

# SYLLABUS

## PhD Course – *Phenomenon-Driven Theory Development*

Prof. Robert W. Gregory (University of Miami)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

#### Background

A significant starting-point for theorizing in the field of management is the researcher's intellectual dwelling with the phenomenon under study (Fisher et al. 2021). For example, theorizing the digital age, researchers must allow themselves to be inspired from our different touchpoints with such phenomena, whether it is through consultancy, teaching, or sheer immersion into the world of digital innovation, transformation, and entrepreneurship. Phenomena-driven theorizing is a powerful way of developing theories relevant to explain novel yet poorly understood phenomena (Gregory & Henfridsson, 2021; Van de Ven, 2007).

#### Objective

The objective of the course is to familiarize the student with theory development in management and business research. The focus is on methods and practices that help the researcher to develop theories that are interesting, rigorous, and valid.

#### Learning Objectives

By the end of the module, the student should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the anatomy of a theory:
  - Different types of theory
  - Boundary conditions
  - Representations
- Demonstrate an understanding of important dimensions of theory
  - Causality
  - Generalization
  - Prediction
- Demonstrate an understanding of the practice of theory development:
  - Conceiving the theory
  - Constructing the theory
  - Communicating the theory

#### Prerequisites

The student must be a PhD candidate.

**Attendance:** *Physical attendance in the classroom is required for in-person classes* and attendance (participation) will be part of the grade. Absences will only be excused in cases of documented serious illness, injury, isolation or quarantine, religious observance, or civic obligation.

If you will miss class for religious observance or a civic obligation, you must inform your instructor at least one week in advance. Any other absences such as absences for work related travel, or family emergency may be excused at the discretion of the faculty upon receiving supporting documentation. If at some point in the semester ***you cannot physically attend class sessions due to illness, injury, isolation, or quarantine***, you must contact Dr. Gregory to determine how to make up the work and

catch up with the material. I will request documentation, such as a medical attestation. Unexcused absences from the classroom may affect your grade or lead to you failing the course. Your *presence in class is essential* to your ability to understand and apply the material covered in this course. Treat this class as you would any other professional obligation.

**Cell Phones and Laptops:** Laptops, smartphones, PDAs, and other electronic devices (such as recording equipment) may be used during class, if attending in person, to aid learning (not to check social media or to complete work from other courses).

**Recordings are Prohibited:** Students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course.

## Course Timeline

The course will take place in the week of June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023. We will meet on Thursday and Friday for 8 hours (including a break), from 10 am to 6 pm.

## Course Schedule

### Session 1: PhD Course introduction

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- course introduction: objectives, contents, and assignment

## *Introduction to Phenomenon-Driven Theorizing*

### Session 2: The Phenomenon

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- identifying a novel phenomenon worth theorizing  
- formulating the research problem

Readings: Van de Ven (2007, chapter 3), Fisher et al. (2021)

## *Fundamentals: Theory, Theorizing, Theoretical Contribution*

### Session 3: What Theory is, What Theory is Not

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- components of a theory  
- boundaries of a theory  
- misconceptions about theory

Readings: Bacharach (1989), Sutton and Staw (1995), DiMaggio (1995), Feldman (2004)

### Session 4: What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution

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- originality of a theory  
- utility of a theory  
- theoretical motivation

Readings: Whetten (1989), Bergh (2003), Barley (2006), Rynes (2002), Corley and Gioia (2011)

### Session 5: Theorizing

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- disciplined imagination  
- construct clarity  
- problematization and constructing mystery

Readings: Weick (1995), Suddaby (2010), Alvesson and Kärreman (2007), Alvesson and Sandberg (2011)

## ***Conceiving, Constructing, and Communicating Theory***

### **Session 6: Reasoning and Writing**

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- logical forms of reasoning
- combining forms of reasoning
- writing for scholarly conversation

Readings: Van de Ven (2007, chapter 4), Shepherd and Sutcliffe (2011), Grant and Pollock (2011)

### **Session 7: Pure Theorizing**

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- building blocks of theory articles
- phenomenon-driven theorizing
- illustrating theory through examples

Readings: Lange and Pfarrer (2017), Gregory and Henfridsson (2021), Gregory et al. (2021), Johns (2006)

## ***Process Theorizing***

### **Session 8: Process Theorizing**

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- process theory vs. variance theory
- narrative strategy
- mechanism-based theorizing

Readings: Pentland (1999), Langley (1999), Van de Ven (2007, chapter 5)

## ***Case-Based Theorizing***

### **Session 9: Building Theories from Case Research**

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- selecting cases, crafting instruments and protocols, and entering the field
- analyzing within-case data
- identifying cross-case patterns

Readings: Eisenhardt (1989), Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), Eisenhardt (2021)

### **Session 10: Replication and Validity**

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- rigor in case-based theorizing
- comparative logic
- validity of case research

Readings: Eisenhardt (1991), Grodal (2021), Tsoukas (1991), Yin (2014, chapter 2),

