

Applied Theory

Professor: Christine Overdevest

Time: Thursday 8:30-11:30 am

Place: Tur 2333

Office Hours: Thursday 11:45 – 1 pm or by appointment.

Email: coverdev@ufl.edu

Are you struggling to find a relevant theoretical perspective in the existing scholarship? Do you have trouble articulating your findings in academic terms? Are you not sure about the right way to integrate a theoretical background or theoretical statement in the text? Whatever your theory challenge is, this course will help you address it.

We start with lessons on why we need theoretical foundations for research. We take a brief tour of techniques of persuasive argumentation and commonly used argument heuristics in the social sciences. Assigned readings guide you in the “how to” of grounding your research conceptually and developing a solid relationship with the reader. The second part of the class presents exemplary works in which we see how skilled sociologists use such heuristics to highlight their contributions and establish strong connections with readers. Finally, students will apply knowledge learned by workshopping a manuscript during the course, ideally a paper for future publication or a dissertation chapter. ‘Workshopping’ refers to sharing a draft paper with peers to discuss it and get feedback. Students can share their projects-in-progress with the class. During class meetings, we will analyze together the theoretical aspects of your work and suggest potential ways to develop them. The shared project could be at any stage – from initial thoughts to an entirely written article. You should engage the class not only with your arguments but also with your hesitations and doubts. The goal is to help you develop your theoretical argument in a non-judgmental context.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Understand the need for conceptual foundations and the need for theory in social science research
- Develop an understanding of and skills in persuasive argumentation
- Understand common social science argument heuristics for how to structure, write, and revise scholarly papers, so they make a contribution to theory
- Provide constructive, professional feedback on their peers’ manuscripts

Required Textbooks

Assigned readings will be on Canvas or are on reserve at the UF library.

Course Schedule:

<p>Week 1. August 25</p>	<p>Introduction to Course</p> <p>Organizational meeting. Introduction to class content and setup.</p>	<p>No Assignment</p>
<p>Week 2. Sept 1</p>	<p>Why do we need conceptual foundations in research?</p> <p>Pp 23-30 (skim 31-43). Chapter 2 Conceptual Foundations of Research. In Research Methods in the Social Sciences by Frankfurt-Nachmias et al. 2015. Macmillan</p> <p>Why is creating a relationship with your reader essential?</p> <p>Craft Of Research: Creating a relationship with your reader: your role, pp.17-19. In Craft of Research, Second Edition 2003</p> <p>Managing Uncertainties Pp 30-31</p> <p>A Checklist for Understanding Readers. Pp 32-33</p> <p>How do I make an effective, persuasive theoretical argument?</p> <p>On the (General) Toulmin Model of Persuasive Argumentation</p> <p>The Toulmin Model of Argumentation. Watch video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-YPPQztuOY</p> <p>Karback, Joan. 1987. Using Toulmin’s Model of Argumentation. The Journal of Teaching Writing,6(1): 81-91</p>	<p>Memo 1. – Based on the readings, briefly answer each of these questions (using bullet points is fine): Why do we need concepts in social science research, e.g., what are their functions and uses?</p> <p>What is the difference between conceptual and operational definitions (and why does it matter)?</p> <p>Why is creating a relationship with your reader essential, and how to do it well?</p>

