the raw material against which that theory is tested; and the empirical literature is supplied through instructor-led lectures, pre-class team videos, and posted readings. Students should expect to read carefully, argue from evidence, and have their reasoning tested in class discussions.

Prerequisites: 1) For students in an Honours program, 78 credits including AP/ADMS 2400 3.00, or 2) for other students, a grade of C+ or better in AP/ADMS 2400 3.00. Students are personally responsible for ensuring they have the required prerequisites; students without them are at risk of being dropped from the course at any time. Enrolment questions should be directed to the School of Administrative Studies (Room 282, Atkinson Building); the instructor does not handle enrolment-related issues.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Interrogate the claims made about organizations or that they make about themselves, testing them against theory, empirical evidence, and the question of who benefits.
- Deploy the core concepts of organization theory as analytical tools applied to contemporary problems.
- Analyze business cases critically: identify the real issues, apply the right analytical tools, and make recommendations that follow from the analysis.

Course Format: How Each Week Works

The course runs on a flipped weekly rhythm with three moving parts:

- **Before class, the team evidence video.** Each week (from Session 3 onward), one student team releases a short video (guideline: 12–18 minutes) that teaches the logic and evidence behind that week's question: what is the claim, what does the research actually show, what does the evidence support, and where it breaks. Videos are posted to eClass by 5:00 PM on the Friday before class. Students are expected to watch the video, read the assigned textbook chapter(s), and read the assigned case before class.
- **Before class, the discussion prompt.** By 10:00 PM on the Monday before class, each student posts one question or one-to-two-sentence reaction to the week's video on the eClass discussion board, to make sure everyone arrives briefed and ready for class. Students are expected to post consistently throughout the term.
- **In class, instructor-led theory and discussion.** The lectures supply the theoretical tools, followed by structured discussion and debate that puts the video's evidence and the week's case under pressure. Students should arrive prepared to argue, to be challenged, and to change their minds when the evidence warrants it.

This is a discussion course, so attendance is mandatory. The value of each session depends on students arriving prepared and contributing thoughtfully to the discussion.

Course Materials

Required textbook: Daft, R. L., & Armstrong, A. (2026). *Organization Theory and Design* (5th Canadian ed.). Cengage Learning Canada. Print ISBN 978-1-77841-794-8; eText ISBN 978-1-77841-840-2 for $85 (tax included). Available as an eText through the York University Bookstore and Cengage. Assigned chapters are listed in the course schedule below and are to be read before the session for which they are listed.

- **Case coursepack (required).** A custom coursepack of approximately 10–12 cases, compiled through Ivey Publishing (iveycases.com). Purchase details and the final case list will be posted on eClass before the first class. [Case selections marked TBD in the schedule below.]
- **Weekly readings.** A number of empirical and theoretical readings (journal articles, book chapters, high-quality long-form) will be posted to eClass, supplementing the assigned textbook chapters.

Course Evaluation

Assessment	Due	Weight	What it certifies
Midterm exam	Nov 3 (in class)	25%	Individual grasp of theory and its application
Team evidence video	Fri 5:00 PM before the team's assigned week	25%	Ability to assemble and communicate evidence
Individual case memo	Midnight, Oct 30	20%	Individual critical case analysis
Group case project (presentation + report)	Dec 8 (present in class; report midnight)	30%	Capstone application: analysis and recommendation for a real organization
Total		100%	

Engagement is recognized through the quality-contribution guidelines, described below.

Land Acknowledgement

York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care-taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

Assessment Descriptions

Midterm exam (25%)

In class on 3 November, during regular class time. The exam covers the theory and evidence from preceding sessions, including the assigned Daft & Armstrong chapters, lectures, team videos, and posted readings. The analytical skills practiced on cases will also be tested. Further details in class.

Team evidence video (25%)

The instructor will form teams of approximately five (5) students within the first two weeks. Each team is assigned one week's question and produces a pre-class video (guideline: 12–18 minutes) that teaches the logic and evidence for that question. A strong video does four things:

- States the claim at issue precisely (e.g., "flat organizations outperform hierarchies") and why it matters.
- Presents the best available evidence on both sides, from the assigned textbook chapters, the posted readings, and from sources the team finds. Visualizations may be used.
- Identifies boundary conditions: where the claim holds, where it breaks, and what remains unsettled.
- Sets up the week's discussion: proposes two or three key considerations to inform the class discussion.

