



College of  
**Business+**  
**Economics**

Philosophy of  
Social Science Research  
MGMT\*6800 (Summer 2018)

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Content of this course and schedule is subject to change

## Course Description

The University catalogue describes

Philosophy of Social Science Research introduces students to the underlying philosophical assumptions that support empirical research methods within social science disciplines. The aim of this course is to examine the philosophy of knowledge generation and claims, particularly in the context of management phenomena.

My interpretation:

With the advent of technological changes in the marketplace, managers and leaders face complex decisions. To assist with decision making, technology allows us to gather diverse and detailed information about customers, distributors, retailers, product and service producers and about the marketing environment. The challenge facing future researchers, leaders and managers is to distill from vast amount of information and convert that into meaningful and action oriented knowledge. Such knowledge development depends upon three critical factors. The first concerns our conceptual and theoretical understanding about the subject. The second concerns our ability to gather data that would create “better” understanding about the subject. The final factor is concerned with the skills needed to apply analytical tools and interpret the results from analysis. This course is about *developing a theory* that enhances management decisions.

## Prerequisites / Co-requisites

A recent graduate level research methods course (MCS\*6050) or equivalent. Based on the advice of the Program Advisor and/or Thesis Advisor, students may be required to take MCS\*6050 (or equivalent) as a co-requisite.

## Course Objectives or Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the philosophy of research and the science of management and its importance to knowledge creation in the field of management.
2. Identify and defend your personal ontological ideas about management and epistemological position as it relates to research in management.
3. Understand the connection between ontology, epistemology, and methodology as it relates to science of management.
4. Discuss the scientific methods, scientific plurality and its applicability to the field of management, and its uses within subjective versus objective research approaches.
5. Describe various research paradigms and the inductive, deductive and abductive approaches to theory.

## Topics Covered

This course covers three main topics.

1. The nature of management research
  - What is research (discovery oriented, applied, managerial, case based)?
  - Dimensions of scientific knowledge (tacit, explicit, perceptual, conceptual, procedural).
  - Why do we need a philosophy of management research?
  - Natural sciences, social sciences and decision sciences.
2. Philosophical foundations for understanding social science research
  - Connecting etymology, ontological, epistemological, human nature and methodological assumptions as it relates to management.
  - Role of assumptions in knowledge building.
  - Subjective, objective dimension.
  - Agency, structure and process dimension.
3. Research paradigms and dimensions
  - Idealism versus realism
  - Functionalism and functionalist methods
  - Interpretivism and interpretive methods
  - Radical humanism and radical humanist methods
  - Radical structuralism and radical structuralist methods

## Student Evaluation

A seminar format with student and instructor lead discussion will be used. The course will consist of lectures and discussions based on assigned readings. The weekly lecture meeting will be used to extend the concepts and principles presented in the text and readings. You are expected (a) to become an active and self-reliant learner, (b) prepare all the reading assignments before lecture sessions, and (c) actively participate in class discussion and develop an appreciation for alternative views.

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Weekly hand in assignments | 50% |
| Major paper                | 50% |

### Critiquing Articles (50%)

Each week, starting from week of May 21 to July 23, the students would complete a 1 to 1.5 page critique of article(s) assigned. The critique would be due at the START of each class. Note that each week's critique is worth 5%.

Here are formatting suggestions for writing critique.

1. Title of the Reading/Article
2. Focus of the Reading/Key Terms about 1/5-1/4 page - point form
3. Overview of the Reading/Article about 1/2-3/4 page - point form
4. Personal Insights/Comments about 1/4-1/2 page - point form

Final output should be about one to one and half (single spaced, 12 font) summary per reading.

### Major Paper (50%), provides evaluation for learning outcomes 3 and 4

The major paper (5,000 words) will be your chance to explore one of management theories (see list below). This paper is expected to be of academic conference quality (e.g. ASAC, AOM, others?) with a potential for future submission into a management conference. You will be required to discuss about your topic's etymology, ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodological approach to research. Suppose I was to do this for management. What is origin of management word? Is management a social science, a practice profession or a fashion business? May be it is all of three. This is ontological question. The epistemological question concerns process of generating and consolidating knowledge. Furthermore, are there some paradigms more acceptable than some others? Are there some dominant institutions, and / or individuals in area of management who have made above normal contribution to distribution and diffusion of knowledge? Finally, are there dominant forms of methodologies that are acceptable in the area of management? Of course, it would be challenging to review management theory or theories in a semester. I have selected 12 such theories that have survived 30 or more years. Here is the list of theories, in alphabetical order. I have additional readings for most of

them in electronic format. I have provided earliest reference that I could find, although theory itself may have originated earlier than that. You could also pick one of theory from [Miles \(2012\)](#) who has documented 40 management theories.