	<p>The Craft of Research, Making Good Arguments, p 114-123</p> <p>Careful readers are likely to question <i>any</i> part of your argument. So you have to anticipate as many of their questions as possible and then acknowledge and respond to the most important ones. You make your contribution to theory, as generally, by anticipating and responding to readers' critical concerns.</p> <p>Craft of Research, Qualifying Claims to Enhance your Credibility, 135-137</p>	
<p>Week 3. Sept 8</p>	<p>What are “argument heuristics” in the social sciences, and why do they matter?</p> <p>Abbott, Andrew 2004 General Heuristics: Search and Argument. Chapter 4 (pp. 110-136) in <i>Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences</i>.</p> <p>This chapter serves as the basis for the next several weeks of class, where we will next read exemplary works of social science and interrogate their use of common argument heuristics. We will ask how these techniques work in the exemplars and how they can help you make theoretical contributions.</p>	<p>Memo 2. What are “argument heuristics” in the social sciences? Define and briefly discuss. For your assignment, please also search the literature in your area and identify a reading that provides an example of one or more of the argument heuristics discussed in this chapter. (Do not pick readings referenced in the assigned chapter). Come to class with a 3-5 slide PowerPoint showing (1) the abstract or other brief description of the work(s) you identify; (2) excerpting key passages that illuminate how authors use the heuristics to develop a theoretical contribution. Be prepared to share with the class.</p>
<p>Week 4. Sept 15</p>	<p>Conceptual or Category Innovation: Creating your own Concepts</p> <p>Cultural Theory – Exemplary Works</p> <p>Annette Lareau – Unequal Childhoods. Notice how Lareau creates and develops the theoretical constructs of the <i>accomplishment of natural growth</i> and <i>concerted cultivation</i> to contain, structure, and</p>	<p>Memo 3. Discuss insights you see from reading Lareau’s use of conceptual innovation. Try to find an example from the literature in your own specialty area of interest where the author used conceptual innovation to make their contribution. Come to class with a 3-5 slide PowerPoint showing (1) the abstract or other brief description of the work; (2) excerpting</p>

	<p>convey her argument. She wraps these concepts in larger theoretical debates about the cultural logics of child-rearing and (cultural explanations of) social reproduction of inequality. Pay attention to other concepts and how she uses them to make a theory contribution (e.g., the transmission of differential advantages, sense of entitlement, sense of constraint). Note how she puts these in italics to draw attention to their special status as general theoretical claims or constructs. She is creating original constructs and using them to help us understand accepted but not fully understood social science notions of cultural reproduction and cultural repertoires (both terms in the lit). This book is a wonderful example of participant observation generating grounded theory in cultural sociology via creative conceptual category innovation.</p> <p>Read Chapters 1, 2, and Skim Chapters 3-11. Notice how Chapter 12 offers qualifications, cf: Booth et al. and Toumlin on the importance of qualifications to build trust with the reader. Readers trust you more when you do not overstate your claims. Delimiting your theory contribution is essential to the quality of your overall argument. What other things does she do that build trust with the reader and strengthen her general argument (see chapter 15, for one)? Read Appendix B.</p> <p>The book is available as an e-copy through UF Library.</p> <p>First submission: _____</p>	<p>key passages that show how the heuristic is used with respect to theory development or contribution.</p>
<p>Week 5. Sept. 22</p>	<p>Problematizing the Obvious</p> <p>Glenn Firebaugh – The New Geography of Global Income Inequality Chapter 71 in David Grusky and Szonja Szelenyi (eds), Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender. pp. 681-694 Routledge.</p> <p>Don't assume a claim is accurate until you have seen evidence to back it up. This heuristic presents</p>	<p>Memo 4. Discuss insights you see relating to how Firebaugh structures his argument to make a theoretical contribution. Try to find an example from the literature in your own area where the author uses “problematizing the obvious” to make their contribution. Come to class with a 3-5 slide PowerPoint showing (1) the abstract or other brief description of the work; (2) excerpting key passages that</p>

	<p>an assertion that most readers accept as true--such as that globalization will lead to greater inequality--and shows that it is false. In this work, Firebaugh shows that inequality worldwide has <i>decreased</i>.</p> <p>The structure form is this: many accept x to be true, but I show why y is true.</p> <p>First submission: _____</p>	<p>show how the heuristic is used with respect to theory development or contribution. Be prepared to present.</p>
<p>Week 6. Sept. 29</p>	<p>Making an assumption (usually a simplifying assumption)</p> <p>Economists have traditionally assumed that people act rationally to maximize their utility (happiness). This assumption has allowed them to build mathematical models of human behavior. Simplifying assumptions often opens the door to entire fields of study.</p> <p>Much economic sociology is built on a different assumption: rational action is hard to achieve because rationality is bounded and embedded in social relations.</p> <p>Economic sociology research demonstrates its theoretical significance by showing how the simplifying assumptions of economics are problematic.</p> <p>Background reading on rationality assumptions in Economics and the alternative - Bounded Rationality - Herbert Simon</p> <p>https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bounded-rationality/</p> <p>Also review: https://sociology.iresearchnet.com/economic-sociology/</p>	<p>Memo 5. Discuss insights you see relating to how Granovetter structures his argument to make a theoretical contribution. Try to find an example from the literature in your own area where the author problematizes “making an assumption” to make their contribution. Come to class with a 3-5 slide PowerPoint showing (1) the abstract or other brief description of the work; (2) excerpting key passages that show how the heuristics is used with respect to theory development or contribution.</p>

