

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Robinson College of Business
BA 9260— Theory Development
Syllabus: Spring 2016

This Course Syllabus Provides a General Plan For The Course;
Deviations May Be Necessary

INSTRUCTOR:

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

- Van de Ven, A. H., *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research*, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Huff, Anne S., *Writing for Scholarly Publications*, Sage Publications, 1999.
- Scholarly journal articles as listed in the syllabus and as announced in class

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Venkatesh, V., *Road to Success: A Guide for Doctoral Students and Junior Faculty Members in the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, (Please order from <https://vvenkatesh.com/book/> to obtain discounted student rate.)
- Weston, A., *Rulebook for Arguments*, Hackett Publishing, 3rd edition, 2000.
- Strunk, W., and White, E.B., *Elements of Style*, Longman, 4th edition, 1999.
- Young, J., *Techniques for Producing Ideas*, McGraw-Hill, 2003. (Kindle version available.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students develop an understanding about developing theory and about its critical role in surfacing a theoretical contribution. They understand the distinction between identifying a business problem and a scientific problem, and the approaches to achieve rigor and relevance. They learn about the key elements of a theory and the approaches to build a theory. They understand the distinctions between process and variance models and among the different types of process and variance models, and also develop the understanding of how to achieve correspondence between theoretical arguments and the specification of the model and its underlying components including the types of constructs and the functional form of the relationships. They develop an understanding about how to leverage context and time in the theory building process, and also about the roles of multi-dimensional constructs and multi-level models in theory development. Cumulatively, they develop the skills and understanding to formulate a research question, synthesize the relevant literatures, build a theory, and specify a model and to achieve correspondence between these essential elements.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the challenges and strategies to develop a theoretical contribution, and to achieve rigor and relevance in research.
2. Formulate a research problem, specify research objectives/questions and motivate their importance.
3. Synthesize the literature and surface the gaps in knowledge related to the research question.
4. Differentiate process and variance models, and align the type of model with the research question and the informing theoretical lens
5. Specify the key elements of process and variance models and achieve correspondence between theoretical arguments and model specification
6. Conceptualize multidimensional constructs and develop multi-level models
7. Define the role of context in the research process and leverage in the theory development process
8. Evaluate the role of time in the definition of constructs and the nature of the relationships
9. Understand the process of communicating and using research knowledge
10. Critique research proposals and manuscripts from a theoretical perspective

CLASS PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF “SYNTHESIS” SLIDES

The course will be run in a seminar format that will include discussion. Students will be called upon to lead the discussion on the topic being covered and all students are expected to participate actively in the discussion. **They should thoroughly read all assigned readings prior to class, prepare a synthesis of the readings, and submit the synthesis PowerPoint slides by noon on the day of the class.**

The PowerPoint slides are to be submitted through the *Desire2Learn System*. Dropbox folders have been set up for each session. Please (1) consolidate all slides for a given session into one PowerPoint file and (2) use the following file name nomenclature: ***Last Name+_First Name+_Month+_Date, for example, Rai_Arun_January_29.***

The class will also include in-class and take-home individual and group exercises on the development of various types of variance and process models.

STAGED APPROACH TO RESEARCH PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION PROCESS FOR THE STAGES

Students will use a **staged approach** to develop a research proposal. They will be provided feedback on the deliverable at each stage (which also includes revisions to the previous stage's deliverable and a response document – a summary of major changes that were made and point-by-point responses to issues that were raised). At the end of the semester, they will submit the research proposal as the deliverable for the course. The final deliverable is graded while the intermediate stages receive feedback but are not graded.

Each of the stages of the research proposal is to be submitted through the *Desire2Learn System*. Dropbox folders have been set up for each stage of the research proposal. Please use the following file name nomenclature: *Last Name+ First Name+ Month+ Date+ Stage_N, for example, Rai_Arun_January_29_Stage_1*.