1. Agency theory, Jensen and Meckling (1976).
2. Diffusion of innovation, Rogers (1962), Bass (1969).
3. Institutional theory, DiMaggio and Powell (1983)
4. Mental Accounting, Thaler (1985) and Nudge, Thaler and Sunstein, (2003)
5. Prospect theory, Kahneman and Tversky (1979)
6. Resource based theory, Wernerfelt (1984)
7. Self determination theory, Deci (1980)
8. Signaling, Spence (1973)
9. Social Contingency theory, Tetlock (1983)
10. Rationality, Simon (1955)
11. Theory of planned behaviour, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)
12. Transaction cost analysis, Williamson (1975)

## Required Reading

Van de Ven, Andrew H. (2006) *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide to Organizational and Social Research*, Oxford University Press.

You may find Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu> a useful source.

You also may find online etymology dictionary <http://etymonline.com> a useful source.

There are many books on various philosophical aspects of science, social science and management. Here is a short list. I would be glad to share following with everyone.

Bhaskar Roy (2007) *A Realist Theory of Science*, Verso.

Bishop Robert C. (2007) *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Continuum International Publishing Group.

Brooks Jr., Frederick P. (2010) *The Design of Design*, Addison-Wesley.

- Burrell Gibson and Gareth Morgan (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*, Ashgate publishing company.
- Catapano, Peter and Simon Critchley (2016) *THE STONE READER: Modern Philosophy in 133 Arguments*, Liveright Publishing company, NY: New York.
- Feyerabend Paul K. (2011) *The Tyranny of Science*, Polity.
- Feyerabend Paul K. (2010) *Against Method*, Verso; 4th edition.
- Griseri Paul (2013) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Management*, Sage Publication.
- Hausman Daniel M. (2008) *The Philosophy of Economics: An Anthology*, Third Edition, Cambridge University Press.
- Hunt Shelby D. (2002) *Foundations of Marketing Theory: Toward a General Theory of Marketing*, M. E. Sharp Inc.
- Kuhn Thomas S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second Edition, University of Chicago Press.
- Lakatos Imre, John Worrall and Gregory Currie (1980) *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes: Volume 1: Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press.
- Lakatos Imre, John Worrall and Gregory Currie (1980) *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology: Volume 2, Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press.
- Longino, Helen L. (2002) *The Fate of Knowledge*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Maki Uskali (editor, 2012), *Philosophy of Economics*, North Holland.
- Mattessich Richard (1978) *Instrumental Reasoning and Systems Methodology: An Epistemology of the Applied and Social Sciences*, D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Pearl Judea (2000) *Causality: Models, Reasoning and Inference*, Cambridge University Press.
- Popper Karl (2002) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Routledge, Second edition.
- Popper Karl (2002) *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, Routledge, Second edition.
- Rosenberg Alexander (2008) *Philosophy of Social Science*, Third Edition, Westview Press.
- Schon, Donald A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Basic Books Inc.
- Simon Herbert A. (1981) *The Sciences of the Artificial*, MIT Press.

### Weekly Topics and Tentative Schedule

| Week of | Topic                             | Key Questions and Readings  |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---|
| May 10  | Introduction                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the course</li> <li>• What is knowledge?</li> <li>• What is science and what is management? science, practice or fashion?</li> <li>• What is research?</li> <li>• Why do we need a philosophy of research?</li> </ul>  |
| May 14  | Field of Management – Assumptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sunstein Cass R.</a> and Richard H. Thaler (2003) Libertarian Paternalism is Not an Oxymoron, <i>The University of Chicago Law Review</i>, 70(4), 1159-1202.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Gregory Mitchell (2005)</a> Libertarian Paternalism is an Oxymoron, <i>Northwestern University Law Review</i>, 99(3), 1245-1277.</li> <li>• Assumptions about the nature of Management</li> <li>• Understanding the subject - object problem in Management research.</li> <li>• Trait and state challenges.</li> <li>• Idea of stake-holders and their role in knowledge process.</li> <li>• Terminology: theory, phenomena, evidence and common knowledge.</li> <li>• Learning outcomes 1 and 2.</li> </ul> |
| May 21  | Knowledge and Understanding       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 1</a></li> <li>• Etymology, Ontology and Epistemology.</li> <li>• What is knowledge? What is reality? What can we know?</li> <li>• How can we generate and understand knowledge?</li> <li>• Learning outcomes 2 and 3</li> </ul>   |
| May 28  | Logical positivism and Relativism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 2</a></li> <li>• Origin and rise of various philosophical orientation.</li> <li>• Assumptions and process of arriving at theory.</li> <li>• Why competing views? Who supported?</li> <li>• Learning outcome 4</li> </ul>   |

