# Philosophy of Management Research

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## Course Description

The Philosophy of Management Research course is to introduce doctoral students to the nature of scientific work in organizations and management. It focuses on a few of the key issues related to philosophy of science and principles of scientific research. These issues play a pivotal role in guiding researchers' understanding and explanation of important phenomena in our natural and social world. Understanding these issues will help participants gain clarity on the role of scientific research in advancing the practice of management, which plays an important role in linking insights from business research and the advancement of humanity. Failing to have a proper understanding of the role of science or of the scientist can impede scientific work, undermine knowledge creation and accumulation, and stall scientific discoveries. The primary purpose of this course is to develop a new generation of social scientists for business schools.

The course explores some of these questions: What is scientific reasoning and explanation? What are the unique challenges in social science relative to natural science? How does progress and development in scientific knowledge come about? What is the development of science in the management and organization discipline? What role do values play in science? How does science contribute to both the progress and the demise of the human condition? How can we as scientists contribute to the progress in the science of management and organizations, and hence humanity? What does it mean to pursue a career in organization science?

## Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to understand:

1. What is scientific reasoning and explanation?
2. What are the unique challenges in social science relative to natural science? What role do values play in science?
3. What is the development of science in the management and organization disciplines? How does science contribute to both the progress and the demise of the human condition?
4. How can we as budding scientists contribute to the progress in the science of management and organizations, and hence humanity?
5. What does it mean to pursue a career in organization or business science?

**Indicative Assessment Tasks**

Continuous assessment: 40% Individual Presentation and Debate

Written assignment: 60%

Individual/Group Presentation and Debate: Students are required to read all the core materials and lead class discussions. Students also need to present their ideas through individual presentations and group debates.

Individual Written Assignment: Students are required to write a 3000 to 5000-word essay by reflecting on their understanding of scientific research in their respective disciplines.

**Course Materials**

Books (participants must buy these books)

1. Kuhn, Thomas (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions.3rd edition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 0-226-45808-3, paper)
2. Okasha, Samir (2002). *Philosophy of science: A very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
3. Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. New York: Routledge.
4. Additional readings listed below.

**Time Table**

| Week | Date | Content | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sep 11 | Introduction | |
| 2 | Sep 18 | Individual preparation | No class (get required books) |
| 3 | Sep 25 | Book review (Zoom) | Okasha, Samir (2002). *Philosophy of science: A very short introduction*. |
| 4 | Oct 2 | No Class | The day following the Mid-Autumn Festival |
| 5 | Oct 9 | Book review | Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. Part A |
| 6 | Oct 16 | Book review | Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. Part B |

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| 7 | Oct 23 | Book review | Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. Part C |
| 8 | Oct 30 | Book review | Kuhn, Thomas (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions & others.* Part A |
| 9 | Nov 6 | Book review | Kuhn, Thomas (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions & others* Part B |
| 10 | Nov 13 | Book review | Additional readings |
| 11 | Nov 20 | Debates 1 and 2 | Group A & B; Group C & D |
| 12 | Nov 27 | Debates 3 and 4 | Group A & C; Group B & D |
| 13 | Dec 4 | Life in science and society: Essay submission and individual presentations | |

**Course Design**

*Students will be divided into 4 groups (Groups A, B, C, D) (depending on the number of students enrolled). Each group needs to lead class discussions on assigned readings as well as to participate in class debates.*

1. All the reading materials and course contents revolve around four key "debate questions."

Debate 1: "Social science is not different from natural science in terms of the goals of explanation, prediction, and seeking truth, as well as epistemology, ontology, and observational methods." Take a position either FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best arguments (citing relevant literature or evidence) to defend your position. (A&B)

Debate 2: "Scientific change and scientific progress is slow because normal science and paradigms constraint the vision and worldview of scientists. They ignore anomalies due to the paradigmatic perspective." Take a position either FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best arguments (citing relevant literature or evidence) to defend your position. (C&D)