## ***Grounded Theorizing***

### **Session 11: Grounded Theory**

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- grounded theory
- conceptualization
- discovery and emergence

Readings: Walsh et al. (2015), Suddaby (2006), Glaser and Strauss (1967, chapter 1)

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**Session 12: From Coding to Theory**

- coding paradigms
- data structure composition
- mixed methods in grounded theorizing

Readings: Gioia et al. (2013), Glaser (1978, chapter 3 and 4), Charmaz (2006, chapter 2 and 3), Berente et al. (2019)

## ***Design Theorizing***

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**Session 13: Building Design Theory**

- the nature of theory in information systems
- action design research
- generating design theories

Readings: Gregor (2006), Sein et al. (2011), Gregory and Muntermann (2014)

## ***Theory Writing Strategies***

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**Session 14: Editorial Guidelines for Writing Theory Papers**

- Writing a pure theory paper
- Positioning a theory paper for maximum impact
- Choosing a style of theorizing

Readings: Thatcher and Fisher (2022), Barney (2018), Bundy et al. (2022), Makadok (2022), Cornelissen (2017), Makadok et al. (2018)

## **READING LIST**

- Alvesson, M. and D. Kärreman (2007). "Constructing Mystery: Empirical Matters in Theory Development." *Academy of Management Review* **32**(4): 1265-1281.
- Alvesson, M. G. and J. Sandberg (2011). "Generating Research Questions Through Problematicization." *Academy of Management Review* **36**(2): 247-271.
- Bacharach, S., B. (1989). "Organizational Theories: Some Criteria for Evaluation." *Academy of Management Review* **14**(4): 496-515.
- Barley, S. R. (2006). "When I Write My Masterpiece: Thoughts on What Makes a Paper Interesting." *Academy of Management Journal* **49**(1): 16-20.
- Barney, J. (2018). Editor's Comments: Positioning a Theory Paper for Publication. *Academy of Management Review*, **43**(3), 345-348
- Berente, N., Seidel, S., and Safadi, H. 2019. "Data-Driven Computationally Intensive Theory Development," *Information Systems Research* (30:1), pp. 50-64.
- Bergh, D. D. (2003). "From the Editors: Thinking Strategically about Contribution." *Academy of Management Journal* **46**(2): 135-136.
- Bundy, J., A. J. Shipp and S. Brickson 2022. "Demystifying and Normalizing the Psychological Experience of Writing for AMR: A Qualitative Analysis of the Highs, Lows, and Suggested Coping Strategies," *Academy of Management Review*, **47**(3), 341-357.

- Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis. London, SAGE Publications.
- Corley, K. G. and D. A. Gioia (2011). "Building Theory About Theory Building: What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution?" Academy of Management Review **36**(1): 12-32.
- Corneliessen, J. (2017). "Developing propositions, a process model or typology? Addressing the challenges of writing theory without a boilerplate." Academy of Management Review **42**(1): 1-9.
- DiMaggio, P. (1995). "Comments on "What Theory is Not"." Administrative Science Quarterly **40**(3): 391-397.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). "Building Theories from Case Study Research." Academy of Management Review **14**(4): 532-550.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1991). "Better Stories and Better Constructs: The Case for Rigor and Comparative Logic." The Academy of Management Review **16**(3): 620-627.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. and M. E. Graebner (2007). "Theory Building from Cases: Opportunities and Challenges." The Academy of Management Journal **50**(1): 25-32.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (2021). "What is the Eisenhardt Method, really?" Strategic Organization **19**(1): 147-160.
- Feldman, D. C. (2004). "What are We Talking About When We Talk About Theory?" Journal of Management **30**(5): 565-567.
- Fisher, G., K. Mayer, and S. Morris (2021). "From the Editors—Phenomenon-Based Theorizing" Academy of Management Review **46**(4): 631-639.
- Glaser, B. G. and A. Strauss (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company.
- Glaser, B. (1978). Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory. Mill Valley, California, Sociology Press.
- Gioia, D. A., et al. (2013). "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on Gioia Methodology." Organizational Research Methods **16**(1): 15-31.
- Grant, A. M. and T. G. Pollock (2011). "PUBLISHING IN AMJ-PART 3: SETTING THE HOOK." Academy of Management Journal **54**(5): 873-879.
- Gregor, S. (2006). "The Nature of Theory in Information Systems." MIS Quarterly **30**(3): 611-642.
- Gregory, R. W., and Henfridsson, O. 2021. "Bridging Art and Science: Phenomenon-Driven Theorizing," Journal of Association for Information Systems (22).
- Gregory, R. W. and J. Muntermann (2014). "Heuristic Theorizing: Proactively Generating Design Theories." Information Systems Research **25**(3): 639-653.
- Gregory, R. W., et al. (2021). "The Role of Artificial Intelligence and Data Network Effects for Creating User Value." Academy of Management Review **46**(3): 1-18.
- Grodal, S., et al. (2021). "Achieving Rigor in Qualitative Analysis: The Role of Active Categorization in Theory Building." Academy of Management Review **46**(3): 591-612.
- Johns, G. (2006). "The Essential Impact of Context on Organizational Behavior." The Academy of Management Review **31**(2): 386.
- Lange, D. and M. D. Pfarrer (2017). "Editors' Comments: Sense and Structure—The Core Building Blocks of an AMR Article." Academy of Management Journal **42**(3): 407-416.
- Langley, A. (1999). "Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data." Academy of Management Review **24**(4): 691-710.
- Makadok, R. (2022). "From the Editors: Guidance for AMR Authors about Making Formal Theory Accessible," Academy of Management Review **47**(2): 193-205.
- Makadok, R., R. Burton, and J. Barney. (2018). "A practical guide for making theory contributions in strategic management," Strategic Management Journal **39**(6): 1530-1545.
- Pentland, B. T. (1999). "Building process theory with narrative: from description to explanation." Academy of Management Review **24**(4): 711-724.
- Rynes, S. (2002). "From the Editors: Some Reflections on Contribution." Academy of Management Journal **45**(2): 311-313.
- Sein, M. K., et al. (2011). "Action Design Research." MIS Quarterly **35**(1): 37-56.
- Shepherd, D. A. and K. M. Sutcliffe (2011). "Inductive Top-Down Theorizing: A Source of New Theories or Organization." Academy of Management Review **36**(2): 361-380.
- Suddaby, R. (2006). "From the Editors: What Grounded Theory is Not." The Academy of Management Journal **49**(4): 633-642.