### Weekly Topics and Tentative Schedule

| Week of | Topic                            | Key Questions and Readings  |
|---------|----------------------------------|---|
| June 4  | Pragmatism and Realism           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 2</a></li> <li>• Origin and rise of various philosophical orientation.</li> <li>• Assumptions and process of arriving at theory.</li> <li>• Why competing views? Who supported?</li> <li>• Learning outcome 4</li> </ul>   |
| June 11 | Formulating the Research Problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 3</a></li> <li>• Application to design of Graduate program, see <a href="#">Holman, David (2000)</a> Contemporary Models of Management Education in the UK, <i>Management Education</i>, 31(2), 197-217.</li> <li>• Learning outcome 4 and 5.</li> </ul>   |
| June 18 | Building a theory                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 4</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Lakatos, Imre (1968)</a> Criticism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes, <i>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</i>, 69, 149–186.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Feyerabend, Paul (1989)</a> Realism and the Historicity of Knowledge, <i>The Journal of Philosophy</i>, 86(8), 393–406.</li> <li>• Learning outcome 4 and 5.</li> </ul> |
| June 25 | Variance Models                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 5</a></li> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 6</a></li> <li>• Learning outcome 4 and 5.</li> </ul>   |
| July 2  | Process Models                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 5</a></li> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 7</a></li> <li>• Learning outcome 4 and 5.</li> </ul>   |

### Weekly Topics and Tentative Schedule

| Week of             | Topic                                      | Key Questions and Readings   |
|---------------------|--|--|
| July 9              | Causation and Causal Models                | <p>There are three inter-related themes in philosophical aspect of causality.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Human perception of causality. Idea that story telling, metaphors, imagery, language or experience help us formulate idea of causality.</li> <li>2. Identifying and testing of causality. This area is related to conceptual and statistical procedures involved in demonstrating causality.</li> <li>3. Counter-factuals and policy roles of causal understanding. This area is particularly relevant to managerial aspect of decision making.</li> <li>4. Learning outcome 4 and 5.</li> </ol> |
| July 16             | Communicating and Using Research Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: <a href="#">Van de Ven, Chapter 8</a></li> </ul>  |
| July 23 and July 30 | Review and student presentations           |  |

This course follows the University grading scheme outlined in the University Calendar. Specific numeric or letter grade will be assigned as follows:

|    |           |   |
|----|-----------|---|
| A+ | 90 - 100% | <b>Excellent:</b> An outstanding performance in which the student demonstrates a superior grasp of the subject matter, and an ability to go beyond the given material in a critical and constructive manner. The student demonstrates a high degree of creative and/or logical thinking, a superior ability to organize, to analyze, and to integrate ideas, and a thorough familiarity with the appropriate literature and techniques. |
| A  | 85 - 89   |   |
| A- | 80 - 84   |   |
| B+ | 77 - 79   | <b>Good:</b> A more than adequate performance in which the student demonstrates a thorough grasp of the subject matter, and an ability to organize and examine the material in a critical and constructive manner. The student demonstrates a good understanding of the relevant issues and a familiarity with the appropriate literature and techniques.   |
| B  | 73 - 76   |   |
| B- | 70 - 72   |   |
| C+ | 67 - 69   | <b>Acceptable:</b> An adequate performance in which the student demonstrates a generally adequate grasp of the subject matter and a moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and constructive manner. The student displays an adequate understanding of the relevant issues, and a general familiarity with the appropriate literature and techniques.  |
| C  | 63 - 66   |   |
| C- | 60 - 62   |   |

### Course Philosophy and Approach

To me learning can and should be fun. However, trying to understand complexity of “real world” requires hard work, patience and thoughtful deliberation. Moreover, participatory learning require that we all bear responsibility to be prepared for each class. Preparation means reading and interpreting the assigned reading material. After you have read the material, note your learning and then ask challenging questions such as why does this work, can it be applied to another situation, is there better way to frame the problem and solve it.

The course is based on an active 12-week semester. In my view the most effective and efficient use of classroom time aims at reinforcing or clarifying what the student has tried to learn on an individual basis. For this reason, it will be assumed that the student has carefully read the assigned material and made a reasonable effort to prepare solutions to the assigned problems **PRIOR** to the class. These materials will be **DISCUSSED** in class.

