LIS 6278 Seminar in Theory Development
Spring 2010
Dr. Michelle M. Kazmer

Thursdays, 2-4:45 p.m.
University Center D Room D2105

Course Description

Students will discuss and critique the structural components and research processes related to the origination, construction, and evolution of theory. The seminar will provide students with an awareness of the historical and social conditions that influence a tradition of ideas.

Objectives

The student will understand the theoretical approach to the development of knowledge by:
• Analyzing historical and social factors associated with theory construction
• Reading critically in the area of theory creation and development
• Understanding and practicing tools to critique theories
• Analyzing the progression of ideas through the development of a specific theory

Texts

Required readings are listed below. They may be placed on reserve in the Shores Library for your convenience.

Assessments

5% Discussion Leading of Assigned Class Reading
20% Theory Paper 1: Three Theories
20% Theory Paper 2: Theory Background and Development
20% Theory Paper 3: Theory Propositions and Concepts
20% Theory Paper 4: Theory Application and Synthesis
15% In-class Theory Presentation, including one assigned reading
REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSESSMENTS

Discussion Leading of Assigned Class Reading (5%)
Please email the professor (no later than Monday January 12) with your top three choices (ranked 1 as the highest and 3 as the lowest) of readings for which you would like to lead the discussion (please choose from the readings beginning with January 28). Please note that leading a discussion means coming prepared with questions and/or activities suitable for driving class discussion for an extended period of time—not lecturing about the reading. You can assume everyone has read the article or book chapter.

Theory Paper 1: Three Theories (20%, Due February 4)
Identify three theories that you think might have potential application to your area of research interest. They need not be from “library and information science” per se, but they need to be theories that might have a reasonable and cogent application to your own research ideas. Write approximately 2000 words (excluding references) in which you identify the three theories you are considering; describe briefly the research and/or disciplines from which they come and the research for which they are normally used; and describe how each of the three theories might be applicable to your own research.

Theory Paper 2: Theory Background and Development (20%, Due February 25)
Select ONE theory with which you will work for the remainder of the semester. For this paper, you should identify the theory with which you will work and write approximately 2000 words (excluding references) about its origins and development over time. You should include information about the person(s) who developed the theory; the intellectual traditions and research milieu in which the theory was originated; the development of the theory over time by the persons(s) who originated it and by persons(s) other than those who originated it; and how the theory has been applied and modified over time.

Theory Paper 3: Theory Propositions and Concepts (20%, Due March 25)
For the this paper, you should write approximately 2000 words (excluding references) identifying, analyzing, relating, and otherwise discussing the concepts and propositions associated with the theory. This paper needs to draw heavily on the class readings and be an extremely rigorous and systematic dissection of your theory, including a brief (no more than 800 words) discussion of the criticisms and limitations of the theory as seen in the literature.

Theory Paper 4: Theory Application and Synthesis (20%, Due April 22)
Write approximately 2000 words (excluding references) providing a detailed discussion of how the theory might be applied to, and refined as a result of, the research problem you wish to explore.

In-class Theory Presentation, including one assigned reading (15%)
Select one reading about your theory that is appropriate background for a class discussion and provide the professor with a citation and a copy of the reading two weeks before your in-class presentation. The presentation of theory in class should include, in some way, all the points addressed in papers 1-3. The presentation should allow time for discussion within the allotted time (approximately 45 minutes).
COURSE OUTLINE

January 7: Introduction to the Course

No readings

January 14: Thinking about theory in LIS (alternative media for class this week)


January 21: The pieces of what we need to talk about (Part 1)


January 28: The pieces of what we need to talk about (Part 2)


February 4: How to "read" a theory – terms and approaches


February 11: Pieces and processes of theory development (Part 1)


February 18: Pieces and processes of theory development (Part 2)


February 25: Some ways to categorize theories


March 4: Theory use in LIS


March 11: No Class (Spring Break)
March 18: Big-picture approaches to LIS theory


March 25: Examples of theory in specific subfields of LIS (Part 1)  

*Paper 3 Due*


April 1: Examples of theory in specific subfields of LIS (Part 2)


April 8: Student Presentations (Part 1)

One reading to be assigned by each student presenting.

April 22: Student Presentations (Part 2)  

*Paper 4 Due*

One reading to be assigned by each student presenting.
ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY:

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “...be honest and truthful and ...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm.)

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

(1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
(2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdr@admin.fsu.edu
http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY:
This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.