	<p>Exemplar reading from Economic Sociology: Read Getting a Job – Granovetter. (His dissertation – cited over 10,000 times).</p> <p>Notice how Granovetter structures his contribution. He starts by pointing out a common assumption that people found good jobs in the 1970s through close personal connections—what we now call strong ties in social network analysis. “It’s not what you know; it is who you know.” It turned out that Granovetter’s dissertation showed the professionals he studied found jobs through secondhand connections—weak ties—rather than through strong ties like immediate friends. When Granovetter offers his best assessment of why this empirical result obtains, his theoretical argument is that everyone we know will have the same job information because they are tied to the same people we are. New information comes in through more distant friends and acquaintances <i>outside</i> our circles. This new common wisdom underpins why “networking” is essential today.</p> <p>Granovetter’s dissertation becomes the foundational reading in social network analysis and economic sociology.</p> <p>First submission: _____</p>	
<p>Week 7. Oct. 6</p>	<p>Making a Reversal</p> <p>Howard Becker 1953. Becoming a Marijuana User. American Journal of Sociology, 59(3): 235-242.</p> <p>Becker started from the standard view that people take up deviant behavior because of psychological motivation to be deviant. Becker reversed the idea. He writes: “Instead of deviant motives leading to deviant behavior, it is the other way around; the deviant behavior in time produces the deviant motivation” (1962:42). He reverses one of our standard assumptions about human behavior. That</p>	<p>Memo 7. Discuss insights you see relating to how Becker and DiMaggio and Powell structure their arguments to make a theoretical contribution. Try to find an example from the literature in your own area where the author “makes a reversal” to make their contribution. Come to class with a 3-5 slide PowerPoint showing (1) the abstract or other brief description of the work; (2) excerpting key passages that show how the heuristics is used with respect to theory development or contribution.</p>

move opens possibilities of interpretation that had been closed to others.

Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell. 1983. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Institutional Fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2):147-160.

Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell's paper "The Iron Cage Revisited," was built on a direct challenge to Hannan and Freeman (1977). The Hannan and Freeman paper's central question was why there are so many types of organizations. They answered that ecological forces produced differences. DiMaggio and Powell turned that question on its head. They asked, why do all organizations look alike, in the process setting up their original theoretical contribution.

Moreover, rather than rejecting Hannan and Freeman's conclusion, notice how DiMaggio and Powell seek a way to allow both to be right. They argue that ecological differentiation comes early in the lives of organizations and isomorphism comes late. They lay out a general theoretical argument about isomorphism and illustrate with examples.

This heuristic produced three of the most widely cited works in modern sociology in the Becker, Granovetter, and DiMaggio and Powell papers.

Note the basic form:

"(Some other author) told you that X is true, but under certain conditions, X is false. Let me tell you about those conditions." This is the simple reversal heuristic.

Optional Supplemental Reading:

Mark S. Granovetter The Strength of Weak Ties. *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 6. (May, 1973), pp. 1360-1380. (cited over 66,000 times).