Videos are posted to eClass by 5:00 PM the Friday before the team's session. Grading rubric: accuracy and completeness of the evidence presented (30%); clarity and honesty of the argument, including boundary conditions (30%); quality of the connection to the week's case and discussion set-up (30%); communication and production quality — clear beats polished (10%). All team members must contribute to research and production; the team submits a one-paragraph contribution statement with the video.

Individual case memo (20%)

A short, individually written critical analysis (maximum 4 pages, single-spaced, 12-pt Arial) of a designated case, due at midnight on 30 October. The memo must: identify the real issues in the case (as distinct from how the organization frames them); apply at least two analytical frameworks from the course; bring in at least one piece of empirical evidence beyond the case itself; and close with a recommendation that follows from the analysis. Graded on: quality of critical analysis (45%); correct and purposeful use of theory (25%); use of evidence (20%); clarity and writing (10%). This is the deliverable that certifies each student can do the course's core work alone.

Group case project (30%): presentation and report

Teams act as a consulting group to a real organization facing a contemporary organizing problem (case provided by the instructor, or an organization proposed by the team and pre-approved). The project analyzes the organization's current structure, environment, and self-claims; tests those claims against evidence the team gathers beyond the case materials; and recommends a practical, theoretically informed intervention. The project should make generous use of course materials and move beyond them.

On 8 December each team presents (10 minutes + 5 minutes of questions); slide decks are submitted at the start of class. The subsequent written report (maximum 15 pages, single-spaced, 12-pt Arial, cover page with case/organization name and all group members' names and student numbers) is due at midnight on 8 December

via eClass. Groups and topics must be pre-approved by the instructor and cannot be modified without permission. One submission per group. Teams will be composed with diversity in mind.

Quality of contribution

Discussions in class and within groups are the heart of this course. A quality contribution is relevant to the question at hand; engages with what has been said before or starts in a productive direction; demonstrates acquaintance with course material; and advances the discussion. It is never rude, flippant, or dismissive.

Course Schedule

Each session pairs a contemporary question with a case and an instructor lecture supplying the theoretical tools, anchored in the assigned Daft & Armstrong chapters. Team video assignments are settled in Session 2. Cases marked TBD will be confirmed in the final coursepack list on eClass.

Class Schedule

Date	Question of the week	Theory tools (lecture) & assigned reading	Case / notes
Sept 15	What is an organization today? Platforms, ecosystems, and gig networks blur the boundary of the firm	Organizations and their environments. Ch. 1	No case; course setup; team formation opens
Sept 22	Why do organizations end up looking the same?	The external environment; institutional theory; isomorphism; decoupling. Ch. 2	Ivey case TBD; teams finalized (last add date)
Sept 29	Can an organization serve two masters? Hybrids, B-corps, and social enterprise	Designing organizations for social and environmental purposes; dual-purpose design; mission drift. Ch. 3	Ivey case TBD; team video
Oct 6	How do you know if an organization is any good? Performance by what measure, and for whom?	Strategy, organizational design, and effectiveness. Ch. 4	Ivey case TBD; team video
Oct 13	Fall Reading Week — No class		
Oct 20	Do “flat” and “bossless” organizations deliver? / Is there a “business case for diversity”?	Fundamentals of organizational structure; culture and ethics; the diversity-bonus debate. Ch. 5 + Ch. 6 (Page/Phillips recommended)	Ivey case TBD; team video
Oct 27	Who does the algorithm work for? Algorithmic management and the data-driven firm	Manufacturing and service technologies; digitization; algorithmic management. Ch. 7	Ivey case TBD; team video. Individual case memo due Oct 30
Nov 3	Midterm exam (Ch. 1–7)		In class
Nov 10	Where did the office go? Distributed work and what it does to structure and culture	Interorganizational relationships; the international environment; the remote/hybrid evidence. Ch. 8 + Ch. 9	Ivey case TBD; team video. (Drop deadline Nov 10)
Nov 17	Who survives and who dies? Size, life cycle, and decline	Organization size, life cycle, and decline. Ch. 10	Ivey case TBD; team video
Nov 24	Purpose or performance? The ESG promise and its discontents	Decision-making processes; conflict, power, and politics. Ch. 11 + Ch. 12	Ivey case TBD; team video
Dec 1	Whose change is it? Why change efforts fail, and who gets hurt	Innovation and change. Ch. 13	Ivey case TBD; team video
Dec 8	Group presentations	Course synthesis	Group presentations; final report due by midnight

Exact readings are confirmed on eClass and may be adjusted as the term unfolds.

