LUND UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

Department of Business Administration

Reg. no U 2023/720

EHFE017,
Institutional Theory – past, present, future,
7.5 credits
Institutionell teori – dåtid, nutid, framtid,
7,5 hp
Third Cycle/Forskarutbildningsnivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by the Department Board on 2023-09-19.

General information

The course EHFE017 is a course in Business Administration at the third-cycle level.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of studies: Business Administration

Learning outcomes

The following learning outcomes are proposed for the course.

Knowledge and understanding

- A thorough understanding of institutional theory, its background, varieties and differences, common use, and benefits as analytical tool;
- A thorough understanding of the state-of-the-art in applying varieties of institutional theory in the field of business administration and social science generally

Competence and skills

- Ability to apply institutional theory, via the course readings and additional literature, to the individual research project;

- Ability to critically reflect on the possibilities and constraints of institutional theory in general, and in studies of organizations particularly

Communication

- Ability to argue critically and constructively about the role of institutions, institutional stability, and institutional change in society in general, and in studies of organizations particularly

Course background and aim

This course will introduce students to institutional theory of various shades, with specific interest in the relevance and usefulness of institutional theory for organizational analysis. It is primarily aimed at doctoral students in business administration, economics, and other fields represented at the faculty (LUSEM), and at doctoral students from the faculties of social science and humanities at Lund University, especially sociology and political science. It is also open for doctoral students in other fields and at other universities.

Institutional theory is an important theoretical tradition in organization studies, business administration, and social science generally. It has many shades and varieties, but they are all bound together by their general perspective on individuals, organizations, and society as in part ruled by durable and predictable patterns that can be analyzed in their own right, to reveal aspects of organizational behavior and social life not available through the lenses of other theory frameworks. To some extent, the core tenets of institutional theory have been victims of obliteration by incorporation, meaning that while they remain relevant and useful for scholars today, many are unaware of their origin and theoretical context. This creates a need for a PhD course that can reestablish and renew interest in this broad and varied theory tradition by doing justice to the various traditions and strands of institutional theory.

The PhD course is therefore designed to introduce doctoral students to institutional theory of various kinds, including classic (‘old’) institutionalism, neoinstitutionalism, historical institutionalism, and Scandinavian institutionalism. The aim is to encourage and inspire the use of institutional theory of various kinds and thus enable and incentivize PhD students to engage empirically and conceptually with perspectives on a higher level of abstraction – including structure in relation to individuals and actions, macro perspectives in relation to micro perspectives, and societal patterns and developments as partial explanations for organizational behavior and individual behavior in organizations.

Course content

The course consists of eight seminars. For the first six, the literature is set in advance, and the students are expected/required to read the specified literature before attending. In these six seminars, various forms of institutional theory are introduced through classic and novel texts. At the seventh seminar, which is a longer session, the students will present a short paper essay where they explore in greater depth one of the topics of the previous seminars. This can be done in direct relation to their thesis topic, or as a general treatise. At the seminar, the students discuss each other’s’ papers.

The first six seminars are preferably held within a relatively short period, to establish a momentum and red thread in the course, whereas the seventh seminar should take place after a longer break, to allow deeper exploration of the literature and writing of individual papers. The seventh seminar, with presentation of individual papers, is preferably held with an invited audience of e.g. thesis advisors and others with a general interest in the topics.

Assessment

To pass the course, students will be expected to read the listed literature and complete written assignments during as well as at the end of the course. More precisely, examination consists of the following written assignments:

1. Active participation in the seminar discussions. Absence from one seminar will be compensated by a short written assignment (1/2–1 A4 page)
2. Final examination paper. In this paper, students are asked to apply (parts of) the course literature to their own research area and critically reflect on the implications of institutional theory and institutional analysis for their research topic.

Credits

Grades are Pass or Fail.

Plagiarism is considered to be a very serious academic offence. The University will take disciplinary actions against any kind of attempted malpractice in examinations and assessments. The penalty that may be imposed for this, and other improper practices in examinations or assessments, includes suspension from the University for a specific period of time.

Entry requirements

PhD students accepted to the PhD programme in Business Administration or an adjacent subject are eligible for the course.

Course literature

See separate literature list.