

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**

**PhD Course Syllabus**

<b>Course Code/Title:</b>	<b>IIMT6021 - Theoretical Approach to Information Systems Research</b>
<b>Year/Semester:</b>	2023-24, The Second Semester
<b>Time/Venue:</b>	KK505
<b>Instructor:</b>	Yulin Fang, Email: <a href="mailto:ylfang@hku.hk">ylfang@hku.hk</a> , Office: KKL-1315 (by appointment)
<b>Course Description:</b>	<p>Theory development is a key goal of information systems (IS) research and is critical for the growth of the field as a scientific discipline. Leading IS journals hold up this goal for scholarly emulation, and a paper's theoretical contribution is a key criterion for its publication. In this course, PhD students are expected to be equipped with necessary foundations and skills to engage in both deductive and inductive theory development in information systems research. Deductive theory building involves drawing on the relevant literature to identify opportunities for new theory. Students will learn theoretical building that incorporates several stages: identifying a theoretical space and focus; searching for appropriate literature; defining concepts; theorizing relationships between concepts; formalizing concepts as constructs with proposals; testing the proposed theoretical relationships empirically. Inductive theory building involves drawing on data/phenomena, often informed by the literature, to identify opportunities for new theory. Students will also learn how research gets developed through review and revision process. The course is seminar-based, organized around student presentation, class discussion, and faculty supervision. A list of topics and related research papers will be provided.</p>
<b>Course Objectives:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop a strong sense of intellectual curiosity, challenge assumptions and positions, and engage in shared enquiry.</li><li>2. Understand the challenges and strategies associated with theorizing and building a new theory.</li><li>3. Appreciate the relative merits of deductive and inductive approaches to theory building.</li><li>4. Be acquainted with major theories developed in and for the field</li><li>5. Propose the foundations of a new theory (inductive or deductive) with a holistic description of the entire theory development process, including how the same theory should be validated.</li></ol>
<b>Pre-requisite:</b>	Nil
<b>Assessment:</b>	100% Coursework  <u>Course Assessment</u> (Tentative): <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Class participation (30%)</li><li>2. Assignment (20%)</li><li>3. Paper presentation (10%)</li><li>4. Term paper (40%)</li></ol>
<b>Remarks:</b>	All PhD courses are non-credit-bearing and will be assessed on a pass/fail basis.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) On completion of this course, students should be able to:	Aligned PLOs*				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Develop a strong sense of intellectual curiosity, challenge assumptions and positions, and engage in shared enquiry.		X	X	X	X
2. Understand the challenges and strategies associated with theorizing and building a new theory	X			X	X
3. Appreciate the relative merits of deductive and inductive approaches to theory building	X	X			X
4. Be acquainted with theories developed in and for the field	X		X	X	X
5. Propose the foundations of a new theory (inductive or deductive) with a holistic description of the entire theory development process, including how the same theory should be validated	X	X	X	X	X

**\*Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for Research Postgraduate Programme:**

1. Demonstrate critical understanding, at an advanced level, of up-to-date knowledge and research methodology of a particular field
2. Implement effective academic and personal strategies for carrying out research projects independently and ethically
3. Contribute original knowledge in response to issues in their specialist area
4. Communicate research findings at a diverse range of levels and through a variety of media
5. Evaluate one's own research in relation to important and latest issues in the field

## Course Format

Our class will meet once a week for 3 hours. We will conduct this class as a seminar; there will be lectures, but it will also be highly dependent upon class participation and discussion. Each week the lecture and discussion will focus on the readings assigned to that week. As such, it is extremely critical that:

- You have done the reading prior to class
- You have seriously considered the questions for the week and have answers to share with the class
- You have written out (for handing in) the required assignment, if applicable.

