PhD Seminar in Organizational Theory – Special Topics
Spring 2022 for Bidding Only. Subject to Change.

Fall 2019
Wednesdays, 2:15 – 5:00 PM
Uris 327

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Office Hours: by appointment

'Science is a conversation between rigor and imagination. What one proposes, the other evaluates.'
Andrew Abbott

Course Description

This PhD Seminar introduces dominant approaches to scientific inquiry in the social sciences, particularly focusing on the area of Organizational Theory. We will then work through existing research across a number of research topics and cultivate critical skills for the evaluation of cutting-edge research. Throughout the semester students will: (1) develop a greater appreciation for how sociologists and organization theorists apply sociological concepts and frameworks to the study of various topics, (2) develop critical skills for the evaluation of cutting-edge work in these research community; (c) and be better prepared to contribute to research in these traditions. Through our discussions of existing research, we will explore a range of research methodologies used by social scientists and consider strengths, limitations, and tradeoffs for each.

In sum, the class is about cultivating a taste for research in this tradition, which involves appreciating why researchers are doing what they are doing, distinguishing good from bad work, and applying those lessons to one’s own research (which should also be applicable to other areas of social science).

Course Requirements and Grading

You will be evaluated on four types of work throughout the semester: (a) class participation (30%); (b) referee reports (20%); (c) response to referee reports (20%), (d) and paper proposal presentation (30%).

Class Participation (30%)

Classroom learning is always a shared responsibility, but it is especially critical in a doctoral seminar. Though I will structure and facilitate the discussion, it is your responsibility to come to class well prepared and ready to engage actively. This means that for our class session to be
successful, each student is expected to be prepared, to engage thoughtfully in the discussion, and to be respectful of others. Though you do not have written assignments each week, I encourage you to engage with the readings critically and be prepared for a thoughtful discussion. Some weeks I will provide thought questions – please reflect on these before class.

Please be sure to let me know in advance if you will miss a session. You are expected to keep up with the reading. Each session covers a great deal of territory, so missing even one session can significantly hinder preparing for the comprehensive exam.

Referee Reports (20%)

Each student will be responsible for producing two referee reports over the course of the semester. You can select for which weeks you complete a report. I recommend that you organize your thoughts in terms of the following questions (some of which will be more or less relevant depending on the specific readings) – more detail on each of these dimensions will be covered in Week 2.

1. Motivation: Why do the authors say that their topic or question is important? What does the author (implicitly or explicitly) regard as incomplete in existing research such that his or her research constitutes a significant contribution? Do you think that this motivation effectively answers the “so what” question?

2. Theory: What distinguishes the theoretical viewpoint of the authors from existing research in that space? What causal mechanism or mechanisms do the authors focus on and why? What are the potential advantages of a given focus and what are the drawbacks?

3. Evidence: What types of evidence do the authors bring to bear to support their argument? Which sorts of analyses do you find most compelling and why? Can you imagine additional data or other research designs being better suited for supporting their claims? Why do you think the authors made the design and data choices that they made?

4. Big Picture: To what extent do you regard this reading as making a significant contribution to the this week’s stream of research? How could the work have made a bigger contribution? Would you recommend that this paper be: accepted, offered an opportunity to revise and resubmit, or rejected.

Response to Referee Reports (20%)

In addition to being a critic of existing research, you will also have opportunities to assume the role of producer where you will read a working paper (or newly published paper) and corresponding referee reports the author has received. Each student will be responsible for producing one response letter explaining their reaction to the reviewer comments and how they would address each of these comments. Which points are valid critiques of the existing work? Which do you feel are unwarranted? What would you do as the author to address each reviewer comment?
Presentation of Paper Proposal (20%)

Verbally communicating one's research to an audience is a key element to success in academia. Often, before having a full draft of a paper, we present our research, for example at conferences or department seminars. You will have the opportunity to develop this skill by presenting your research proposal during the final week of the semester. These presentations will be 15-20 minutes in length and include a question and answer component, similar to typical conference session. You should plan to share a PowerPoint-style presentation and will be evaluated on your ability to communicate the motivation for your research, your central research question, the existing theory and literature, and a research design.

COURSE OUTLINE

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<td>Networks: Effects for Reproducing Inequality</td>
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WEEK 1

Introduction to Empirical Inquiry in the Social Sciences
September 11, 2019

Medawar, “Is the Scientific Paper Fraudulent?”


Assignment:

Come prepared to discuss one piece of research you admire. Bring a copy with you to class.

WEEK 2

Networks: Implications for Inequality
September 18, 2019


Abraham, Mabel (forthcoming) “Gender-Role Incongruity and Audience-Based Gender Bias: An Examination of Networking among Entrepreneurs.” Administrative Science Quarterly


WEEK 3

Labor Markets I: Organizational Processes
September 25, 2019


WEEK 4

Labor Markets II: Applicant Interface
October 2, 2019


Fernandez RM, Campero S. 2016. Gender sorting and the glass ceiling in high-tech firms. ILR Rev. 70(1):73–104

WEEK 5

Identity: Specialists versus Generalists

*October 9, 2019*


*note: also listen to this interview [https://asqblog.com/2016/06/22/merluzzi-phillips-2016/](https://asqblog.com/2016/06/22/merluzzi-phillips-2016/)*


WEEK 6

Social Movements: The Current Frontier (w/ Dan Wang)

*October 23, 2019*

Management practices—such as Six Sigma, Business Process Reengineering, or Agile management processes—constitute one of the most highly visible applications of management research, and many practitioners view them as the basic tools of their trade. Yet they have been known to wax and wane in popularity, often quite unpredictably, with one technique following the other in wave-like fashion. The scholarly observation of this trend has given rise to the literature on fads and fashions in management studies, which—building on earlier work in allied disciplines—has sought to explain the transience, persistence, and overall trajectory of management practices. In this article, we review and integrate the existing literature on management fads and fashions, taking stock of the sizable body of work that has accumulated over the past few decades and which, to our knowledge, has never been reviewed comprehensively before. At the same time, we also note that technological change—with the advent of the social media and the ubiquity of Internet connectivity, for example—has radically transformed how practitioners seek, consume, and engage with new practices, as well as the way in which such practices are broadcast and diffuse. In our review, therefore, we try to make this well-established body of literature current by explicitly discussing how well its central tenets and theoretical arguments have stood the test of time, and we propose useful directions for moving forward.