

## **TU-L1010 THEORY BUILDING AND RESEARCH DESIGN IN STRATEGY AND VENTURING**

5 credit units

---

Course brochure, Spring 2022

December 8, 2021

### **INTRODUCTION**

The course is intended mainly for first-year doctoral students majoring in strategy and venturing but is also applicable for other doctoral students preparing a doctoral dissertation related to strategy and/or entrepreneurship. The course is a continuation for the fall-term course Research Methods in Industrial Engineering and Management. Students wishing to participate in the course are recommended to take first the fall term course. However, passing the fall term course is not a prerequisite for participation.

The course comprises readings, assignments, seminar sessions, seminar presentations, discussions, an exam, and developing a research proposal for the doctoral dissertation. The sessions will consist of lectures/discussions among the instructor and the seminar participants. Therefore, it is essential that all participants come to each class prepared. To this end, each seminar participant will prepare and email the instructor short pre-assignments related to different parts of preparing a research proposal before each session. This is to stimulate discussion and help participants get more out of the seminar to develop their own research. The class is most effective when everyone contributes and participates in the learning process.

### **OBJECTIVE AND FOCUS**

The concrete key objective is to help participants create and develop a good dissertation proposal. The course focuses on areas relevant for developing a good research proposal, including problem formulation, literature review, theory and hypothesis development, and research designs and methodological choices. The course is intended to be an arena where students can discuss their research projects and get feedback from the faculty and from their fellow students.

### **INSTRUCTOR**

The instructor of the course is Professor Markku Maula. His contact information is:  
email: [markku.maula@aalto.fi](mailto:markku.maula@aalto.fi), mobile phone: +358 40 556 0677

### **SCHEDULE**

The seminar will be held on Mondays from 13.15 to 16:00 using Zoom. The schedule of the course is presented below:

<b>Date (Mondays)</b>	<b>Submission by email by 10:00 am</b>	<b>Zoom at 13:15-16:00</b>
January 10	DL for enrollment	
<b>January 24</b>	DL for pre-assignment for Session 1	<b>Session 1: Introduction</b>
<b>January 31</b>	DL for pre-assignment for Session 2	<b>Session 2: Literature review</b>
<b>February 7</b>	DL for pre-assignment for Session 3	<b>Session 3: Theory development</b>
<b>February 14</b>	DL for pre-assignment for Session 4	<b>Session 4: Research designs</b>
<b>February 23</b> <i>(TUESDAY)</i>		<b>Exam at 13:00-16:00 (place and time to be confirmed)</b>
March 14	DL for the <u>draft dissertation proposal</u>	
<b>March 21</b>	DL for pre-assignment for Session 5	<b>Session 5: Dissertation proposal presentations</b>
April 11	DL for the <u>finalized dissertation proposal</u>	

## PASSING THE COURSE AND GRADING POLICY

The course grade will be determined as follows:

Pre-lecture assignments, presentations, and class participation	30%
Exam	35%
Dissertation proposal	35%

*Dissertation proposal:* The major goal and requirement of the course is a completed research proposal at the end of the spring semester. This means a paper describing in detail the proposed study, with all the necessary supporting materials and argumentation expected in a proposal, the importance of the problem, past work, expected results, and analysis strategy, for example.

*Exam:* An exam covering the reading materials will be arranged in the middle of the course. The idea of the exam is to ensure that all participants have got familiar with the reading materials before finalizing their own draft dissertation proposals.

*Pre-lecture assignments:* Before each seminar session, each seminar participant will prepare and email the instructor a short assignment related to the topic of the session. This is to stimulate class discussion and help participants get more out of the course in terms of developing their own research. The class is most effective when everyone contributes and participates in the learning process.

*Presentations:* Each participant will give two types of seminar presentations: (i) short presentations concerning their research and the pre-assignments, and (ii) the dissertation proposal.

In the first four seminar sessions, after a short lecture in the beginning, we will discuss the experiences of seminar participants concerning their own research. To stimulate the discussion, participants will give short presentations concerning their pre-assignments.

