Purpose of the Seminar

The purpose of this seminar is to investigate the philosophical underpinnings of theory and research. We will explore and analyze both traditional and non-traditional paradigms in the social and physical sciences. We will discuss logical positivism and empiricism, examine the distinctions between inductive and deductive reasoning, and examine postmodern approaches. We will do this in the context of business research in general as well as through the investigation of theory development within specific business disciplines.

A major objective of this course is to enhance the skills of theory construction among doctoral candidates. The course is designed to encourage independent constructive criticism of existing theories or knowledge and the development of a personal point of view of philosophy about one’s discipline.

Texts


Texts on Reserve:
Brown, Harold I. (1977), *Perception, Theory, and Commitment*
Chalmers, A.F. (1999), *What is this thing called Science?*
Dubin, Robert (1969), *Theory Building*
Kaplan, Abraham (1964), *The Conduct of Inquiry*
Kuhn, Thomas (1970), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
Laudan, Larry (1977), *Progress and Its Problems*
Zaltman, Gerald (1982), *Theory Construction in Marketing*
Zukav, Gary (1979), *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters*

Seminar Approach

The success of the seminar is heavily dependent on all participants having read the materials in advance of the seminar. Initially, the instructor will lead the class discussions. It is expected that by the middle of the term, responsibility for leading the class discussions will shift to other seminar members. By the end of the course, students will be presenting and critiquing theories on which they might base future research.
As students taking this seminar are from a variety of business disciplines, our discussions will greatly benefit from this diversity. Recognizing that this diversity exists, it is expected that the theories and concepts discussed will not be equally familiar to all students. As a discussant, it is your job to communicate the elements essential to understanding and to try to avoid the jargon of your discipline.

**Course Assignments**

Please note the short written assignments as they appear in the syllabus. They are due on the day assigned and will form the basis for discussion in addition to the readings assigned for that week. For each assigned reading, you are responsible for being able to: 1) summarize the author’s position, 2) provide your opinion of the author’s position, and 3) discuss the relevance of the paper/book for business science and theory construction.

For week 4, in addition to the assigned readings, each of you will select one of the 6 listed books. Each of you will present to the class and submit in writing to me: 1) a summary of the author’s position, 2) your opinion of the author’s position, and 3) a discussion of the relevance of the paper/book for business science and theory construction. Your performance on this assignment comprises 15% of your participation and weekly assignments grade.

**Seminar Paper**

Seminar participants are expected to complete a paper that analyzes a theoretical controversy or critically evaluates theoretical constructs. Regardless of the topic, the relevancy of the topic to your discipline should be discussed in the paper. The quality of this paper should be such that it can be submitted to a conference, consequently, this paper may form the basis for a phase 2 paper (most likely after revision).

The actual topic should be selected by the student and approved by me no later than week 11 of the course. A paper outline and partial bibliography should be submitted by this week. You will present your paper in the last weeks of the semester. Papers are due the last day of class.

**Grading**

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<td>Book Summary</td>
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<td>Class Leadership</td>
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<td>Overall Preparation and Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Becoming a scholar is a journey, not a destination. Good luck on your travels.
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Weekly Assignments

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Self Reflection

“...definitions are temporary verbalizations of concepts, and concepts – particularly difficult concepts—are usually revised repeatedly as our knowledge and understanding grows.”
Ernst Mayr

No readings are required for our first working session. Nevertheless, this first assignment is demanding. Prepare for this class by thinking about and answering the questions that follow. At the bare minimum, you should come in prepared to discuss how your field (i.e., marketing, or management information systems) would answer these questions. I want you to reflect and state your own position on these questions. Here lies the difficulty. You may, of course, read in the literature to find “answers” to these questions. But then, you will miss the point of this class. The entire course is focused on exploring these fundamental questions and moving you far enough along in your intellectual development so you can take an informed stance. If you have thought and reflected on your own position you will get more out of this course. If you do not think about these issues, then as we explore alternative ways of knowing, you will have no point of reference from which to judge these different approaches.

Baseline Questions:

What is science? What is not science?

