This seminar is designed to acquaint students with current ideas relevant to theory building in organizational science. We will read and discuss topics such as “what is good theory” and importantly how to build theory. Theory building is more art than science, though, so students should not expect to finish this module with perfect theory in hand. Rather, these ideas will allow you to better understand where theories come from, how to evaluate theory, and hopefully how to build novel theory with your own work.

Each week will consist of reading and discussion. Coming to class ready to offer your opinions and reflections on each and every article is essential. Class contribution will play a role in your grade (15%).

Evaluating theory also takes practice. As such, each student will provide a detailed, developmental peer review of one theory paper (25%).

For the remaining assignments (60%), each student will have a choice:

- Choice one is to identify two theory papers published in top journal in your research area of interest. A good place to look is at the Best Paper awards or Decade Awards. Then provide thoughtful critique of each paper addressing such issues as: how did the authors develop their arguments? What was most effective? How do you assess the magnitude of the theoretical contribution? What questions are left unanswered? These critiques will account for 30% each of your course grade (total 60%).

- Choice two is only for those students who believe they have identified a unique theoretical contribution. As you’ll soon understand, you can’t just sit down one day and force yourself to write a new theory, so this option may be more appealing to advanced students. For this assignment, you’ll turn in a detailed outline of a theory paper (or the initial theory ideas for your dissertation). This will include: Formal statement of your research question; No fewer than three ways you seek to advance theory with this effort; 8-10 major citations of the body of literature/theories you seek to contribute to; and Formal propositions and/or model with bullets supporting each of literature to draw on, key arguments. I will not read/grade a full paper. This is to be a disciplined, well structured outline only. This will account for 60% of your grade.

**Weekly topics and readings**

**Week One: What is good theory?**


**Week Two: The theory building process**


Plus *at least three* of the following from *Great Minds in Management*:

- Folger, R. The road to fairness and beyond, pp. 55-83.
- Scott, R. Institutional theory: Contributing to a theoretical research program, pp. 460-484.

**Week Three: Where can new theories come from?**


**Week Four: Where can new theories come from: Part 2**


**Week Five: Should we care about theory?**


**Additional Reading (Helpful to writing good theory papers):**
