PhD SEMINAR IN THEORY BUILDING  
Fall Semester 2014  
Thursdays, 15:00-18:00  
Location, TBA

Instructor: Jaume Villanueva, Assistant Professor of Strategy and General Management  
Email: jaume.villanueva@esade.edu  
Phone: 932 806 162 (Ext. 2258)  
Office hours: by appointment

Course Description
This seminar focuses on problem formulation, theory building and research design. It is intended for doctoral students in the social and behavioral sciences conducting research on managerial and organizational problems.

This seminar is modeled after the renowned theory building and research design course offered by Professor Andrew H. Van de Ven at the University of Minnesota. This seminar is intended as an intensive, shorter version of the Minnesota course, consisting of four 3-hour sessions spread over four weeks (rather than the original full 15-week course).

The goal of the seminar is to provide students with insight into how to develop a substantive research proposal, one that includes a meaningful research problem that is grounded both in theory and in reality, a well-developed theoretical framework that is well-argued and that directly addresses the research problem, and a well-crafted research design that clearly spells out the key elements of process or variance research models and the appropriate units of analysis.

The overarching framework adopted in the course is that of “engaged scholarship” (Van de Ven, 2007), which has as its aim to develop research that rigorously advances theory, but that is also grounded in reality, helping solve, or illuminate, relevant problems or questions experienced by actual people and organizations. This is only an organizing framework, but one that is helpful to think through issues of problem formulation and theory building.

To achieve this goal, students will engage in a number of class activities, including class-time discussions, presentations, readings and will turn in 3 assignments, the last of which is a research proposal worksheet. The goal of these short deliverables (max. 2 pages) is to provide students with an outcome-based objective of practical implications, as students can use these exercises to hone-in aspects of their dissertations or to develop papers that can be submitted to journals or conferences.

Seminar Requirements
Completing this seminar class involves fulfilling two key responsibilities: regular discussion preparation and turning in required assignments on time.

* The instructor, a former student and assistant of Professor Van de Ven at the University of Minnesota, has full and explicit permission to utilize all the ideas and materials associated with the original course.
Participation and discussion preparation

Class discussion of the assigned readings is one of the most important elements of this seminar. Expectations are placed on students in terms of reading and thinking about the assigned readings prior to coming to class each week, as well as in terms of participating in discussions so that the learning experience of the entire class can be enriched.

Assignments

Students will complete three short (max. 2 pages) assignments:
- Problem formulation report (due session 2)
- Theory building report (due session 3)
- Research proposal worksheet (due session 4)

More details regarding these assignments will be provided in class.

Readings & Class Materials


The other readings (articles, book chapters, etc.) will be provided by the instructor and can be changed/modified as the seminar develops.

**SCHEDULE**

**Session 1 (November 20)**

**Main Topics**
- Introduction and overview: developing a research proposal
- Formulating a research problem or question
- Situating, diagnosing and grounding a research problem in reality

**Readings (3)**
- Van de Ven, A. 2007. “Engaged Scholarship,” *chapter 1 & chapter 3*

**Session 2 (November 27)**

**Main Topics**
- Building theory: developing plausible answers to research questions
- Justifying theory: building arguments and identifying assumptions

**Assignment**
- Problem formulation report

**Readings (4)**
- Van de Ven, A. 2007. “Engaged Scholarship,” *chapter 4*
Session 3 (December 4)
Main Topics
- Developing variance theory and variance research designs
- Developing process theory and process research designs
Assignment
- Theory building report
Readings (4)

Session 4 (December 11)
Main Topics
- Conclusions
- Engaged scholarship and problem solving
- Communicating research
Assignment
- Research proposal worksheet
Readings (3)