Submitting Assignments and Late Work

All assignments are submitted through eClass; separate drop boxes will be provided. For group submissions, one submission per group with all members named on the cover page and the group's name in the file title. Due dates are firm, except where academic consideration or another University-approved accommodation applies. Otherwise, late assignments are penalized by one grade point per day (an A becomes A−, then B+, and so on). A student who misses the midterm for an acceptable, documented reason may be permitted a make-up exam at the instructor's discretion.

Academic Consideration of Missed Coursework

Coursework worth **20% or less** of the final course grade **might** fall under the provisions of the Policy on Academic Consideration for Missed Course Work, whereby students may self-declare **no more than** two (2) seven-day consideration periods in a 12-week term [one (1) seven-day consideration period per six-week term] for missed assessments. Students are expected to be familiar with the policy, eligibility criteria, timelines and responsibilities as set in the policy.

- This policy applies to course assessments worth 20% or less of your overall course grade and does not apply to final exams held during the final examination period.
- Where **built-in** accommodations are set for the assessment, additional considerations are not required under the policy. Built in accommodations can include dropping the lower grade from a set of assessments (such as when the 5 top marks of 7 quizzes count towards the final grade), providing a flexible submission timeline (such as when assignments are open for a long duration), or other built-in accommodations.
- **Additional criteria** regarding eligible assessments are described in the Policy on Academic Consideration for Missed Course Work and eClass reporting help page.

Students are responsible to:

- Check Policy for eligibility criteria (sections 5.1 a, c, d) and timelines.
- Promptly **submit** their self-declaration(s) for academic consideration through eClass.
- **Follow up** regarding accommodation with their professor **no later than** two (2) business days after the end of the consideration period regarding any accommodation for missed work. A grade of zero (0) on the missed work will normally apply when follow up is not done.
- **Be prepared** to complete the work as per the accommodation upon your return.

Grading

The grading scheme conforms to the 9-point system used in undergraduate programs at York University (A+ = 9, 90–100, through F = 0, below 50). For the full description, see the York University Academic Calendar.

Academic Conduct, Honestly & Integrity

Academic Honesty/Integrity: Academic integrity is a fundamental and important value of York University. To maintain a fair and honest learning environment, you are responsible for understanding and upholding academic integrity in all courses and academic activities. **Please familiarize yourself with the meaning of academic integrity at York**. You can learn more about upholding academic integrity in your courses by exploring LA&PS Advice for Students regarding Academic Honesty and Academic Integrity for Students.
To better understand the serious consequences of breaching academic honesty policies, familiarize yourself with the *Senate Policy on Academic Conduct*.

Suspected breaches of academic conduct and honesty will be investigated and pursued; significant penalties will be applied when a breach has been found to have occurred. Following these simple rules will help you **avoid** breaches of academic honesty:

- Complete your work well in advance of the deadline.
- Write your entire work yourself (each and every word!) from the ground up.
- DO NOT consult others for ideas or assistance on individual assignments. Independent research using legitimate sources is permitted and expected where required by an assignment. Collaboration is permitted only where expressly required by the assignment.
- DO NOT use tutoring or editing services to prepare your work.

Policy on Use of Generative AI Tools for THIS course: **The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in our course is PROHIBITED**. Submitting any work created (in whole or part) through the use of generative AI tools will be considered a violation of York University's Senate Policy on Academic Conduct. Using AI apps such as ChatGPT, GPT-3, DALL-E, translation software or others to complete academic work in this course is considered a breach of academic honesty/integrity. For more information, please review AI Technology & Academic Integrity: Information for Students. **Turnitin**: To promote academic integrity in this course, students will normally be required to submit their online submissions of written work through Turnitin (via the course eClass) for a review of textual similarity and the detection of possible plagiarism. In so doing, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used only for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Forms of Identification (Student ID)

Photo identification with YU-Card **must be presented** at exams to write the exam (students without ID would not be allowed to write the exam). **YU-cards (either physical or mobile versions) are the ONLY official student identification accepted for exams.** Passports, driver's license and other forms of identification are NO LONGER accepted.

