Knowledge creation and dissemination is one of the objectives of any science. What constitutes knowledge is a highly contested issue. Certainly, at the core of social science disciplines, knowledge is inseparable from theory. Indeed, to seek theory-guided explanations of real-world phenomenon is what separates scholars from consultants, who seek to change reality without explaining it, and from journalists, who report reality but do not explain it. The pursuit of theory drives us to understand reality – to discover truth -- before making recommendations on how to change reality; to explain why reality exists as it does, before trying to alter it. To pursue theory is to pursue knowledge; to pursue knowledge is to advance humanity. Consequently, many scholars emphasize the centrality of theories for any scientific endeavor – a thought widely reflected in many disciplines from the natural to the social sciences. While attention to theoretical work has been at the heart of the Information Systems (IS) discipline for a long time, the focus on theoretical debates and genuine conceptual contributions has been picking up recently. This is reflected by a number of journal sections and conference tracks dedicated to advancing theory and theorizing in IS research just as much as in many authors’ experiences during the reviews of their work.

This course --Theory in Information Systems Research -- invites participants to join the ongoing discourse on theories and theorizing in the Business and Information Systems Engineering (BISE) and Information Systems (IS) research communities. It is designed to help participants build and extend their understanding of the nature and role of theory in BISE and IS research. Through discussions and analyses of current theoretical developments in the BISE and IS discipline and some of its main reference disciplines, participants will engage with theory and advance their skills of crafting their own theoretical contributions and evaluating those of others.
Course Objectives

1. To understand the importance and usefulness of theory in research
2. To learn theorizing strategies
3. To learn to evaluate theoretical contribution in research
4. To develop basic theorizing skills
5. To identify a theory that could be applicable to your own research program

Course Grading

The grade will be based upon class discussion, upon leading the discussion of some of the articles, and upon a single individual project.

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Theory Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussion</td>
<td>1/3rd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Leader</td>
<td>1/3rd</td>
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Course/Class Organization - Our Approach

This course will be driven by discussion and as such students are expected to come prepared for each class, having read and thought about the articles/readings for the week. On the first day of class, each student will volunteer to lead the discussion on one reading of their choice for each session.

The purpose of the classes is to discuss what you have learnt from the readings - both assigned and otherwise and to clarify points you did not understand. My role (as instructor) will be to ensure that the key points have been identified and understood and to keep the discussion moving.

Theory Presentations:

Each student will present one theory not covered in the course readings. These will take place the 3rd-5th class sessions. The presentations will be brief – no more than 15 minutes. The presentations are intended to expose students in the class to novel theories with which they were not previously familiar. The student should plan to diagram the theory in one or more powerpoint slides, present the slides to the class, and distribute the slides in the class dropbox folder. The final slide should provide references to the seminal work as well as other references, as needed, to the theory.
Course Schedule

Session 1: Theory


Session 2: Theorizing


Session 3: Evaluating Theory and Theory Contribution


Session 4: Theory Contribution by Method (holding journal constant)


Session 5: Theory Contribution by Journal (holding method constant)