Debate 3: "The relationship between management theory and practice has constituted one of the hottest debates for decades in both global and domestic communities (e.g., Aguinis, et al., 2012; Van de Ven, 2007). Currently, in business schools, the researchers aiming at producing scientific and/or practical knowledge have often been treated as different groups. Here, as a key question, do you think our academic research can really inform managerial practice?" Take a position FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best argument (citing relevant literature or evidence, and examples in management research) and defend your position. (A&C)

Debate 4: "According to the value-free ideal, science should be judged on epistemic values alone. Social (or contextual) values should be avoided and are unnecessary to guide good science." Take a position FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best argument (citing relevant literature or evidence, and examples in management research) and defend your position. (B&D)

2. Course schedule

**Week 1: Introduction**

In this introductory lecture, we will briefly introduce some key concepts related to the philosophy of science. We will also elaborate the course design and course requirements.

**Week 2: Individual preparation**

Students are expected to get the required books and do initial readings.

**Week 3-10: Book review**

One of the key requirements is that in Weeks 3-9, students are required to read three books and write five book reviews (1,000 words each). Students should demonstrate that they have a basic understanding of these classic readings. Students must submit their book review before 11pm on Thursdays before we talk about the specific book and chapters (i.e., 24/9, 8/10, 15/10, 22/10, and 5/11).

**Week 3: Okasha, Samir (2002). *Philosophy of science: A very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. Book Review Assignment 1.**

In your book review, you should read the following chapters and try to present your understanding of the fundamental question: What is science?

- Okasha, Chapter 1 – What is science (A)
- Okasha, Chapter 2 – Scientific reasoning (B)
- Okasha, Chapter 3 – Explanation in science (C)
- Okasha, Chapter 4 – Realism and anti-realism (D)

**Week 4: No class. The day following the Mid-autumn festival.**

**Week 5: Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. New York: Routledge. Part A. Book Review Assignment 2.**

In your book review, you should read the following chapters and try to present your view on: Is social science a science?

- Risjord, Chapter 1 – Introduction to philosophy of social science (B)
- Risjord, Chapter 2 – Objectivity, values, and the possibility of a social science (C)
- Risjord, Chapter 3 – Theories, interpretations, and concepts (D)
- Risjord, Chapter 4 – Interpretive methodology (A)

**Week 6: Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. New York: Routledge. Part B. Book Review Assignment 3.**

In your book review, you should read the following chapters and try to present your view on the same question (but with different evidence and arguments): Is social science a science?

- Risjord, Chapter 6 – Reductionism: structure, agents, and evolution (A&B)
- Risjord, Chapter 7 – Social norms (C&D)

**Week 7: Risjord, Mark (2014). *Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction*. New York: Routledge. Part C. Book Review Assignment 4.**

In your book review, you should read the following chapters and try to present your view on the same question (but with different evidence and arguments): Is social science a science?

- Risjord, Chapter 9 – Causality and law in the social world.(A&C)
- Risjord, Chapter 10 – Methodologies of causal inference (B&D)

**Week 8: Kuhn, Thomas (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions.3rdedition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 0-226-45808-3, paper) Part A**

In your book review, we want you to read the following materials and focus on this question: How does science advance knowledge?

- Kuhn, Chapter 2 & 3 – The route of normal science Kuhn; The nature of normal science (C)
- Kuhn, Chapter 4 & 5 – Normal science as problem solving; The priority of paradigms (D)
- Kuhn, Chapter 6 & 7 – Anomaly and emergence of scientific discoveries; Crisis and … (A)
- Kuhn, Chapter 8 & 9 – Response to crisis; Nature and necessity of scientific revolution (B)

**Week 9: Kuhn, Thomas (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions.3rdedition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 0-226-45808-3, paper) Part B. Book Review Assignment 5.**

In your book review, we want you to read the following materials and focus on this question: How does science advance knowledge?

