Course Description
This seminar introduces doctoral students in business administration to key theoretical paradigms in psychology that inform behavioral research in their fields.

Learning Objectives
Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to
- Explain the key assumptions underlying different theoretical approaches.
- Clearly describe core propositions and empirical findings.
- Identify their methodological implications.
- Bring multiple theoretical approaches to bear on their own area of research.
- Conceptualize their own specific research issue in the broader context of what else is known about human cognition, emotion, and behavior.

Required Materials
All required materials will be available on Blackboard

Prerequisites and/or Recommended Preparation:
There are no formal prerequisites. If you never had a psychology class, expect that the readings take more time because you will need to look up unfamiliar concepts.

Classroom Policies
1. Active class participation is important in achieving the learning objectives for this course. Unless students provide an accommodation letter from USC OSAS or from Marshall detailing visa or travel restrictions, attendance and active participation is expected in the classroom.

2. Any student with such accommodations should submit their accommodation document to their instructor as soon as possible. Your instructor will then provide regular access to a recording of the class and an opportunity to regularly make up missed in-class participation.

3. Students who are experiencing illness should not attend class in person. Please inform the instructor in advance of the class session to discuss what accommodations will be made to allow for the make-up of missed class work and missed in-class participation. Students will not be penalized for not attending class in person under these circumstances.

Grading Policies:
This class is reading intensive and requires active participation. The readings consist of theory chapters, empirical reviews, and select journal articles that exemplify classic studies and applications of the theoretical framework in different areas of business research. Each week, all students will read one or two overview chapters and extract the key theoretical propositions, core manipulations/measures, and findings. Each week, all students will submit a short summary on Blackboard that addresses the following points:
- The key background assumptions of the theory
- The core propositions of the theory
- The paradigmatic manipulations
- The paradigmatic measures
- Controversies

We will discuss these points in class and arrive at shared summaries.

The core readings will be complemented by additional readings, usually exemplary studies. Each week, we will have 2 short presentations of select complementary papers, which students can choose based on their own interest area. Expect to make 4 short presentations over the course of the semester.

Grading is based on your weekly summaries (50%), presentations (40%), and classroom discussion (10%).

**COURSE CALENDAR**

*Note: The syllabus may change over the course of the semester, in response to student interests. The official syllabus is the version Blackboard. Changes made on Blackboard will be automatically announced.*

**08/22 1. Theories and paradigms**
The first class introduces key concepts of philosophy of science and discusses paradigm shifts in (psychological) theorizing. The Gawronski & Bodenhausen chapter reviews criteria of theory evaluation in philosophy of science. The ups and downs of a theory’s popularity are often unrelated to these substantive criteria and follow more social processes within a scientific community. Lachman et al.’s recommended chapter discusses these processes, drawing on Kuhn’s notion of paradigm shifts.

**Core reading**

**Complementary readings**


**Recommended**


**08/29 2. Evolutionary psychology and evolved morality**
The human mind is a product of evolution and reflects challenges our ancestors faced. Kenrick discusses the implications for different levels of analysis. Haidt’s theory of moral judgment can serve as an example of an evolutionarily informed theory with broad implications for human judgment and behavior.
**Core readings**


**Complementary readings**

Marketing implications:

Management implications:

Moral Foundations Theory:

**Recommended**


**09/05**

3. Labor Day

**09/12**

4. Consistency theories

Numerous research traditions assume that inconsistency of beliefs, or inconsistency of beliefs and behavior, is aversive and results in predictable cognitive reorganization as well as affective and behavioral consequences. The required reading reviews this tradition, and the recommended readings provide classic examples and business applications.

**Core reading**


**Complementary readings**

Choice:

Disconfirmation:
Accounting/investment example:

**Recommended**


**09/19  5. Lay scientists and their shortcomings: Attribution theories and biases**

In the 1970s, the motivational focus of consistency theories gave way to a perspective that treated individuals as lay scientists, who used covariation information and principles of causal reasoning to make sense of others’ behavior. Malle reviews the history and current state of this work. As became apparent, the lay scientist is plagued by many shortcomings, highlighted in the Ross paper, which brings Kahneman and Tversky’s early work on heuristics and biases to bear on social perception issues.

**Core readings**


**Complementary readings**
Marketing examples:

Management examples:

**Recommended**

**09/26  6. Heuristics & biases**

Kahneman and Tversky’s analysis of heuristics and biases in judgment and decision making has become the most influential behavioral science perspective in business research, in part through its adaptation by economists under the label of behavioral economics. Much of this work is effect focused and pays limited attention to the underlying processes. The required readings review the classic heuristics. The complementary readings provide process and application examples. The exchange between Simonson and Schwarz illustrates the differences between effect-focused and process-focused perspectives.
Core readings


Complementary readings
Process focus: Availability heuristic

Process focus: Anchoring heuristic

Effect vs. process:


Applications in finance:

Applications in public policy:

Recommended


10/03
7. Information processing
Whereas the heuristics & biases approach juxtaposed normative reasoning criteria and human performance, the information processing approach attempted to understand the processes underlying human cognition. It was guided by the computer metaphor that dominated cognitive science for several decades. While the paradigm produced considerable progress in some areas, it fostered neglect of aspects that were difficult to conceptualize within the guiding metaphor. For the classic approach, see the Lachman et al. reference of the first class. The required Wyer chapter illustrates a current version of the approach, whereas the Schwarz chapter discusses processes of mental construal that include variables that were initially neglected in information processing theories. What is now known as the “social cognition” paradigm that dominates social psychology is the offspring of information processing models, enriched with the developments we address in subsequent classes.
Core readings


