

# Philosophy of Management Research

Professor Xu Huang

& Dr. Song Chang

Fall 2022

Hong Kong Baptist University

Meeting Venue: WLB 203 (Mixed Mode)

Meeting Time: Thursdays 9:30 am-12:20 noon

xu Huang@hkbu.edu.hk; schang@hkbu.edu.hk

zoom link: <https://hkbu.zoom.us/j/92312487756>

## 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?

Students applying for the Dare to Care Scholarship are welcome to participate as auditing students. However, all auditing students are expected to participate fully in all sessions due to the nature of the course design and to receive a certificate of completion (based on instructors' judgement).

## 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. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 8	Introduction	General Introduction and RRBM position paper
2	Sep 15	Book review	Okasha, Samir (2002). <i>Philosophy of science: A very short introduction</i> .
3	Sep 22	Book review	Risjord, Mark (2014). <i>Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction</i> . Part A

4	Sept 29	Book review	Risjord, Mark (2014). <i>Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction</i> . Part B
5	Oct 6	NO class	
6	Oct 13	Book review	Risjord, Mark (2014). <i>Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction</i> . Part C
7	Oct 20	Book review	Kuhn, Thomas (1996). <i>The structure of scientific revolutions &amp; others</i> . Part A
8	Oct 27	Book review	Kuhn, Thomas (1996). <i>The structure of scientific revolutions &amp; others</i> Part B
9	Nov 3	Paper Discussion (Song)	Additional Readings I (including Douglas and Merton)
10	Nov 10	Paper Discussion (Xu)	Additional Reading II
11	Nov 17	Debates 1 and 2	Group A & B; Group C & D
12	Nov 24	Debates 3 and 4	Group A & C; Group B & D
13	Dec 1	Life in science and society: Essay submission and individual presentations	Dec 8 <sup>th</sup> , final written paper submission

## 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 3-11: Book reviews**

One of the key requirements is that in Weeks 3-9, students are required to read three books and write six 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 Wednesdays before we talk about the specific book and chapters (i.e., 14/9, 21/9, 28/9, 12/10, 19/10, and 26/10).

### **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: 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 5: 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.3rd edition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 0-226-45808-3, paper) Part A. 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 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.3rd edition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 0-226-45808-3, paper) Part B. Book Review Assignment 6.**

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 I

- 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: Additional Readings II

- Wasserstein, R. L., & Lazar, N. A. 2016. The ASA statement on p-values: Context, process, and purpose. *The American Statistician*, 70(2): 129-133. (A)
- Tihanyi, L. 2020. From “That’s interesting” to “That’s important”. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2): 329-331. (A)
- Beugelsdijk, S., van Witteloostuijn, A., & Meyer, K. E. (2020). A new approach to data access and research transparency (DART). *Journal of International Business Studies*, 51(6), 887-905. (A)
- Brodeur, A., Cook, N., & Heyes, A. (2020). Methods matter: p-Hacking and publication bias in causal analysis in Economics. *American Economic Review*, 110(11): 3634-3660. (B)
- Decoteau, C. L., & Daniel, M. (2020). Scientific hegemony and the filed of autism. *American Sociological Review*, 85(3): 451-476. (C)
- Pratt, M. G., Kaplan, S., & Whittington, R. (2020). The tumult over transparency: Decoupling transparency from replication in establishing trustworthy qualitative research. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(1): 1-19. (D)

## **Week 12: Debates**

### **Debate 1**

- 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.
- 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 13: 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 14. Individual Essay Submission and Presentation**

- Students will have two options here. See Appendix B below.

### **Appendix A: 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).

### **Appendix B:**

Students will have two options.

#### **Option A, which is a regular route and applicable to normal students, is to work on an essay titled as “Life in science and society”. In this Option,**

- 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 your passions in life driving you to become the person you are in 2047? What would you like to be remembered for, personally and professionally?

#### **Option B, which is applicable (but are not limited) to students who wish to apply for the Dare to Care Dissertation Scholarship, is to develop a preliminary research proposal based on SDGs. In this option, students need to:**

Identify one or more goals from among the 17 UN SDGs and develop a research question around that goal. The question should ideally involve a puzzle (begins with the word “Why” or “How”) involving issues around the goal and the answer to that puzzle may have policy or practice implications. For example, you might be interested in the goal of “zero poverty” (Goal 1). How can business, non-profit or governmental agencies contribute to the alleviation of poverty in a region or community? You might be interested in health and well-being (Goal 3). Why are some employers willing to invest in employee and community well-being more than other employers? There is something for everyone in these 17 goals. More than ten of them have implications for researchers in all the business disciplines. Business, government or non-governmental non-profit agencies are the primary agencies to implement these goals. Identify one goal that appeals to you and that fits your disciplinary background or personal preference.

We suggest a few resources to get you started. (1) The first is the *Academy of Management Discoveries* special issue on the Sustainable Development Goals (December 2019). (2) The second is the list of award-winning papers in Management and in Marketing which can be found on the RRBM website: [www.rrbm.network](http://www.rrbm.network). You may see how they define research



questions on some of the broad goals. (3) Third is the SDG website. Each SDG goal has several specific targets to be achieved by 2030 (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>). These targets provide measurable outcomes which have implications on business actions. You might also check out the SDG Compass which “provides guidance for companies on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the realization of the SDGs” (<https://sdgcompass.org/business-indicators/>)

In formulating your research question and developing your research design, we would like you to pay special attention to the philosophy of science issues and the responsible research principles. This is the opportunity to apply what you learned in this course to designing empirical studies that will enhance your chance of reaching credible and replicable findings and offering knowledge that is potentially useful to solve practical problems in business and society.

The proposal should have the following sections:

1. **Problem statement:** Describe the SDG and the specific problem you are focusing on. This problem then becomes your research question. Try to make it either a Why or a How question. The why question allows you to identify and explain current practices and discover those that contribute to achievement of the goals. The how question allows you to identify the mechanism that links some practices to positive or negative outcomes.
2. **Research design:** Briefly description the population and region that your research is most relevant; the method of observation (data and measures), the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Pay attention to the “context” (industry, country, profession, ownership, culture, etc.) of your research and explain how it might be relevant to understand or explain the problem (phenomenon). This will help you determine why your “treatment” (the cause or the correlate) is appropriate or would work for the outcomes you are trying to influence (e.g., the SDG goal or target).
3. **Philosophy of science:** Describe how this research project and research design consider the issues discussed in the Okasha, Risjord and Douglas books. A few examples of relevant issues may include the problems of induction and deduction, inductive risk, construct validity, ontology, interpretive and explanatory approaches, looping effect, instrumental rationality, reductionism, normativity, naturalism, under-determinism, methodological localism, situational determinism, multiple realizability, supervenience, causal explanations, etc. Focus on those most relevant for the phenomenon you aim to understand and explain.
4. **Principles of responsible research:** Describe how you consider the seven principles of responsible research in your problem definition and research design. Tsui (2019)’s AMD Guidepost Essay may be a useful guide to develop your research proposal and design that will enhance your chance of producing credible findings and useful knowledge.