In the last presentation sessions, the participants will present their own doctoral dissertation proposals. These presentations will allow the participants to obtain feedback and suggestions from other participants in the seminar course. In order to allow sufficient time for discussion, the research proposal presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

## COURSE MATERIALS

Most of the course materials will be made available online for the enrolled course participants. The total amount of course readings equals roughly 700 pages.

## INFORMATION

Up-to-date information about the course is made available on the MyCourses page of the course: <https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=32164>

## DETAILED PROGRAM

### ***DL for enrollment***

January 10 (Monday) by email to Markku.Maula@aalto.fi

Please include the following information in your email:

1. your name
2. email address
3. student number
4. postgraduate major
5. name of your supervising professor
6. the topic of your thesis work
7. the stage where you are at in the doctoral dissertation process
8. whether or not you will be able to make it to all sessions
9. any comments or questions concerning the course

### ***Session 1: Introduction, research proposals & choice of topic***

January 24 (Monday) at 13:15-16:00 in Zoom

Introduction

- Course objectives
- Practical arrangements
- Lecture on developing a dissertation proposal

*Pre-lecture readings*

- Christensen, C. M. & Raynor, M. E. 2003. Why Hard-Nosed Executives Should Care About Management Theory. *Harvard Business Review* (September): 67-74.
- Van de Ven, A. H. 2007. *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research*, Oxford University Press, Chapter 1 Engaged Scholarship in a Professional School.
- Bartunek, J.M., Rynes, S.L., Ireland, R.D., 2006. What Makes Management Research Interesting, and Why Does It Matter? *Academy of Management Journal* 49, 9-15.
- Colquitt, J. A. & George, G. 2011. Publishing in AMJ—Part 1: Topic Choice. *Academy of Management Journal* 54(3): 432-435.
- Sandberg, J., Alvesson, M., 2011. Ways of Constructing Research Questions: Gap-Spotting or Problematization? *Organization* 18, 23-44.
- Watch: Van De Ven, A. H. 2017. Research Problem Formulation part 1: What is a problem? at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzQPOTodLs>

*Pre-lecture assignment*

- Formulate and describe your research problem (max 1 page)
- Submit this by email to the instructor before the session on Monday, January 24 by 10:00 am
- Be prepared to present and discuss the research problem

### ***Session 2: Literature review and framing a contribution***

January 31 (Monday) at 13:15-16:00 in Zoom

*Pre-lecture readings*

- Briner, R. B. & Denyer, D. 2012. Systematic Review and Evidence Synthesis as a Practice and Scholarship Tool. In D. M. Rousseau (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Evidence-Based Management*: Oxford University Press.
- Zupic, I., Čater, T. 2015. Bibliometric Methods in Management and Organization. *Organizational Research Methods* 18(3): 429-472.
- Jones, O., Gatrell, C., 2014. Editorial: The Future of Writing and Reviewing for IJMR. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 16, 249-264.

- Locke, K. & Golden-Biddle, K. 1997. Constructing Opportunities for Contribution: Structuring Intertextual Coherence and Problematizing in Organizational Studies. *Academy of Management Journal* 40(5): 1023-1062.
- Grant, A. M. & Pollock, T. G. 2011. Publishing in AMJ—Part 3: Setting the hook. *Academy of Management Journal* 54(5): 873-879.

#### *Pre-lecture assignment*

- Write as rigorous as possible literature review related to your research problem (preferably about 5 pages, max 10 pages including tables and figures)
- Submit this by email to the instructor before the session on Monday, January 31 by 10:00 am
- Be prepared to present and discuss the process and outcome of the literature review

