# Introduction to Entrepreneurship Research

## General information:

**Instructors**: Oliver Alexy, Nicola Breugst, Hana Milanov, Holger Patzelt (all TUM ERI), Chuck Easley (Stanford University)

**Format:** The 4.5 day course is designed as a 'full immersion' experience, with the first 1.5 days specifically focusing on issues around theory and the process of theorizing, such as the design of the research question, its embedding in an academic conversation, and the dos and don'ts of making theoretical contributions. The (remaining) 3 days focus on the execution of the research question, including research methods and research design. Also, questions around the PhD process and academic careers will be tackled together. By immersing students in such a "boot-camp" for entrepreneurship research, the intensive experience condensed in 4.5 days will have long term pay-offs when it comes to pre-empting many questions and uncertainties that normally arise during a thesis-writing process. The course is usually worth 5 ECTS, but can be stretched to 6 ECTS by individual assignments.

**Audience:** Beginning doctoral students from all fields of study, who have had limited prior exposure to issues such as general research design and thesis development, with special interest in the entrepreneurship field. **Note: the course is mandatory for all TUM ERI doctoral students. To ensure quality of discussion, the course is limited to 15 doctoral students.**

**Prerequisites:** **All students must prepare draft answers to Assignments #1-#4 for each day of study** (see "Class outline"). Per assignment, these answers should comprise 1 page of text (12 pt., Times New Roman, 1'' margin, single-spaced) to be submitted **before** the first day of class. During the course, students will merge the updated drafts into a proposal.

**Application:** All eligible and interested students should send a one-page motivation letter (be sure to state your current stage and planned progress in your PhD) and current CV to Holger Patzelt, before March 1, 2019 (patzelt@tum.de).

**Location:** TUM School of Management, Entrepreneurship Research Institute, Garching, Lichtenbergstr. 6, Left building, 2nd floor, Room 2001 (first room on the left, just after entering the ERI).

**Grading:** **All students (including TUM students) will be pass/fail graded based on course participation, presentations given, and proposal handed in.** For students that require an actual grade for this class, please get in touch with us beforehand to discuss modalities. We will attempt to give every student the opportunity to present on all topics covered (see "Course outline" for presentation schedules and topic). Presentations may happen in groups, and should never be longer than 7 minutes (this will eventually depend on the number of course participants). The proposal is described in Assignment #5 (see "Course outline").

# Course aims

The aim of this course is to provide participants with a broad overview of both content and process issues central to entrepreneurship research. The course is interactive in nature and demands students' preparation and active engagement during and between class sessions.

**Knowledge Objectives**
Students will be exposed to essential process-related concepts underlying research activity, and explore them in more detail within the context of the Entrepreneurship field. Specific knowledge goals of the course include, but are not restricted to:
- Understanding what makes for a good research question and developing the ability to identify promising research questions for own thesis and further research projects
- Understanding what constitutes an academic conversation in the field of entrepreneurship and identification of key theoretical paradigms in the field – especially as they relate to students' own research question field. Accordingly, upon completing this course, students should have in hand a broad survey of key literature that informs their dissertation-related literature inquiry going forward.
- Ability to understand appropriateness, relevance and possible trade-offs of research methods available for addressing identified research questions.
- Ability to appreciate the intricacies of a solid research design, as they relate to identifying sources of data, collecting and analyzing data, designing questionnaires / interviews, operationalizing key constructs – especially as they relate to the student's research question.
- General stronger ability to engage in a research conversation and a key set of skills in advancing own research program during doctoral studies.

**Skills Objectives**
- Improve diagnostic and analytical skills
- Enhance verbal skills via class and group discussions
- Build up critical thinking and interpretation skills
- Gain confidence in embarking on own thesis writing process

# Course logistics, preparation, and readings

**Preparation:**  This course requires students' advanced preparation in terms of (1) reading the obligatory readings (list provided at the end of this document) and (2) submitting draft answers to the assignment questions. While an important part of the course experience will consist of students' ongoing discovery of the important literature (both in terms of theory and methods), it is essential that all students are able to start the course with a basic understanding of the field's development and their own plans. Please note that the course will be demanding - **you are required to complete all assigned readings before the beginning of the course, and to continuously revise your draft proposal throughout the course**.

# Course procedures

To make this class a success for everyone, we need you to prepare for class and participate in class. Put concisely: how much you take away from this class and contribute to classmates correlates directly with the effort you put in completing class assignments.