How does change occur in science? What is progress in science?

What is research? What is good research?

Why do we do field research? Why do we do laboratory research? What assumptions underlie the use of a laboratory study? What assumptions underlie the use of a survey?

What is objectivity? How do we achieve it? Why do we achieve it? What role does judgment play in the research process? What role does passion and commitment play in the research process?

What is a concept? What is a construct? What is a variable? What is an operation definition?

What is a model?

What is a theory? How do we construct theories? What is a good theory? What is a bad theory? When do we reject a theory?
What is validity? What is reliability? Why do we seek these? When do we achieve validity and reliability?

**Ontological Questions:**


What is the nature of humans? Can people act freely? Are people determined by outside influences? What is human potential?

**Epistemological Questions:**

How do we gain knowledge about reality?

How do we gain knowledge about humans?

Do we have access to our own thoughts? (How do we know?) Do we have access to other minds? (How do we know?) Where do mental constructs get their meaning?

When do we have knowledge? What is the best way of gaining knowledge?

What is the relationship between a single study and a theory?

What is the role of inductive reasoning in the development of knowledge?

What is the role of deductive reasoning in the development of knowledge?

What is the role of introspection and intuition in the development of knowledge?

To what extent does the discipline influence the development of knowledge?

What is the role of replication in the development of knowledge?

To what extent is knowledge socially constructed?

What is truth (Truth)?

**Axiology:**

What are your (your discipline’s) values goals, aims?

Why do you (those in your discipline) subscribe to these aims?

How do these aims influence our choice of theories and methods?
How do we achieve these aims? What count as achieving a goal?

Are alternative goals permitted?

**Week 3: Nature of Science and Explanation**

*I was born not knowing and have had only a little time to change that here and there.*

*Richard Feynman*

Read:

Kuhn, Chapters 1 through VIII


**Week 4: Scientific Revolutions and Morphology of Laws and Theories**

*The heresy of one age becomes the orthodoxy of the next.*

*Helen Keller*

Read:

Kuhn, Chapters IX through XIII

Johnson and Duberley, Chapter 1


Pick one book and scan it to report in class on its central thesis and its relevancy for theory development in your discipline:

Feyerabend, *Against Method*

Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Reason*

Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*

Popper, *Objective Knowledge*

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*

**Week 5: Logical Empiricism: The Logic of Discovery and Replication**

*We make to ourselves pictures of facts…The picture is a model of reality…The elements of the picture stand, in the picture, for the objects.*

*Wittgenstein*

*If verification is understood as a complete and definitive establishment of truth then a universal sentence, e.g., a so-called law of physics or biology, can never be verified. We cannot verify the law, but we can test it by testing its single instances,…thus, instead of verification, we may speak here of gradually increasing confirmation of the law.*

*Carnap*
Week 5: **Logical Empiricism: The Logic of Discovery and Replication** (continued)

Read:
Chalmers (1978), Chapters 1, 2, & 3


Week 6: No Class-Columbus Day

Week 7: **Falsification**

*Only the falsity of the theory can be inferred from empirical evidence, and this inference is a purely deductive one.*

*Popper*

Read:
Chalmers (1978), Chapters 4-7.

Assignment
Be sure you know a falsificationist’s view on the process of science, the nature of observation, the role of confirmation, the nature of progress, and be sure to know the attacks against falsificationism.

Week 8: **Relativism and Beyond**

*That is the essence of science: ask an impertinent question, and you are on the way to a pertinent answer.*

*Jacob Bronowski*

Johnson and Duberley (2000), Chapter 4-5.


**Week 9: Marketing Thought**

Skim:
Bartels, *History of Marketing Thought*

Read:


Assignment: Choose any basic academic text used in your discipline which has multiple editions (at least 4 editions). Select any 4 editions and carefully review the changes which have occurred in each revision. Write a paper (no more than five typed pages), which critically evaluates the changes in development of thought and postulate why.

**Week 10: MIS Thought**


Week 11: Management Thought


Week 12: Ethical Issues and Wrap-Up


Johnson and Cuberley (2000), Chapter 8.