### ***Session 3: Theorizing and hypothesis development***

February 7 (Monday) at 13:15-16:00 in Zoom

#### *Pre-lecture readings*

- Byron, K. & Thatcher, S. M. B. 2016. Editors' comments: "What I know now that I wish I knew then"—teaching theory and theory building. *Academy of Management Review* 41(1): 1-8.
- Whetten, D. A. 1989. What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution. *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 490-495.
- Makadok, R., Burton, R., & Barney, J. 2018. A Practical Guide for Making Theory Contributions in Strategic Management. *Strategic Management Journal* 39(6): 1530-1545.
- Bettis, R. A., Gambardella, A., Helfat, C., & Mitchell, W. 2014. Theory in strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal* 35(10): 1411-1413.
- Colquitt, J. A. & Zapata-Phelan, C. P. 2007. Trends in Theory Building and Theory Testing: A Five-Decade Study of the Academy of Management Journal. *Academy of Management Journal* 50(6): 1281-1303.
- Weick, K. E. 1989. Theory Construction as Disciplined Imagination. *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 516-531.
- Poole, M. S. & Van de Ven, A. H. 1989. Using Paradox to Build Management and Organization Theories. *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 562-578.
- Sparrowe, R. T., Mayer, K. J., 2011. Publishing in AMJ—Part 4: Grounding Hypotheses. *Academy of Management Journal* 54: 1098-1102.

#### *Pre-lecture assignment*

- Develop as robust as possible new propositions or hypotheses concerning your research problem (max 5 pages).
- Submit this by email to the instructor before the session on Monday, February 7 by 10:00 am
- Be prepared to present and discuss the propositions/hypotheses

### ***Session 4: Empirical research design***

February 14 (Monday) at 13:15-16:00 in Zoom

#### *Pre-lecture readings*

- Maula, M.V.J., Stam, W. 2020. Enhancing rigor in quantitative entrepreneurship research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 44(6): 1059-1090.
- Bono, J. E. & McNamara, G. 2011. Publishing in AMJ—Part 2: Research Design. *Academy of Management Journal* 54(4): 657-660.
- Bettis, R., Gambardella, A., Helfat, C., & Mitchell, W. 2014. Quantitative Empirical Analysis in Strategic Management. *Strategic Management Journal* 35(7): 949-953.

- Shaver, J.M. 2019. Causal identification through a cumulative body of research in the study of strategy and organizations. *Journal of Management*, Forthcoming.
- Ertug, G., Gruber, M., Nyberg, A., & Steensma, H. K. 2018. From the Editors—A Brief Primer on Data Visualization Opportunities in Management Research. *Academy of Management Journal* 61(5): 1613-1625.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., Graebner, M. E., & Sonenshein, S. 2016. Grand Challenges and Inductive Methods: Rigor Without Rigor Mortis. *Academy of Management Journal* 59(4): 1113-1123.
- Graebner, M. E., Martin, J. A., & Roundy, P. T. 2012. Qualitative Data: Cooking Without a Recipe. *Strategic Organization* 10(3): 276-284.
- Zhang, Y. & Shaw, J. D. 2012. Publishing in AMJ—Part 5: Crafting the Methods and Results. *Academy of Management Journal* 55(1): 8–12.
- Aguinis, H., Ramani, R., & Alabduljader, N. 2018. What You See Is What You Get? Enhancing Methodological Transparency in Management Research. *Academy of Management Annals* 12(1): 1-28.

#### *Pre-lecture assignment*

- Plan as robust as possible (but practically feasible) way (research design and methods) to test your hypothesis/proposition (max 5 pages)
- Submit this by email to the instructor before the session on Monday, February 14 by 10:00 am
- Be prepared to present and discuss the research design

#### **Exam**

February 22 (**Tuesday**) at 13:00-16:00, place and time to be confirmed

- The exam will cover all the reading materials of the course announced in this course syllabus.

#### ***DL for the draft dissertation proposal***

March 14 (Monday) at 10:00 am by email

- Submit the draft version of your research proposal by email to the instructor by 10:00 am. This deadline is strict (the drafts will be distributed by the instructor to course participants for their feedback and Session 5 pre-assignments immediately after the deadline)

#### ***Session 5: Dissertation proposal presentations***

March 21 (Monday) at 13:15-16:00 in Zoom

#### *Pre-lecture readings*

- Research proposals to be discussed in the session

#### *Pre-lecture assignment*

- For each research proposal, write 1-3 pages of suggestions on how to develop the research plans
- Submit these by email to the instructor before the session on Monday, March 21 by 10:00 am

#### ***DL for the finalized research proposal***

April 11 (Monday) at 10:00 am by email

- Submit the final version of your research proposal for the instructor to be graded (DL 10:00 am). This deadline is strict.