- Kuhn, Chapter 10 & 11– Revolution as change of world view; The invisibility of revolution (D)
- Popper, Conjecture and refutation. In Godfrey-Smith, P. 2003. Chapter 4 An introduction to the philosophy of social science: Theory and reality. The University of Chicago Press. (A)
- Lakatos, Lauden, Feyerabend. In Godfrey-Smith, P. 2003. Chapter 7. An introduction to the philosophy of social science: Theory and reality. The University of Chicago Press.(B)

- Ghoshal, S. 2005. Why bad management theories are driving out good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*. 4(1): 75-91. (C)

**Week 10: Additional readings**

- Bettis, R.A., Ethiraj, S., Gambardella, A., Helfat, C. and Mitchell, W. 2016. Creating repeatable cumulative knowledge in strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 37(1): 257-261. (A)
- Davis, J.F. 2015. Editorial essay: What is organizational research for? *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 60(2): 179-188. (A)
- Douglas, H. 2009. Chapter 4 – The moral responsibilities of scientists. *Science, policy, and the value-free ideal*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Douglas, H. 2014. The moral terrain of science. (B)
- Hambrick, D. 2007. The field's devotion to management theory. *Academy of Management Journal:* 1346-1351.(B)
- Merton, R., 1973. The moral structure of science.(C)
- Pfeffer, J. 1993. Barriers to the advance of organizational science: Paradigm development as a dependent variable. Academy of Management Review, 18: 599-620.(C)
- Tsui, A.S. 2016a. Reflections on the so-called value-free ideal: A call for responsible science in the business schools. Cross Cultural and Strategic Management Journal, 23(1): 4-28.(D)
- Responsible research in business and management, 2018 (download from rrbm.network). (D)

**Week 11: Debates**

**Debate 1**

- Debate1: "Social science is not different from natural science in terms of the goals of explanation, prediction, and seeking truth, as well as epistemology, ontology, and observational methods." Take a position either FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best arguments (citing relevant literature or evidence) to defend your position.
- Two groups should debate on the above topic, based on (but not limited to) readings on Weeks 3, 5, 6, & 7.

**Debate 2**

- Debate 2: "Scientific change and scientific progress is slow because normal science and paradigms constraint the vision and worldview of scientists. They ignore anomalies due to the paradigmatic perspective." Take a position either FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best arguments (citing relevant literature or evidence) to defend your position.
- Two groups should debate on the above topic, based on (but not limited to) readings on Week 8 & 9.

**Week 12: Debates**

**Debate 3**

- Debate 3: “The relationship between management theory and practice has constituted one of the hottest debates for decades in both global and domestic communities (e.g., Aguinis, et al., 2012; Van de Ven, 2007). Currently, in business schools, the researchers aiming at producing scientific and/or practical knowledge have often been treated as different groups. Here, as a key question, do you think our academic research can really inform managerial practice?” Take a position FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best argument (citing relevant literature or evidence, and examples in management research) and defend your position.
- Two groups should debate on the above topic, based on (but not limited to) readings on Week 10.

**Debate 4**

- Debate 4: “According to the value-free ideal, science should be judged on epistemic values alone. Social (or contextual) values should be avoided and are unnecessary to guide good science.” Take a position FOR or AGAINST this statement and present your best argument (citing relevant literature or evidence, and examples in management research) and defend your position.
- Two groups should debate on the above topic, based on (but not limited to) readings on Week 10.

**Week 13. Life in science and society (Essay submission and student presentations)**

- Each student should submit an essay and present their personal vision in the class.
- For the essay, the topic is “how can you as an individual scientist contribute to progress in science in your discipline?” Either looking back or looking forward, write a 3000 to 5000-word essay about your scientific career and the most important contribution(s) that you have made or would like to make in the past or future 25 years of your professional life as a scientist and educator. In your essay, you should also reflect on the scientific progression in your discipline and present your view on the values of scientific research in your disciplines and your roles in the scientific progress in your discipline.
- For the presentation, it should focus on: What are you passions in life driving you to become the person you are in 2045? What would you like to be remembered for, personally and professionally?

**Appendix: Instructions for debate (in teams)**

The pro team will make a 10-minute argument in favor of the given statement. The con team will make a 10-minute argument against the statement. Then, the Con team and the class can question the Pro team for 10 minutes, followed by questioning of the Con team by the Pro team and the class for 10 minutes. The class will take a 15-minute caucus while the two teams prepare a 5-minute closing statement to summarize their key arguments (taking into account the information emerged from the questioning period).