Theory Building and Testing in Consumer Psychology

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Course Purpose

This course cultivates Ph.D. students’ ability to be independent scholars with regard to theory building, testing, and assessing contributions. To accomplish this, the course focuses heavily on theory development and the construction of nomological nets with an emphasis on consumer psychology. This year the course covers topics such as of Attitudes, Social Hierarchy, Metacognition, and Compensatory Processes.

Course Expectations

Students will complete all deliverables by the proscribed time. Students will be on time for all meetings, be fully prepared for discussions, and actively engage in class dialogues.

Course Deliverables

In addition to assigned readings, students are accountable and assessed on the following work:

- First Class Assignment
- Weekly Discussion and Question Submission
- Midterm
- Final Paper

First Class Assignment: Read the review chapters on the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Heuristic Systematic Model. You are tasked with explaining to the field both the points of similarity among the models as well as the points of difference. Of particular interest, consider what predictions each model makes. Provide a concise (i.e., 1-2 single-spaced paged) written response to compare and contrast the models. Make a recommendation for how persuasion research should move forward based on these two models.

Weekly Discussion and Question Submission: Class discussions are used to enhance students’ mastery of theory discussion and stimulate the discovery of unanswered questions that merit future research. These are objectives are accomplished through two venues.

First, each student will submit a thought piece as to critical questions and/or observations to the instructors. This submission will be due Monday prior to each class by 5:00pm. A submission, while not limited in scope, will typically consist of a one page single-spaced document that introduces the question(s) and/or observation and offers an initial perspective or thought by the student. Emphasis of a paper’s relation to a “nomologial net,” which will be discussed in the first class, is encouraged.
Second, to encourage thorough preparation, students will be selected to lead a paper, often at random, the day of the class. Leading a paper entails providing a concise summary of the paper, raising questions for discussion, and summarizing key observations following discussion.

**Midterm:** The midterm is due in Week 5 and consists of a synthesis of the topics from Weeks 2-4. Specifically, the core assignment is to integrate two or more separate areas from the previous weeks to explain how new ideas can be developed for theory building and testing. The midterm is due in Week 6 and is targeted at 5-10 single spaced pages. Students will present their ideas in class.

**Final Paper:** The final assignment is a paper that provides a nomological net of a chosen area of topics. The goal of this assignment is to demonstrate the ability to build nomological nets around a chosen construct of interest. In addition, students will be asked to create a “tree illustration” of their chosen topic. An example of this will be provided and discussed in class. The final paper is targeted at 5-10 single spaced pages and will be submitted the last class. Students will also present their ideas in the final class.
### Class 1 - Introduction and Theoretical Contributions

**Conceptual:**

**ELM and HSM Discussion**

### Class 2 - Attitude Strength

**Conceptual**

**Empirical**
Class 3 - Social Hierarchy

Conceptual


Empirical


*Please read paper #3 prior to paper #4 as they follow a logical sequence.

Class 4 - Metacognition

Conceptual


Empirical


Class 5 - Midterm

Midterm Presentations
### Class 6- Lay Theories of Persuasion, Morality, and Fairness

**Conceptual**


**Empirical**


4. The Dishonesty of Honest People: A Theory of Self-Concept Maintenance; Mazar, Nina, On Amir, and Dan Ariely; *Journal of Marketing Research*; Issue: 45 (6); 2008; Pages: 633-644

### Class 7- Agency and Communion

**Conceptual**


**Empirical**


### Class 8 - Conspicuous and Compensatory Consumption

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### Class 9 - Behavioral Economics and Decision Making

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### Class 10 - Final

| Final Presentations |