Complementary readings
Classic early consumer study:

Management:

Recommended


10/10 8. Thinking more or less: Dual-process models
Numerous theories distinguish a more effortful and systematic reasoning style from a more associative and intuitive one. Strack & Deutsch (2015) give an overview of such dual-process theories and Petty & Brinol (2012) discuss the current version of Petty and Cacioppo’s (1983) elaboration likelihood model that has guided the last 4 decades of persuasion research. Kahneman’s (2011) trade book popularized Stanovich’s system 1/system 2 terminology and includes many business and finance applications; it is highly recommended.

Core readings


Complementary readings
Tbd

Recommended


10/17 9. Associative, implicit, automatic, unconscious
Building on our discussion of information processing, we review developments that focus on processes that are often lumped under labels like “implicit” or “automatic.” An overview lecture addresses different...
theoretical approaches; the selected readings focus on implicit attitudes and nonconscious influences on behavior.

Core reading


Complementary readings


Recommended


10/24 10. Thinking & feeling: Moods, emotions, and metacognitive experiences
For several decades, theories of judgment and decision making were dominated by approaches that emphasized declarative information in the form of relevant attributes of the target of judgment. However, thinking is always accompanied by subjective experience, from the ease with which information can be processed and the feelings the information elicits to merely incidental experiences. As a result, judgments always reflect an interplay of declarative and experiential information. This class addresses this interplay, focusing on moods and metacognitive experiences of ease and difficulty.

Core readings


Complementary readings
Mood – implications for finance:

Mood – implications for marketing:

Fluency – implications for finance:


Fluency – consumer behavior:
See Schwarz et al (2021), required reading.

**Recommended**


10/31 11. Embodied cognition
People experience the world through their senses and psychologists have traditionally assumed that the sensory modality in which information is acquired leaves traces on its representation. In contrast to this tradition, the “cognitive revolution” of the 1970s followed its computer metaphor in assuming that representations are amodal – no matter how information was acquired, it was assumed to get represented in the same format, just as required by the operating system of computers. This was a mistake and psychology recently rediscovered the wisdom of modality specific mental process assumptions, which also stimulated extensive research in consumer behavior under the label of “sensory marketing”. We discuss the major approaches to the “embodied” nature of cognition and review select findings. The Schwarz & Lee handbook chapter gives an overview.

**Core reading**

**Complementary readings**
Thinking as simulation:

Conceptual metaphors & marketing:

Conceptual metaphors & management:

Different embodiment theories applied to consumer issues:

Sensory marketing:

**Recommended**


**11/07 12. Thinking in a social context: Cognition & communication**

Theories of memory, reasoning, and judgment typically treat the individual as an isolated information processor. But in everyday life, people do much of their thinking in a social context and in direct or indirect communication with others. Mercier and Sperber propose that people reason to argue, a proposal that has been largely ignored in business research. Schwarz draws on Grice’s theory of cooperative communication and reviews research that shows that many apparent errors and shortcomings of human judgment reflect that researchers do not obey the rules that govern communication in daily life. When those rules are observed, many familiar biases are attenuated or eliminated.

**Core reading**


**Complementary readings**

Tbd


Recommended


11/14  13. Exchange theories and distributive justice
Many areas of the social and behavioral sciences rely on exchange theories to conceptualize issues of interaction, distribution, and justice. Stafford and Kuiper provide a short overview, focusing on personal relationships; Tyler elaborates on implications for justice; and van Lange & Rusbult review a particular version, namely Thibaut & Kelley’s interdependence theory. Fiske introduces different types of social relationships, which moderate the applicable exchange logic. The other papers illustrate applications to marketing, operations management, and other domains. Emerson (1976) provides a detailed analysis and critique of the logical structure of exchange theories.

Core readings


Complementary readings


Marketing:

Management:

Supply chains:

Recommended


11/21  14. Culture
Psychologists long assumed that basic processes are largely invariant across cultures, whereas the specific content of processing varies by culture. More recent research documented profound cultural differences in basic cognitive, affective, and motivational process. However, the emergence and operation of cultural differences is more compatible with a framework of situated cognition than with the dispositional approach that often characterizes discourse about cultures. The Oyserman discusses different theoretical approaches and highlights their underlying assumptions. Markus and Kitayama’s article was highly influential in drawing attention to cultural differences but their dispositional approach underestimates contextual malleability.

Core reading

Complementary readings


Recommended


11/28  15. Integrative discussion: Theory & application
The final class reviews key lessons learned, revisits the criteria for theory evaluation, and discusses the relationship between theory testing and application. Campbell’s classic paper on “reforms as experiments” highlights the commonalities and pitfalls; while written for public administrators, it has direct implications for business practice and research.

Core reading
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
eeo-tix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.
The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776
osas.usc.edu
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otp@med.usc.edu
chan.usc.edu/otfp
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, the USC Emergency Information web site (http://emergency.usc.edu/) will provide safety and other information, including electronic means by which instructors will conduct class using a combination of USC’s Blackboard learning management system (blackboard.usc.edu), teleconferencing, and other technologies.