## COURSE DETAILS *(subject to change at instructor's discretion)*

### I. Teaching and Learning Activities

In-class and Out-of-class Activities <i>(e.g. lectures, class discussion, papers reading, proposal writing)</i>	Expected hour	% of student study effort
1. Class presentation	30	30%
2. Class discussion	20	20%
3. Paper reading	20	20%
4. Term Paper	30	30%
Total	100	100%

## II. Assessment

Assessment Components (e.g. assignments, proposal, presentation, examination)	Weight	CLOs to be assessed				
		1	2	3	4	5
1. Class presentation	10	X	X	X	X	X
2. Class discussion	30	X	X	X	X	X
3. Assignment	20	X	X	X	X	X
4. Term paper	40	X	X	X	X	X
Total	100%					

## III. Course Content and Tentative Schedule

Weeks	Topics
1	Introduction - Scientific Inquiry & The Role of Theory for the IS Field
2	Theory and Its Components
3	IS Research Question Formulation
4	Literature Synthesis for IS Research
5	Research Model / Hypotheses Development for IS Research
6	Theoretical Contribution for IS Research
7	IS Theories for Individual Outcomes
8	IS Theories for Group Outcomes
9	IS Theories for Organizational Outcomes
10	Alternative IS Theorizing Approach
11	Relevance and Impact of IS Research
12	Writing, Reviewing and Publication Process
13	Research Paper Development Workshop (1)
14	Research Paper Development Workshop (2)

### Class Participation

This is a PhD-level course. Your active participation is essential. In general, the learning environment is a highly interactive rather than “sit down and listen”. One has not learned a concept or idea until he/she can explain and defend it. To prepare for in-class participation, you need to read the assigned articles and be prepared to answer questions and any other issues that might come up during the class meeting.

### Assignment

Assignment will be group and individual. Group assignments take the form of synthesis of readings. Individual assignments take the form of manuscript review and term paper progress report. They will be given in due course.

### Class Presentation

Students should thoroughly read all assigned readings prior to class. Working in groups of two. For selected classes, a group will be invited to prepare a synthesis of the readings and submit the synthesis in the form of PowerPoint slides by midnight before the day of the class. Each PowerPoint file should not contain more than 15 slides.

## **Term Paper**

There is no final exam in this module. However, you will be required to submit a term paper that extends or builds a theory. I encourage you to choose a topic on which you plan to work in the near future. You are encouraged to create a new paper or one drastically different from any earlier version of writing. For the latter, the deliverable will include the final version and a detailed explanation note on how it has been improved from the first version available at the beginning of the course. Submit the term paper by the end of week 15.

## **IV. Required/Recommended Readings**

A list of research topics and papers will be distributed at the beginning of the course.

## **V. Course Policy**

**The University Regulations on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced!** Academic dishonesty is behaviour in which a deliberately fraudulent misrepresentation is employed in an attempt to gain undeserved intellectual credit, either for oneself or for another. It includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following types of cases:

- a. Plagiarism - The representation of someone else's ideas as if they are their own. Where the arguments, data, designs, etc., of someone else are being used in a paper, report, oral presentation, or similar academic project, this fact must be made explicitly clear by citing the appropriate references. The references must fully indicate the extent to which any parts of the project are not one's own work. Paraphrasing of someone else's ideas is still using someone else's ideas, and must be acknowledged. Please check the University Statement on plagiarism on the web: <http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism/>
- b. Unauthorized Collaboration on Out-of-Class Projects - The representation of work as solely one's own when in fact it is the result of a joint effort.
- c. Cheating on In-Class Exams - The covert gathering of information from other students, the use of unauthorized notes, unauthorized aids, etc.
- d. Unauthorized Advance Access to an Exam - The representation of materials prepared at leisure, as a result of unauthorized advance access (however obtained), as if it were prepared under the rigors of the exam setting. This misrepresentation is dishonest in itself even if there are not compounding factors, such as unauthorized uses of books or notes.

You are expected to do your own work whenever you are supposed to. Incident(s) of academic dishonesty will NOT be tolerated. Cheating or plagiarism of any kind would result in an automatic FAIL grade for the course plus strict enforcement of all Faculty and/or University regulations regarding such behaviour.

**Late assignment submission will NOT be accepted.** The exceptions are doctor's note, prior approval by the instructor for special circumstances (e.g. representing HKU on a one-week sports competition).