| Stages | Deliverable |
|---|--|
| Stage 1 Due: 2/2 by 11:59 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Statement • Form of Engaged Scholarship • Candidate Journals | <p>Describe the research problem, enumerate why the problem is important from both a practical and scholarly standpoint, and specify the research objectives/questions (1 page).</p> <p>Identify the Engaged Scholarship approach that will be used and explain the reasons for the choice (0.5 page).</p> <p>Identify candidate scholarly journals that are likely to be suitable targets for the research and explain why these can be suitable outlets (0.5 page). <i>Articles from these journals should serve as exemplars for the approach taken to develop the proposal.</i></p> |
| Stage 2 Due: 3/8 by 11:59 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Synthesis | <p>Synthesize the ~ 10 major articles that are relevant to the research problem and questions, clearly articulating what is known and what are the gaps in knowledge that relate to the problem and motivate the research (3 pages).</p> |
| Stage 3 Due: 4/26 by 11:59 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of theory • Type of model • Model specification | <p>Specify the role of existing theory for the research. What theories will be used to inform the study? Why? (1 page).</p> <p>Specify if a process or variance approach will be used for the study and justify the choice (0.5 page).</p> <p>Develop the key elements of the process or variance model. Ensure that there is correspondence between the theoretical arguments and the specification of the model (3-4 pages, including figures and tables).</p> |

Grading

There are three components to grade assessment:

| Component | Criteria | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|---|------------|
| PowerPoint “Synthesis” slides | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis quality • “Meets Expectation”: 8.5 out of 10 (Very good performance) • Adjustments will be made to the Meets Expectations anchor if performance is (1) exceptional or (2) below expectation. | 25% |
| In-class Participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and quantity of participation • “Meets Expectation”: 8.5/10 (Very good performance) • Adjustments will be made to the “Meets Expectation” anchor when performance is (1) exceptional or (2) below expectation. • Quantity of participation does not substitute for quality. | 25% |
| Research Proposal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although a staged approach will be used to provide developmental feedback, only Stage 3 (final proposal) will be graded. | 50% |

Final grades for the course will be based on a normal 100% scale and will be determined by adding up the points earned. The overall grading scale for the course is as follows:

| <i>Letter grade</i> | <i>Quality Pts Earned</i> | <i>Range</i> | <i>Meaning</i> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--|
| A | 4.0 | > 94 | Excellent; hard to improve upon |
| A- | 3.7 | 89-93 | Very professional |
| B+ | 3.3 | 87-88 | Above normal professional expectations |
| B | 3.0 | 83-86 | Expected professional performance |
| B- | 2.7 | 79-82 | Slightly below what would be professionally expected |
| C+ | 2.3 | 77-78 | Significant flaws or multiple minor flaws, but generally acceptable |
| C | 2.0 | 73-76 | Significant flaws that require professional rework to be acceptable |
| C- | 1.7 | 69-72 | Several significant and minor flaws that border on unacceptable professional work |
| D | 1.0 | 60's | Unacceptable; salvageable only with significant effort to remedy the nature and multitude of flaws |
| F | 0.0 | < 60 | Reject; well below minimal expectations |

"W" and "WF" will be accorded as per university policies to students that qualify for such grades.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE¹

(10 sessions of 4 hours each; * indicates skim as an example/potential future resource as will be discussed in class)

| Session # (mm/dd) | Topics | Reading Assignments | Deliverables |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION | | | |
| 1/12 | Overview of the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Engaged Scholarship • Scholarship as Conversation • Roles of theory and methods in generating scholarly contribution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van de Ven, Chapter 1 • Huff, Chapters 1-2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing Van de Ven Chapter 1 plus the Whetten, Sutton and Staw, Weick, DiMaggio and Bacharach articles. |
| 1/12 | Foundations of theory building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What theory is (and is not) • Nature of constructs and relationships • Making a theoretical contribution • Nature of theoretical contributions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacharach (1989) • DiMaggio (1995) • Sutton & Staw (1995) • Weick (1995) • Whetten (1989) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the last (10th) slide to state three interesting (and important) question based on the readings. |
| SESSION 2: PROBLEM FORMULATION | | | |
| 1/26 | Formulating the Research Problem and Question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business problem vs. Scientific problem Identifying gaps in knowledge (but being cautious about the criticisms of gap-spotting, sans importance, research objectives) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problemization of assumptions • Motivating and formulating research objectives/questions | Concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van de Ven, Chapter 3 • Alvesson & Sandberg (2011) • Simon (1980) • Weber (2003) Examples of problem formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown and Drake (2014)* • Cardinals & Yin (2015)* • Haumann et al. (2015)* • Rai et al. (2009)* • Shang et al. (2009)* • Venkatesh et al. (2016)* • Wolfe et al. (2002)* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing the following: (1) Simon, 1980, (2) Van de Ven, Chapter 3; (3) Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, and (4) Weber 2003. • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting question based on the readings along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |

¹ I have provided examples for the various concepts and theory development approaches. You are encouraged to identify additional examples *including, but not only* ones in your areas of research.

| Session # (mm/dd) | Topics | Reading Assignments | Deliverables |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1/26 | Types of theoretical contribution (based on emphasis on theory development vs. theory testing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colquitt & Zapatta-Phelan (2007) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 slides synthesizing (1) the types of theoretical contribution (Colquitt & Zapatta-Phelan, AMJ) (1 slide) and (2) the articles on <i>Approaches to Achieving Theoretical Contribution</i> (4 slides). |
| 1/26 | Approaches to achieve theoretical contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspectives on “interesting questions,” “sticky papers,” and “rigor vs. relevance,” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barley (2006) • Benbasat & Zmud (1999) • Bergh (2003) • Corley & Gioia (2011) • Feldman (2004a) • Huber (2008) • Lee (1999) • Rynes (2002) • Zmud & Ives (1996) | |
| SESSION 3: SYNTHESIZING THE LITERATURE AND REVIEW OF PROBLEM/RESEARCH QUESTION FORMULATION | | | |
| 2/2 | Synthesizing the literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept-based synthesis • Surfacing the gaps in understanding relative to the problem and question as formulated, or a perspective taken on a phenomenon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques to synthesize the literature (handouts from Indiana University and North Carolina State University) • Bem (1995) • LePine & King (2010) • Webster & Watson (2002) <p>Examples of literature synthesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahuja et al. (2008)* • Alavi & Leidner (2001)* • Carter and Hodgson (2006)* • Cascio & Aguinis (2008)* • Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005)* • Eisenhardt (1989)* • Haumann et al. (2015)* • Niazkhani et al. (2009)* • Wade (2004)* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 of the research proposal • 5 slides synthesizing the following: (1) LaPine and King (2) Webster and Watson (2002) and (3) Bem (1995). • Select one paper that synthesizes the literature and then in 2 slides describe the decisions made by the authors of the paper to synthesize the literature. <i>You may select a paper from the listed examples (or any other article).</i> |

| Session # (mm/dd) | Topics | Reading Assignments | Deliverables |
|--|---|--|---|
| 2/2 | Choices that Make Publication More Likely | • Huff, Chapters 3-5 | • Be prepared to discuss Huff, chapters 3-5. |
| 2/2 | Discussion of research proposals | | • 2 slides on your Stage 1 Research Proposal (do not submit; please have these slides with you for in-class presentation/discussion) |
| SESSION 4: BUILDING A THEORY | | | |
| 2/16 | Building a theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abduction, deduction, induction • Terms of a theory • Ladder of abstraction • Typologies and taxonomies • Propositions and hypotheses • Structure of arguments • Logical validity • Defining the <i>what, how, why</i> and the <i>who, when, where</i> elements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van de Ven, Chapter 4 • Suddaby (2010) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing Van de Ven, Chapter 4 • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting question based on the reading, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |
| 2/16 | Building theory by combining lenses | • Okhuysen & Bonardi (2011) | • 2 slides synthesizing Okhuysen and Bonardi |
| SESSION 5: VARIANCE VS. PROCESS MODELS + Writing Theoretical/Empirical Articles | | | |
| 2/23 | Differentiating between variance and process models | • Van de Ven, Chapter 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing Van de Ven, Chapter 5 • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting questions based on the reading, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |
| 2/23 | Writing theoretical articles | • Fulmer (2012) | • 3 slides synthesizing Fulmer |
| 2/23 | Writing empirical articles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bem (2003) • Feldman (2004b) • Huff, Chapters 6 - 11 | • 5 slides synthesizing Bem, Feldman, and Huff, chapters 6-11. |

