Subject Outline

ACCY 903 – Theoretical Foundations of Research
Wollongong Campus
(6 Credit Points)
Semester 2, 2005

SUBJECT COORDINATOR:
Ms Geeta Singh
School of Accounting and Finance
Room 40.315, phone 02 4221 4301
geeta@uow.edu.au

Consultation hours:
Tuesdays: 2- 4 pm
Wednesdays: 2- 4pm

CO-LECTURER:
Mr Ron Perrin
Sub Dean
Faculty of Commerce
Room 40.224, phone 02 4221 4118

School of Accounting and Finance
ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS & SEMINAR TIME
Thursdays - 4.30 to 6.30 pm, in 67.104
(two are no tutorials in this subject)

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION
This subject is concerned with the nature of theory, research and theory construction in accounting and finance. It examines existing theories and the methodological bases for these theories. It provides a critique of the traditional forms of theory construction and proposes alternative methods. It compares quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and theory construction. It proposes the inclusion of traditionally overlooked dimensions to theories in accounting and finance such as the ethical, socially responsible and environmental.

OBJECTIVES
*By the end of the course you should be able to critically evaluate:*  
a. the traditional means by which theories have been constructed;  
b. the extent to which research shapes theory;  
c. the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research and the implications for theory, and  
d. the success of proposed solutions to some contemporary problems.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weightage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay (topic to be advised)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project (topic to be advised)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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You must achieve a score of not less than 45% in the final exam and 50% overall to pass.

THE ESSAY
You must submit an essay during the semester. Written work should conform to the following requirements:

**Length:** Around 1500 words - not more than 2000 (not including the list of references)

**Presentation/Content:** Essays MUST:

- a. be word processed/typed using double-line spacing
- b. include the assessment (cover sheet) from the end of this program (remove and staple it) on the front of your essay.
- c. include a synopsis and a list of references.
- d. adopt the method of referencing and annotation described in this subject outline.
- e. include the ‘Acknowledgment Practice note’ (regarding plagiarism) duly signed and dated.

Penalties, including loss of marks and/or requests for re-submission of work may result from failure to follow the formal requirements outlined above. Late submission penalties of one mark per day apply. Requests for extensions MUST be made BEFORE submission date. Our School’s policy is that submission by fax is not acceptable.
ESSAY MARKING GUIDE
Among other things, the following issues will be considered when marking your essays. Please keep them in mind when you are writing them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synopsis/Abstract</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clanchy &amp; Ballard (Essay Writing for Students, 1981) recommend that the synopsis should cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The <em>outline</em> of your main arguments, (not the full details); and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The general <em>conclusions</em> you have reached.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remember, the synopsis is <em>not a 'road map' of your essay</em>. That role is more suited to an 'Introduction'</td>
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<tr>
<td>The synopsis length should be about 200 words.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Structure &amp; Presentation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did the structure and the use of meaningful headings enhance the logic, coherence and flow of your arguments? How has the presentation added to the overall impact of the essay?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How relevant was the content of your essay in building, supporting and advancing your arguments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the postgraduate level, essayists are expected to adopt an analytical approach to the topic. It is not acceptable to simply reproduce the source materials.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Style</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How logical and coherent was the language you used to establish and support your point of view? How did your written style add to/detract from the flow and readability of the essay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you adequately reviewed your essay for correct spelling, grammar and usage?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referencing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did your references support your arguments? Do you have sufficient evidence of research to build and present your arguments? Did you follow the prescribed referencing method?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You must read your essay (aloud to yourself is a good idea) BEFORE you hand it in to be assessed to make sure that the English expression is appropriate. English is the language of instruction and you will detract from the argument in your essay if your English expression is unsatisfactory.</td>
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</table>

In Australia, our western academic tradition considers the use of other peoples’ writings or ideas within our own essays/research, without properly acknowledging or attributing those writings or ideas to their source, as a very serious breach of ethics and standards, tantamount to stealing – this includes material found on the internet! We call this PLAGIARISM. You are encouraged to read widely. You are encouraged to use the ideas and writings of other authors to support your own ideas - providing you properly ACKNOWLEDGE the work of others in your list of references and notes as is required. As a student you must become familiar with, read and adopt the University of Wollongong Acknowledgment Practice as set out in the 2005 Postgraduate Calendar. At the end of your essays you must type and sign a statement with the following wording:

"I have read and adopted the University of Wollongong Acknowledgment Practice Code as set out in the 2005 Postgraduate Calendar.