We hope that this class will provide you with a highly enjoyable learning process. While this syllabus represents our "classroom contract", we trust that you will share our belief that we can learn from each other in rich discussions in and outside of the classroom. We will do our best to facilitate an interesting and rounded discussion conducive to a learning environment. At the same time, we expect from you proactive preparation and active participation, with a healthy dose of humor and good spirit. We also appreciate your specific research interests, opinions and constructive feedback, and (within the course structure boundaries), we will do our best to make the class contribute to your learning process. Finally, we find entrepreneurship to be a fascinating field, and are delighted to meet and share ideas with a group of diverse and interesting individuals whose ideas could shape the way our understanding, thinking and knowledge evolves in the future. We hope you find that as exciting as we do.

# Course outline

* Subject to change, always with students' learning progress in mind.

**Day 1 – Thursday, April 4, 2019: The Research Question and the Conversation Metaphor**

**9.00 – 10.45    Overall Course Introduction (all professors)**

**11.00 – 12.30    Research Questions: Lecture (Prof. Patzelt)**

**Assignment #1: Prepare before coming to course, finish after Day 1**

Immerse yourself into the relevant literature of interest to your research. This process should serve as a starting point both to understand what makes interesting research questions, and then generating your own. Accordingly, for Day 1, **each student is expected to bring to class 2-3 examples of interesting research questions you developed found by engaging with the literature, or your actual research question if you have one already**. You will be expected to present and be able to discuss:

a)    What makes your research question(s) novel, relevant and interesting?
b)    To what extent have the questions been answered by findings in earlier papers? Find at least one way to extend the article(s) that you think are the core basis of your own research, and use this to generate a more refined research question. If you had the opportunity to talk to the authors of one of these articles, why should they believe that your work holds the potential to extend theirs?
c)    How did the authors who wrote the articles that form the theoretical core of your own work translate their research question(s) into propositions / testable hypotheses?
d)    Which key theories drove / informed their research questions?
e)    How did the research questions proposed translate into final contributions?

*\* Thursday afternoon is reserved for individual work on the continuous advancement of assignments.*

**Day 2 – Friday, April 5, 2019: The Role of Theory in Joining the Conversation**

**9.00 – 10.30     Research question presentations and discussion (Prof. Alexy, Prof. Patzelt)**

**11.00 – 12.30   Theory: What is it, why is it important (Prof. Alexy)**

*Lunch break – chance for 1:1 feedback*

**14.00 – 15.30   Theory: Levels of theorizing and boundary conditions (Prof. Easley, Stanford University)**

**16.00 – 17.30   Theory: What is good research (discussion) (Prof. Easley, Stanford University)**

**Assignment #2: Prepare before coming to course, update during and after Day 2**

Students should identify 2-3 core theoretical pieces that inform their broad research question (these can include both "classic" readings, such as Theory of Planned Behavior or Resource Dependence Theory, but also new theoretical thinking covered in journals such as Academy of Management Review). You are expected to be able to present:
a)   Core tenets / relationships of a theoretical view central to your work
b)   On which level does the theory operate (e.g. Individual? Firm? Field?)?
c)   What are the key assumptions and boundary conditions of this theory?
d)   If working with this theory, which people in the field are you really talking to (try and name some names!)? What would you ask them if you met them for a coffee to extend that conversation?
e)   Updated research question in light of the theory

*Saturday, April 6 and Sunday, April 7 are intended as a self-study days - students advance their proposals*

**Day 3 – Monday, April 8, 2019: Choosing your Weapon: Understanding Different Research Methods**

**9.00 – 10.30     Theoretical perspectives student presentations** (Prof. Patzelt, Prof. Alexy)

**11.00 – 12.30   Research methods: Quantitative Research** (Prof. Milanov)

*Lunch break – chance for 1:1 feedback*

**14.00 – 15.30   Research methods: Qualitative Research (**Prof. Alexy**)**

**16.00 – 17.30   Research methods: Experiments (**Prof. Breugst**)**
        **Note:** Throughout the day, we will strongly emphasize the topic of research ethics.

