

teaching methods and underestimate interactive teaching techniques such as discussions, case methods, or role playing; students who have a different understanding of the term “copyright”; or students whose academic background emphasized theoretical knowledge over practical applications. Despite this one shortcoming, however, this book is an excellent pedagogical resource for anyone involved in teaching business studies. Even veteran teachers will benefit from reflection on the authors’ teaching experience and get some new ideas for their classes.

Address correspondence to Elena Denisova-Schmidt, Hauptstr. 3, 79771 Klettgau, Germany; email: denisova-schmidt@t-online.de, elena.denisova-schmidt@unisg.ch.

DISCOURSE, INTERPRETATION, ORGANIZATION

Loizos Heracleous. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 202 pages.

Reviewed by Monika Wallmon, Uppsala University, Sweden

DOI: 10.1177/1080569908325965

SHAKESPEARE ONCE DECLARED, “Hear the meaning within the word” (1962, p. 36), and this is what Loizos Heracleous encourages us to do in his recent volume, *Discourse, Interpretation, Organization*, promoting the practice of discourse studies in organizations.

Sandwiched between the covers of *Discourse, Interpretation, Organization* are only 202 pages, but the book’s size is deceptive and proves that good things can come in small packages. It is a well-conceived, practically oriented, clearly expressed, and focused piece of writing. The book moves from theory to practice, beginning with an introductory chapter that explicates the nuts and bolts of discourse research in social science, particularly in organization theory, and that helps put this complex field into perspective. The four chapters that follow expand on the interpretive, functional, critical, and structural streams of organizational discourse. The final two chapters then illustrate the discourse approach using examples from an IT organization and a global consulting firm.

I would contend that the study of organizational discourse should strengthen students’ critical thinking skills. Whereas other activities partially accomplish these objectives, discourse theory exceptionally cultivates critical thinking. Heracleous’s book helps readers apply discourse analysis to the study of organizations. The

book should engage most students. The book avoids formulaic rules; offers useful references for follow-up reading; and provides a unified view of the field, integrating and relating diverse concepts in creative ways.

However, in few places, I would have liked Heracleous to explore his generalizations further. Although he does not present the text as a full account of how discourse approaches can be used to study organizations, some may express horror that complex phenomena such as “power,” “meaning,” and even “organization” are taken as relatively unproblematic. I wanted Heracleous more carefully to incorporate insights from the authors to whom he refers, such as Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Paul Ricoeur. However, the bibliography is extensive and provides a pathway for readers interested in obtaining more information. Also, those who have pushed more extreme versions of social constructivist and postmodern thought, such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Fredric Jameson, deserve more attention. My suspicion is that the author considers a critical realism of greater value to organizational studies than a postmodern one.

Heracleous provides multiple perspectives while remembering his student audience. The volume suggests to the students what is possible with discourse analysis and expands on traditional applications. Beginners will find it useful, yet it will provoke thought even among more advanced students. Throughout the text, readers remain aware of the breadth, depth, and complexity of the intellectual territory it explores. Although some of the areas Heracleous examines are not quite the unexplored territories that he implies, his volume is likely to succeed in encouraging students to reflect and act. In this, it will have done the field a great service. Overall, I recommend this book. I see it as an asset for students in business communication, as well as for those with a general interest in the way in which our words shape our worlds.

Reference

Shakespeare, W. (1962). *The comedy of errors* (2nd ed.). A. Quiller-Couch & J. Dover Wilson (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Address correspondence to Monika Wallmon, Uppsala University, Department of Business Studies, Box 513, SE-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden; email: monika.wallmon@fek.uu.se.