Signed

......................................................" Date............................

REFERENCING IN WRITTEN WORK

(Use these instructions for your essay)

There are certain referencing conventions followed in presenting formal written work such as essays, major assignments and projects. The main objective in presenting references is that others – readers wishing to follow-up, check or whatever - can easily find or obtain the particular work or idea being referred to. Some of these conventions are set out below.

The Bibliography (Reference List)

Titles of books (monographs) and journals are shown in *italics*. Titles of articles are shown in parentheses. For books, date of publication and publisher should be shown (and, if you like, the place of publication). For journal articles the date, volume number and pagination should be indicated. The authors should be listed with surname followed by a comma and the initials. Where there is more than one author the first author is listed with surname first followed by initials but subsequent authors are shown with their initials then the surname. The list should be sorted alphabetically (from authors’ surnames) and where there is more than one work being cited by an author(s) they should be listed in date order, oldest to latest. Formatting should be such that the list is clear and easy to read.
For Example:

In the Text
In the main body of the essay reference can be made to a work by its author with date and page number(s) in brackets; for example:

I feel I really understood semiotics after reading Cobley and Jansz (1997).

If you are quoting the quote, it should be indicated in parentheses with the author’s name and date and page number listed in brackets; for example:

In discussing the differences between the two approaches to accounting history Fleischman and Tyson claim the “critical historians tend to question the objectivity of much primary source material” (1997, p 91). However, “in its stress on the social context, the work of Jakobson and the Prague School is extremely important” (Cobley & Jansz, 1997, p 154).

Do not “overdo it”. Note that in the above example the references are different (where the dates are indicated). That is because references should not interfere with the flow of the text. If you are making a lengthy quote you can do this by

Indenting the paragraph and possibly showing it in a different font size, as in some books.
But if you are doing this then you do NOT need the parentheses marks and you should not use italics. Italics should only be used to emphasise some word(s). (Gaffikin, 2001, p 999)

Technology has influenced referencing. In the past underlining was used because typewriters tended not to be able to italicise words. But, as word processors can easily manage italics and bold text, underlining should only be used minimally. Unfortunately, some people do not seem to appreciate this and indicate the same “thing” in multiple ways. That is, you really only need to indicate that you are quoting in one method (preferably as above) but some people indent, use parentheses and even italicise the whole quote. Thus they are saying “I am quoting, quoting quoting” (that is the same thing three times!).

There are many other conventions and, if you wish to learn more about this topic, you can read a style manual – a book published to tell authors how to present their work to the publishers. Alternatively, you can look at the “instructions to authors” given in journals (either near the front or back of an issue). In the Department many subjects require students to comply with *The Accounting Review* style in presenting their essays; that is essentially what I have outline above. When referring to a work in the main body of your text you should follow the same format as in the bibliography as I have when making reference to *The Accounting Review*. Presentation is important as it gives the readers a “first impression” of how important you believe your work is. *Always proofread* your work before handing it in. Leave spaces after punctuation marks.
Note: If you wish to use a different style, say the *Accounting Auditing and Accountability Journal (AAAJ)* style, then please make sure that you are consistent in using it.

**FINAL EXAMINATION**
There will be a three-hour written examination at the end of the semester. It will consist of questions covering all aspects of the course. Specific details will given at the end of the subject prior to the examination, however, traditionally the examinations have required written answers to four or five questions on topics covered in the class.

**SUBJECT PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMINAR SCHEDULE</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/07/05</td>
<td>Introduction (Understanding Theory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/07/05</td>
<td>History and Development of Accounting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/08/05</td>
<td>Nature and Uses of Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/08/05</td>
<td>Approaches to Accounting Theory Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/08/05</td>
<td>Positive Theorising</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/08/05</td>
<td>Regulation as Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>25/08/05</td>
<td>The Nature of Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/09/05</td>
<td>The Critiques of Mainstream Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/09/05</td>
<td>Alternatives to Mainstream Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/09/05</td>
<td>Research and Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/09/05</td>
<td>Accounting and Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/10/05</td>
<td>The Ethical Dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/05</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/10/05</td>
<td>Review</td>
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**STUDY TECHNIQUES:** (Some tips and tricks)

*(an edited version of an original prepared by Ron Perrin, Sub Dean, Faculty of Commerce and member of the School of Accounting & Finance)*

**Reading:** Always take time to read the preface and Acknowledgments before beginning to read the body of the book. Read for overall understanding rather than minute detail.