**Assignment #3: Prepare before coming to course, update during and after Day 3**

Following exposure to different lectures on research methods, students should think about how they might approach investigating their own research question in terms of methodological approaches. Specifically, each student should think about 2 approaches that might be most appropriate to explore their chosen research question. The following day, student should be ready to present:
a)   Refined research question
b)   On which level the data need to be collected (e.g. Individual? Team? Firm? Field?)
c)   Two chosen methodological approaches (and why these are chosen)

d) Compare and contrast the two approaches on research rigor and practical considerations

**Day 4 – Tuesday, April 9, 2019: Executing Your Research Project**

**9.00 – 10.30    Research methods student presentations (Prof. Milanov, Prof. Breugst)**

**11.00 – 12.30    Research design and execution: Construct operationalization (Prof. Breugst)**

*Lunch break – chance for 1:1 feedback*

**14.00 – 15.30    Research design and execution: Primary vs. secondary data collection (Prof. Milanov)**

**16.00 – 17.30    Research design and execution: From the PhD to the academic career (discussion) (Prof. Patzelt, n.n.)**

**Assignment #4: Prepare before coming to class, update during and after Day 4**
Following exposure to different lectures on research design, students should think about how they might approach operationalizing key constructs in their own study. Specifically, each student should review the literature for potential operationalizations of at least 2 key constructs, including finding possible interview questions / guidelines (for qualitative research), scales (for primary data collection), proxies (for secondary data), or even look into possibilities using experimental approaches and relevant manipulations. The following day, student should be ready to present:
a)    Sources for data collection – what would be the ideal source of data and how could you collect it?
b)    Operationalizations (make sure to be precise and cite original sources / have examples ready)
c)    Trade-offs in terms of construct validity and reliability of the measure
d)    Choose which operationalization to follow and suggest potential improvements

**Assignment #5: Prepare before and update throughout and after the course; submit 2 weeks after Day 5:**
Synthesize all key learnings (i.e., the updated assignments) into a (max.) five page (12 pt. Times New Roman, single-spaced, 1'' margins) PhD proposal containing:
-    A clearly articulated research question: new, interesting, and relevant to a conversation
-    The empirical execution strategy
-    The expected findings, and the theoretical contributions this would allow you to make
-    The problems you expect to encounter, and how you would solve them

**Day 5 – Wednesday, April 10, 2019: Bringing It All Together**

**9.00 – 10.30    Research Design and Execution: Student Presentations (Prof. Patzelt, n.n.)**

**11.00 – 12.30    Research Design and Execution: Student Presentations (Prof. Patzelt, n.n.)**

*Lunch break – chance for 1:1 feedback*

**14.00 – 15.30    Student team discussion: Next steps in the PhD; questions for last session**

**16.00 – 17.30    Plenary session: Q&A, reflections and conclusions**

Note: once you are registered for the course, we will sign you up for its e-learning site—we will provide the more difficult-to-access articles there, and in particular the book chapter. **We expect that you have read all these articles before the respective session of class**. Ideally, though, you should have scrutinized all of these articles thoroughly before class, so that you are fully capable of discussing their content.

*On development of the Entrepreneurship field and its future potential:*

- Shepherd, D. A., Patzelt, H. Trailblaizing in Entrepreneurship: Creating New Paths for Developing the Field. Palgrave MacMillan, Cham, Switzerland.
- Gartner, W.B. 2001. Is there an elephant in entrepreneurship? Blind assumptions in theory development. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 25(4): 27-39.
- Shane, S. 2012. Delivering on the promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(1): 10-20.
- Shepherd, D. A. 2015. Party on! A call for entrepreneurship research that is more interactive, activity based, cognitively hot, compassionate, and prosocial. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(4): 489-507.

*On crafting a paper:*

Series of editorial articles on "Publishing in AMJ" *(totaling 30 pages)* will be made available to students.
- Part 1: Topic choice (Colquitt, J.A., George, G.)
- Part 2: Research design (Bono, J.E., McNamara, G.)
- Part 3: Setting the hook (Grant, A.M., Pollock, T.G.)
- Part 4: Grounding hypotheses (Sparrowe, R.T., Mayer, K.J)
- Part 5: Crafting the methods and results (Zhang, Y., Shaw, J.D.)
- Part 6: Discussing the implications (Geletkanycz, M., Tepper, B.J.)
- Part 7: What's different about qualitative research? (Bansal, P., Corley, K.)
- Part 8: Publishing in AMJ for non-US authors (George, G.)

*On what is theory:*

- Bacharach, S.B. Organizational theories: Some criteria for evaluation. *Academy of Management Review*, 14: 496 – 515—**read only until p. 500 (excluding from "Generation of Criteria…")**
- Sutton, R.I., Staw, B.M. (1995). What theory is not. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40: 371-384
- Huff, A. S. 1998. *Writing for scholarly publication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, **only pp. 45-53**