	<p>Note the title: it captures the main reversal. In standard thinking, strong ties were assumed to be determinative in getting a good job. Granovetter hones in on the opposite: the strength of weak (non-familial or other close ties) getting a good job.</p> <p>First submission: _____</p>	
<p>Week 8. Oct 13</p>	<p>Reconceptualizing</p> <p>Gusfield, Joseph. 1980. The Culture of Public Problems Drinking-Driving and the Symbolic Order</p> <p>Joseph Gusfield reconceptualizes drunk-driving accidents as a “setting” or location problem (too many people have to drive in order to drink in social places) rather than an actor problem (too many people are unable to control their cars because of alcohol intake—the concept implicit in the phrase “drunk-driving”).</p> <p>Performativity theory also reconceptualizes – starting with Judith Butler’s idea that some types of speech perform new categories and identities. She drew from linguistics and speech act theory – especially John Austin’s work.</p> <p>The Diverse Economies perspective picks this notion up and argues that <i>performing</i> alternative ways of life is important for bringing them into being and legitimating them.</p> <p>J.K. Gibson-Graham. 2008. Diverse Economies: Performative Practices for ‘Other Worlds.’ Progress in Human Geography, 32(5):613-632.</p> <p>First submission: _____</p>	<p>Memo 7. Discuss insights you see relating to how Gusfield or the performativity literature structures their argument to make a theoretical contribution. Try to find an example from the literature in your own area where the author “reconceptualizes” prominent ideas to make their contribution. Come to class with a 3-5 slide powerpoint showing (1) the abstract or other brief description of the work; (2) excerpting key passages that show how the heuristics is used with respect to theory development or contribution.</p>

<p>Week 9. Oct. 20</p>	<p>Student Assigned Readings - Pick 2-3 key pieces of literature from your paper. Be prepared in class to lead a discussion of how you use this work to set up and signify your contribution to theory in your second submission. Present ongoing challenges you find with your work in progress.</p> <p>Second Submission _____</p>	<p>Memo 8. Read the assigned readings and the workshop paper for this week. Prepare feedback on the workshopped paper in your memo (bullet points are fine). Acknowledge what worked well and provide constructive input for improving the theoretical contribution. Did you have any questions the author should address to build credibility with the reader? Were important alternative explanations or accounts addressed? Would you recommend edits or additions? While not required, feel free to share track changes or line comments to the author.</p>
<p>Week 10. Oct. 27</p>	<p>Student Assigned Readings - Pick 2-3 key pieces of literature from your paper. Be prepared in class to lead a discussion of how you use this work to set up and signify your contribution to theory in your second submission. Present ongoing challenges you find with your work in progress.</p> <p>Second Submission _____</p>	<p>Memo 9. Read the assigned readings and the workshop paper for this week. Prepare feedback on the workshopped paper in your memo (bullet points are fine). Acknowledge what worked well and provide constructive input for improving the theoretical contribution. Did you have any questions the author should address to build credibility with the reader? Were important alternative explanations or accounts addressed? Would you recommend edits or additions? While not required, feel free to share track changes or line comments to the author.</p>
<p>Week 11. Nov. 3</p>	<p>Student Assigned Readings - Pick 2-3 key pieces of literature from your paper. Be prepared in class to lead a discussion of how you use this work to set up and signify your contribution to theory in your second submission. Present ongoing challenges you find with your work in progress.</p> <p>Second Submission _____</p>	<p>Memo 10. Read the assigned readings and the workshop paper for this week. Prepare feedback on the workshopped paper in your memo (bullet points are fine). Acknowledge what worked well and provide constructive input for improving the theoretical contribution. Did you have any questions the author should address to build credibility with the reader? Were important alternative explanations or accounts addressed? Would you recommend edits or additions? While not required, feel free to share track changes or line comments to the author.</p>