Here are three important rules:

1. **Attendance:** Because interaction is central, and also because your fellow group members will be relying on you for ideas, I expect you to attend every class. Valid reasons for absence include serious illness and family emergencies. Studying for exams and completing assignments are not valid reasons to miss class.
2. **Preparation:** You are expected to read assigned material in advance and to be fully prepared for class discussion. You may be called upon to begin the class and to contribute to discussion at any time. Unsupported opinion will not substitute for informed discussion. Adequate preparation is the only way to avoid embarrassment.
3. **Group work:** You will participate in some group work during the term. Group size of two is preferred for this course. The group should address group problems or conflict in a timely fashion. I am available to assist groups who experience problems.

## Policies and Regulations

All students are expected to abide by the University's academic regulations in the completion of their academic work, as set out in the undergraduate calendar (see <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/index.shtml>). Some regulations are highlighted below:

### Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Graduate Calendar: [http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec\\_d0e1687.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e1687.shtml). You are also advised to make use of the resources available through the Learning Commons (<http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/>) and to discuss any questions you may have with your course instructor, teaching assistant, Academic Advisor or Academic Counselor.

Students should be aware that faculty have the right to use software to aid in the detection of plagiarism or copying and to examine students orally on submitted work. For students found guilty of academic misconduct, serious penalties, up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University can be imposed.

### Academic Consideration:

Students who find themselves unable to meet course requirements by the deadline or criteria expected because of medical, psychological or compassionate circumstances beyond their control, should review the regulations on Academic Consideration in the Undergraduate Calendar ([http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad\\_calendar/c08/c08-ac.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/undergrad_calendar/c08/c08-ac.shtml)) and discuss their situation with the instructor, Program Counsellor or Academic Advisor as appropriate.

### Religious Holidays:

Should a student need to miss scheduled tests, mid-term examinations, final examinations, or requirements to attend classes and participate in-class experiential for religious reasons, please advise the instructor within two weeks of the distribution of this course outline so that alternate arrangements can be made. For further information see

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-accomrelig.shtml>

### **Code of Conduct - The Top Ten**

As a student in the Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies, College of Management and Economics at the University of Guelph, you are a member of a scholarly community committed to improving the effectiveness of people and organizations, and the societies in which they reside, through pathbreaking and engaging scholarship and pedagogy. We seek to promote a comprehensive, critical and strategic understanding of organizations, including the complex interrelationship between leadership, systems (financial and human) and the broader social and political context. And, we prepare graduates for leadership roles in which organizational objectives, self-awareness, social responsibility and sustainability are primary considerations.

In keeping with this commitment, we expect all of us, including students, faculty and staff to act in a professional and respectful manner to fellow students, staff and faculty, as well as to members of the broader university and local community. This expectation is very much in keeping with your preparation for a professional career.

The following conduct is expected of all of us, including students:

1. Come to class prepared to learn and actively participate (having completed assigned readings, learning activities etc.).
2. Approach your academic work with integrity (avoid all forms of academic misconduct).
3. Arrive on time and stay for the entire class. If you happen to be late, enter the classroom as quietly as possible. At the end of class, apologize to the faculty member for the interruption. If you have to leave class early, alert the faculty member in advance.
4. If you know in advance that you are going to miss a class, send an email to the faculty member letting him/her know that you will be absent, with a brief explanation.
5. While in class, refrain from using any written material (e.g., newspaper) or technology (e.g., the Internet, computer games, cell phone) that is not relevant to the learning activities of that class. Turn off your cell phone at the start of each class.
6. Listen attentively and respectfully to the points of view of your peers and the faculty member. Don't talk while others have the floor.
7. Raise your hand when you wish to contribute and wait to be called upon. Challenge others appropriately, drawing on reason and research rather than unsubstantiated opinion, anecdote and /or emotion. Keep an open mind and be prepared to have your point of view challenged.
8. When sending emails to faculty, apply principles of business writing; use a professional and respectful style (use a formal salutation, check for spelling and grammatical errors, and avoid slang and colloquial short forms).
9. When making a presentation, wear business dress.
10. Provide thoughtful feedback at the completion of all courses (we are committed to continuous improvement but need your input to help us decide what to focus on).

**E-mail Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

**When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the graduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration: [http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec\\_d0e1400.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e1400.shtml)

**Drop Date**

The last date to drop one semester courses, without academic penalty, is 40th day of classes. Two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. Refer to the Graduate Calendar for the schedule of dates: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current>

**Recording of Materials**

Presentations which are made in relation to course work including lectures cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

**Resources**

The Graduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to graduate programs: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/grad>