Important Note regarding conduct in examinations: Use of mobile or wireless devices is PROHIBITED in the examination room. All such devices must be completely **OFF** (turned off, not silenced or in "airplane mode") during the exam and while in the examination hall. An exception **might** be made by your instructor for the purpose for mobile YU-Card identification and validation – **pay careful attention to instructions provided by the course director provided for the specific exam/course**. Earbuds/earphones/smartwatches/cameras are prohibited in the exam room.

Student Conduct in the Learning Environment

All students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with University code of conduct norms, as captured in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities, the policy on Disruptive and/or Harassing Behaviour in Academic Situations, and related policies.

York University is committed to fostering teaching and learning environments that are free of disruptive and/or harassing behaviour, physically safe and conducive to effective teaching and learning. Students and instructors are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterized by courtesy, civility and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to such a relationship. Individuals who fail to adhere to such standards and who violate University or public law may be subject to disciplinary action by the University.

Copyright & Intellectual Property

Course materials are designed for use as part of this course at York University and are the intellectual property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third-party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. **Students may not** publish, post on an Internet site, sell, or otherwise distribute any course materials or work without the instructor's express permission. Course materials should only be used by students enrolled in this course.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g., uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a charge of misconduct according to York's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Senate Policy on Academic Conduct, and/or legal consequences for copyright violations. More information: https://copyright.info.yorku.ca/

Remote Learning Information

Several platforms might be used in this course (e.g., eClass, Zoom, etc.) through which students will interact with the course materials, the course director, as well as with one another. Students are required to have access to minimum technology requirements to complete online activities and assignments.

Technical Requirements & Support: When meeting online or completing coursework online, please ensure that you have access to a stable, higher-speed Internet connection and an appropriate computer/device that can support your learning. Please note that smartphones/smart devices apps (such as the eClass and Zoom apps) may have different/limited functionality compared to their use on a laptop or desktop. A webcam/camera and microphone may be needed for certain communication.

Check out these links for e-learning information and quick help:

- **York U's Student Guide to eLearning**: https://www.yorku.ca/scld/remote-learning/
- **Technology requirements and FAQs for eClass**: https://lthelp.yorku.ca/95440-student-faq
- **Student Guide to eClass**: https://lthelp.yorku.ca/eclass
- **Zoom meeting etiquette**: https://lthelp.yorku.ca/zoom-students/zoom-meeting-etiquette

Additional computing support:

- Computing for Students Website: https://www.yorku.ca/uit/student-services/
- Check your internet connection speed: www.speedtest.net

Disclaimers:

- If you have privacy concerns about your data, provide only your first name or a nickname when you join a session (inform the course director in advance).
- The system is configured in a way that all participants are automatically notified when a session is being recorded. In other words, a session cannot be recorded without you knowing about it.

Accessibility and Accommodation

York University is committed to a learning environment with equal opportunity for all. If you anticipate or experience barriers to learning in this course, please raise them with the instructor as early as possible. Students with disabilities should contact Student Accessibility Services to coordinate accommodations, which are communicated through a Letter of Accommodation; test/exam accommodations normally require three weeks' notice. For religious observance conflicts with any date in this outline, contact the instructor within the first three weeks of class; conflicts within formal examination periods require a Religious Accommodation for Examination Form at least three weeks before the exam period begins.

Additional Common Course Policies

Check out common course policies for ADMS/DEMS courses on the School website: https://www.yorku.ca/laps/sas/academic-resources/common-course-policies/

Including information regarding:

- Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
- Religious Accommodation
- and more

Supports

Getting support when you need it: Following is a selection of resources (academic and non-academic):

- Learning Skills Services: https://www.yorku.ca/scld/learning-skills/
- Learning Commons: http://learningcommons.yorku.ca/
- Writing Centre: https://www.yorku.ca/laps/writing-centre/
- ESL Open Learning Centre: https://www.yorku.ca/laps/eslolc/
- Student Accessibility Services: https://students.yorku.ca/accessibility
- Student Counselling & Development: https://students.yorku.ca/counselling
- Mental Health and Wellness at York: https://www.yorku.ca/well-being/
- Sexual Violence Response & Support: http://thecentre.yorku.ca/
- Community Safety: https://www.yorku.ca/safety/
- Office of Student Community Relations: https://students.yorku.ca/oscr
- York International: https://www.yorku.ca/international/
- My Online Services: https://myonlineservices.students.yorku.ca/
- Manage your Academic Record: https://students.yorku.ca/myonlineservices
- Additional LA&PS student resources: https://www.yorku.ca/laps/services/

For **important sessional dates**, please refer to: http://registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/