<p>Week 12. Nov. 10</p>	<p>Student Assigned Readings - Pick 2-3 key pieces of literature from your paper. Be prepared in class to lead a discussion of how you use this work to set up and signify your contribution to theory in your second submission. Present ongoing challenges you find with your work in progress.</p> <p>Second Submission _____</p>	<p>Memo 11. Read the assigned readings and the workshop paper for this week. Prepare feedback on the workshopped paper in your memo (bullet points are fine). Acknowledge what worked well and provide constructive input for improving the theoretical contribution. Did you have any questions the author should address to build credibility with the reader? Were important alternative explanations or accounts addressed? Would you recommend edits or additions? While not required, feel free to share track changes or line comments to the author.</p>
<p>Week 13 Nov 17</p>	<p>Student Assigned Readings - Pick 2-3 key pieces of literature from your paper. Be prepared in class to lead a discussion of how you use this work to set up and signify your contribution to theory in your second submission. Present ongoing challenges you find with your work in progress.</p> <p>A Rejection Letter, by Dr. Justin Paul Editor in Chief, International Journal of Consumer Studies</p> <p>Second Submission _____</p> <p>Course Breakdown</p>	<p>Memo 12. Read the assigned readings and the workshop paper for this week. Prepare feedback on the workshopped paper in your memo (bullet points are fine). Acknowledge what worked well and provide constructive input for improving the theoretical contribution. Did you have any questions the author should address to build credibility with the reader? Were important alternative explanations or accounts addressed? Would you recommend edits or additions? While not required, feel free to share track changes or line comments to the author.</p>
<p>Week 14 Dec 1</p>	<p>Faculty one-on-one consultations and feedback on final drafts</p>	
<p>Dec 10</p>	<p>Final Draft Due 12/10.</p>	

Assignments:

Workshop your Paper

First submission (5 percent):

If you already have a manuscript you want to share and discuss, please sign up for one of the earlier workshops. If not, submit a detailed outline of the piece you intend to write during the semester. The outline should include your research question and a clear definition of the relevant fields of knowledge. Explain the current debates in the field and the contribution you expect to make. If you have done the research but not written it up yet, mention the findings and their theoretical importance. Include at the end of your submission a statement on the obstacles you're facing, *whether you submitted a full paper or an outline*. There is no smooth process in writing a paper or developing your academic question/statement. Many writers do their best thinking in the last few pages of a draft.

Second submission (10 percent):

Five weeks after your first submission, submit your second submission, in which you implement the feedback you received. Ideally, it would be an entire article or chapter, but it is not required. What is needed is a reflection on the critiques and refinements in developing your theoretical contribution and argument. A second workshop session will be devoted to providing additional feedback.

Final submission (25 percent of grade):

Due 12/10.

Weekly Assignments (40 percent of grade):

- (1) 12 Brief memos. Submit to Canvas (discussion tool) by 8 pm the night before class. Two lowest scores will be dropped, so in effect you only need to complete 10.
- (2) 6 Powerpoints. Submit to Canvas (discussion tool) by 8 pm the night before class. One lowest scores will be dropped, so in effect you only need to complete 5.

Participation (10 percent of grade):

Everyone should come prepared to offer constructive feedback to strengthen the work discussed verbally. The more engaged you are in helping your peers, the better for everyone.

Evaluation of Grades

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Total Points</i>	<i>Percentage of Final Grade</i>
First Submission	5	5%
Second Submission	10	10%
Final Submission	25	25%
Memos	20 (2 points each)	20%
PowerPoints	20 (4 points each)	20%
Participation	10	10%
		100%

Note: This syllabus is subject to further change or revision, as needed, to best realize the educational goals of the course.

Workshop Sign Up

Week 4 _____ (first submission) Week 9 ____ (second submission)
Week 5 _____ (first submission) Week 10 ____ (second submission)
Week 6 _____ (first submission) Week 11 ____ (second submission)
Week 7 _____ (first submission) Week 12 ____ (second submission)
Week 8 _____ (first submission) Week 13 ____ (second submission)

Attendance Policy, Class Expectations, and Make-Up Policy

You are expected to attend every class (Zoom and face-to-face) unless you have a documented emergency or illness, consistent with the UF attendance policy (<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#attendance>). A substantial part of your grade will be based on activities and participation during these sessions. If you are

unable to attend, please notify us via email before class. Absences will result in the loss of a half letter grade for each absence beginning with your second missed class.

State whether attendance is required and if so, how will it be monitored? What are the penalties for absence, tardiness, cell phone policy, laptop policy, etc. What are the arrangements for missed homework, missed quizzes, and missed exams? This statement is required: Excused absences must be consistent with university policies in the Graduate Catalog (<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#attendance>) and require appropriate documentation. Additional information can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal

penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html>

Campus Resources:

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), [or http://www.police.ufl.edu/](http://www.police.ufl.edu/).

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-emailselect option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Student Complaints Campus:

https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf.

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>.