- Suddaby, R. (2010). "Editor's Comments: Construct Clarity in Theories of Management and Organization." The Academy of Management Review **35**(3): 356-357.
- Sutton, R. I. and B. M. Staw (1995). "What Theory is Not." Administrative Science Quarterly **40**(3): 371-384.
- Thatcher, S. M. B. and G. Fisher (2022). "From the Editors—The Nuts and Bolts of Writing a Theory Paper: A Practical Guide to Getting Started." Academy of Management Review **47**(1): 1-8.
- Tsoukas, H. (1991). "The Validity of Idiographic Research Explanations." The Academy of Management Review **14**(4): 551-561.
- Van de Ven, A. H. (2007). Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Walsh, I., et al. (2015). "What Grounded Theory Is ... A Critically Reflective Conversation Among Scholars." Organizational Research Methods **18**(4): 581-599.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). "What Theory is not, Theorizing is." Administrative Science Quarterly **40**(3): 385-390.
- Whetten, D. A. (1989). "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution?" Academy of Management Review **14**(4): 490-494.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. Los Angeles, Sage.

#### Evaluation Criteria

1. Participation  
25%
2. Discussion Leadership  
25%
3. Individual Paper  
50%

TOTAL  
100%

#### Description of Evaluation Criteria:

**DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP (25%):** Each student will be designated as “discussion leader” for multiple class sessions (dependent on course enrollment). The requirements are to lead the session and summarize briefly (because all students will have read) 45 minutes maximum – the key points/issues of the required readings and to “kick off” the general discussion. In particular, the discussion leader should (1) highlight the key themes/issues across the assigned and supplemental readings rather than summarize each reading; and (2) develop some questions or points for class discussion. The discussion leader will also help the class to explore some of the research issues the leader feels are important to the topic. I may deviate from these issues where necessary to address other important aspects on the topic. The discussion leader prepares a brief synthesis for his/her colleagues to guide the discussion. The synthesis will be provided to all seminar participants prior to the session. Your synthesis should be posted at least two days before the class you are leading.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION (25%):** Each week there are assigned readings. Some readings students will access themselves; others will be made available using an online platform designed to encourage engagement with the materials and your classmates. Students will be given instructions during our first class about how to access these readings. Students are expected to contribute to all the seminar discussions. Preparation for each class session by demonstrating that content has been read will significantly determine each student's ability to fulfill this requirement. Even if a student is not the discussion leader, they should still be ready to share their thoughts on the integration, evaluation and extension of the readings. This should include discussion of the research question or issues being addressed and purpose of the article: The important ideas, concepts, theories, methods, results, and conclusions for each article.

**THEORY PAPER (50%):** You are expected to write a theory development paper. You should draw on your in-depth understanding of a novel yet poorly understood phenomenon and incorporate rich examples into your pure theory paper. Alternatively, you should draw on primary data collected and analyzed with methods for inductive theory development discussed in this course. Either way, the paper should establish the phenomenon as a foundation for developing a theory that is relevant and timely. The quality expectation is that the paper works as a draft for later submission to a leading journal, such as *Academy of Management Review* or *Academy of Management Journal*. The quality and the originality of the presented theory as well as the process of coming up with the theory will be valued in assessing the paper. The paper should make original contributions to a well-specified literature.