| Session # (mm/dd) | Topics | Reading Assignments | Deliverables |
|--|--|--|---|
| SESSION 6: DEVELOPING VARIANCE MODELS | | | |
| 3/1 | Achieving correspondence of theoretical arguments and the specification of variance models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative forms of fit • Moderation • Mediation • Moderated-mediation, mediated-moderation • Nonlinear relationships (e.g., threshold effects, saturation effects, inverted-U effects; Quadratic moderation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van de Ven, Chapter 6 • Venkatraman (1989) <hr/> <p><i>Examples of Variance Models</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown & Drake (2014)* • Cardinals & Yin (2015)* • Feng et al. (2015)*. • Haumann et al. (2015)* • Overby (2008)* • Xue (2011)* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing Van de Ven, Chapter 6. • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting questions based on the reading, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. • 5 slides synthesizing Venkatraman (1989) |
| SESSION 7: DEVELOPING PROCESS MODELS | | | |
| 3/8 | Theorizing process models | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van de Ven, Chapter 7 • Pentland (2003) (Please review p. 528-532) <hr/> <p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maitlis & Ozcelik (2004)* • Montealegre (2002)* <hr/> <p><i>Additional Resources on Process Models</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langley (1999) • Sabherwal & Robey (1993) • Van de Ven & Poole (1995) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 2 of the research proposal (includes revisions to Stage 1 and response document) • 10 slides synthesizing Van de Ven, Chapter 7 • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting based on the readings, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |

| Session # (mm/dd) | Topics | Reading Assignments | Deliverables |
|---|---|---|---|
| SESSION 8: DEVELOPING MULTILEVEL MODELS | | | |
| 3/29 | Developing multilevel theories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chan (1998) • Klein et al. (1994) • Klein & Kozlowski (2000) (p. 211-221) • Rousseau (2011) <p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burton-Jones & Gallivan (2007)* • Rai et al. (2009)* <p><i>Additional Resources on Multilevel Theorizing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Klein et al. (1999) • Mathieu & Chen (2011) • Morgeson & Hofmann (1999) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing the following: Klein et al. (1994); Klein & Kozlowski (2000, 211-221); Chan (1998), Rousseau (2011) • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting question based on the readings, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |
| SESSION 9: LEVERAGING CONTEXT AND TIME IN THEORY DEVELOPMENT | | | |
| 4/5 | Leveraging context in theory development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alvesson & Karreman (2007) • Bamberger & Pratt (2010) • Johns (2006) <p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hong et al. (2013)* • Klein & Rai (2009)* • Venkatesh et al. (2016)* <p><i>Additional Resources on Context in Theorizing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke (2007) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing Johns and Alvesson & Karreman • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting question based on the readings, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |
| 4/5 | Leveraging time in theory development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancona et al. (2001) • Mitchell & James (2001) <p><i>Examples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiu et al. (2013)* • Romanelli & Tushman (1994)* • Shipp et al. (2009)* • Venkatesh et al. (2006)* <p><i>Additional Recommendations on Time in Theorizing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bluedorn & Denhardt (1988) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing Mitchell & James, and Ancona et al. • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting question based on the readings, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |

| Session # (mm/dd) | Topics | Reading Assignments | Deliverables |
|--|--|--|---|
| SESSION 10: MULTIPLE PARADIGMS AND PARADOX; TYPOLOGIES; MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCTS | | | |
| 4/19 | Leveraging multiple paradigms and paradox for theory development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis & Grimes (1999) • Poole & Van de Ven (1989) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 slides synthesizing the following: Lewis & Grimes and Pool & Van de Ven articles. • Use the last (10th) slide to state one interesting question based on the readings, along with a brief statement of why the question is important. |
| 4/19 | Typologies as a form of theory building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doty & Glick (1994) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 slides synthesizing Doty & Glick |
| 4/19 | Specifying multidimensional constructs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law et al. (1998) <p><i>Additional Recommendations on Construct Specification</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jarvis et al. (2003) • Petter et al. (2007) • Wong et al. (2008) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 slides on Law et al. |
| SESSION 10: WRAP-UP | | | |
| 4/19 | Communicating and Using Research Knowledge Practicing Engaged Scholarship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van de Ven, Chapter 8 & 9 | |
| STAGE 3 of Research Proposal Due (April 26, 2016) (includes revisions and responses to comments on Stage 2) | | | |

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