Amsterdam Business Research Institute

Theory Building in Business Administration

Course Manual

Academic year 2018-2019
Course title: Theory Building in Business Administration

Coordinator(s): Prof. dr. Omar N. Solinger and dr. Flore M. Bridoux

Lecturer(s): Prof. dr. F.M. Bridoux

Study period: September 2018 – October 2018

ECTS: 6 ECTS

Tuition: € 600

Course goals: Upon completion of this course, students will have:

- Acquired academic knowledge of and insight into the literature on theory building in business administration
- Further developed their ability to critically analyze and assess theories related to business administration as well as how their own work contributes to the existing literature
- Further developed the ability to generate new knowledge through the thoughtful application of construct development, counterfactual reasoning, and analogical reasoning tools
- Further developed their skills at communicating about theories with an academic audience

Course Content: Theory and theory development are seen as crucial to making meaningful academic contributions to bodies of knowledge in management and organizational research. Despite its prominence, the constituent processes around theorizing are often left implicit, and not typically discussed or taught in doctoral training programs. The course tries to address this very point; participants will through a series of exercises, practical assignments and readings be trained in ‘reading’ theory in journal articles, and will also develop skills in the development and assessment of theory.

The objectives of this course involve: (a) developing further understanding of issues around management and organizational theory; what theory is, and what its core components are; (b) developing reflective skills in theory development; including basic argumentation and the formulation of propositions, construct clarity and persuasive writing; (c) developing creative skills in developing theory through specific forms of reasoning such as conceptual blending and counter-factual reasoning.
Form of tuition

We make use of weekly 4-hour sessions, often in the afternoon, that are organized in a workshop-format and around ‘soap boxes’ (students presenting required reading articles and facilitating high-level plenary discussion) and in-class exercises and break-out groups.

Assessment

The assessment of this course consists of a series of formative tests in the form of 6 weekly take-home assignments (50 % of the total grade) and a final assignment (50 % of the grade). These formative tests require the students to apply the class material learned in the previous class to their own research topics of interest. The final assignment for the course will consist of a written essay that describes the participant’s use of the theory building methods or concepts used in class (e.g., construct development, counter-factual reasoning, analogical reasoning) in the context of their own research. Details on the assignment will be distributed in class. All of these assignments are individual assignments.

Formative assignments need to be handed in via the designated Blackboard/canvas portal no later than 48 hours before the next class (e.g., on Mondays 13.00 PM, if the next class is on Wednesdays). Late assignments will not be graded and count as insufficient. The final assignment should be handed in two weeks after the latest session in hard-copy and via the Blackboard Safe Assignment / Canvas portal.

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<th>Course structure</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Room</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>September 04, 2018</td>
<td>13:30 – 17:30</td>
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<td>October 09, 2018</td>
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Literature  The list of readings will be provided on the Canvas site of the course.