**The Source Materials for this Course are Genuinely Scarce.** Access the texts or reports you are assigned, read them quickly and return them to the library so that your fellow participants can use them. Cooperation and teamwork is essential in this course - help and sustain each other.

**Read Other Works by the Authors** - it will help you place their major works within an understandable framework. Discuss what you read with other participants - share your knowledge and improve your understanding.

**Situate What You Read Within a Wider Historical and Social Context.** When was the book written and what were the economic and social conditions prevalent at that time? How would the authors ideas have been shaped by his upbringing?
**Freedom and Safety.** Our seminars are designed as an environment within which you are free to express your ideas in safety. You are free and safe to disagree with me, to disagree with whatever you may read or whatever is presented to you by others. However, that freedom is tempered by a need to respect the views of others with behave with tolerance and civility.

**Why?** I believe this is the most important question you can ask of any program of inquiry and it should drive your research efforts.

**COURSE RULES AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES**
The Postgraduate Course Rules and the University’s Policies relating to student conduct, and especially applications for special consideration and supplementary exams are found in the Postgraduate Calendar 2005. You are obliged to read these if you intend to rely upon them in any application you may make.

**NON-Discriminatory Language Practice and Presentation**
In the Postgraduate Calendar the university has established a policy and guidelines for referring to minority groups, gender inclusive language and sex role stereotyping and status issues. I would ask that you adopt and honour the policy and these rules as a matter of course.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**
[refer http://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/ds/]
If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodation in this subject you are strongly advised to discuss the issues early in the session with one of the Sub Deans, Ron Perrin or Nadia Verucci, in room 40.224.

**THE MAIN REFERENCES**

**Textbook:**

**Secondary Text:**

**Other:**
Ball, R & C W Smith (1992), *The Economics of Accounting Policy Choice*, McGraw-Hill. [BS]
Seminar Readings
Please note the following are initial readings and that you should read as widely as possible on the topics. The letter codes (abbreviations) refer to the list of books above. Many references are journal articles which have been reprinted in some of the above books or elsewhere.

1. **Introduction**

2. **History and Development of Accounting, Nature and Uses of Accounting**
BJ chapter 1 and 2
HPH chapters 1-3
MP chapters 2 and 3

3. **Approaches to Accounting Theory Construction**
BJ chapter 3
CD chapter 1
HPH chapters 1-6
MP chapter 4 and 5

4. **Positive Theorising**
BJ chapter 11
HPH chapters 15 and 16
JRT chapter 4 (especially introduction and articles by Ball & Brown, Watts & Zimmerman, Watts)
CD chapter 7
BS chapter 1 (especially articles by Watts, Watts & Zimmerman [both], Jensen)
GHH chapter 9 and 10

5. **Regulation as Theory**
BJ chapters 4 and 5
HPH chapters 7-9
CD chapters 3 and 5
WTD chapters 4 and 7
GHH chapters 12 and 13

6. **The Nature of Theory**
BJ chapters 6 and 9
HPH chapters 1 and 2 (again), 5 and 6
7. The Critiques of Mainstream Theory
JRT chapter 5 (especially introduction, and articles by Tinker et al, Lowe et al, Cooper and Hopper)
BJ chapter 15

8. Alternatives to Mainstream Theory
Arrington, Ed, “Intellectual Tyranny and the Public Interest: The Quest for the Grail and the Quality of Life” (1990), Advances in Public Interest Accounting, JAI Press, pp 1-16.
CD chapter 12

9. Research & Theory

10. Accounting & Social Responsibility
MP chapters 18 and 19
GHH chapter 19
CD chapter 9
11. The Ethical Dimension

HPH chapter 14
MP chapter 16

12. & 13. Review

Professor Gaffikin’s contribution is gratefully acknowledged in developing this subject.