ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND SEMINAR TIME
Tuesdays - 10.30 to 12.30pm, in 40.131
Classes will be conducted on a seminar (by groups) basis and attendance is an essential part of the learning process.

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
Group Seminar Presentations (10% ea) 10%
Participation 10%
Essay 20%
Final examination 60%
100%
You must achieve a score of not less than 45% in the 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 2000 words - not more than 2500 (not including the list of references)
Presentation/Content: Essays MUST:-
a. be word processed/typed using double-line spacing and have a cover sheet at the front with your family name, given names and student number.
b. include a synopsis and a list of references.
c. adopt the method of referencing and annotation described in the handout.
d. 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clanchy &amp; Ballard (Essay Writing for Students, 1981) recommend that the synopsis should cover</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. The outline of your main arguments, (not the full details); and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The general conclusions you have reached.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remember, the synopsis is not a 'road map' of your essay. That role is more suited to an 'Introduction'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where synopsis length is not specified it is usual to aim at around 5 - 10% of the length of the essay itself.</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>

<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>
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<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 If you are not sure about what analysis entails please see me.)</td>
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<th>Style</th>
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<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? Have you adequately reviewed your essay for correct spelling, grammar and usage?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Referencing</th>
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<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>
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<th>Other Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Other matters worthy of comment.</td>
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THE ESSAY QUESTION
Essay, due in the seminar on.
Discuss the following statements indicating your agreement or disagreement.
The current crisis in which the accounting profession finds itself is largely due to the fact that
its (accounting) theory simplistically overlooked the political and sociological implications of
the practice of accounting. This is also true for many other disciplines in relation to how their
theories are derived.

PLAGIARISM
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. 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 2003 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 2003 Postgraduate Calendar.

Signed

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

FINAL EXAMINATION
There will be a 3 hour written examination at the end of the semester. It will consist of
questions covering all aspects of the course.

SEMINAR PROGRAM

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date (2003)</th>
<th>Seminar</th>
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| 4 March     | Getting to know you!  
              | Introduction and overview of the course |
|             | Assignment of seminar topics |
| 11 March    | History and development of accounting:-- |
|             | Nature and uses of accounting |
| 18 March    | Approaches to accounting theory |
|             | Construction |
| 25 March    | Positive theorising |
| 1 April     | Regulation as theory |
| 8 April     | The nature of theory |
| 15 April    | The critiques of mainstream theory |
| 29 April    | Alternatives to mainstream theory |
| 6 May       | Research and theory |
| 13 May      | Accounting and social responsibility |
| 20 May      | The ethical dimension |
| 27 May | Review |
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. I will explain and illustrate why this is important during the first seminar. 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 by behaving 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.

**Use Me as a Resource and as a Sounding-Board for Your Ideas and Thoughts.** And do not forget other post-graduate students who may have done this subject and may have valuable understanding and advice for you. Ask around.

**SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS**

The following is what is expected from you in your role as a seminar presenter

**Structure**

Your presentation should have a distinct structure - an introduction, a ‘body’ and a conclusion. This requirement is not designed to restrict your imagination or talent for innovation but to allow us all to follow your arguments more easily. In terms of allocating time to each division, that is up to you but as a general guide say 20%; 60%; 20% respectively.

**Content**

The content ought to highlight the fruits of your research effort. The set texts may vary extensively in length but all exhibit complexity. Each author or committee presents ideas, descriptions, explanations, examples or predictions that may be considered groundbreaking. Instead of being overwhelmed by the complexities look on them as a challenge. You should aim at a closer reading of your seminar texts or reports. You must, however, decide whether to present an overview of the whole text/report or to concentrate
on a particular issue which interests you. Whichever way you choose to present your material, my assessment will concentrate on how well you understand your topic. In order to determine this, you may be questioned or challenged on some aspect of your address, as is common in our academic community. You should be prepared to support your point of view or understanding. Your fellow participants will also actively be encouraged to question you and become part of the exchange of ideas. None of this is designed to embarrass you or to denigrate your presentation or language skills, but is a practical means of allowing you to demonstrate your familiarity with the topic.

Presentation Style
Almost everyone will be nervous about speaking in front of the group. With many people that nervousness is made more obvious by problems that arise during the presentation. Here are some tips:

- **Bring a glass of water** - if nerves make your lips or mouth go dry then a sip of water works wonders.
- **Smile** - a smile can help you and your audience to relax.
- **Slow down** - nerves often make us speak more quickly. The quicker we speak, the more difficult we are to understand. Whether English is your first or second language you need to modulate the pace of your delivery and while 35 minutes may seem like an eternity, for a presenter who is familiar with his/her topic it passes very quickly.
- **Involve everyone** - make us active participants. Remember it is your responsibility to maintain our interest in your presentation. Be bright and cheerful, use quizzes/games or questions to involve us.
- **Try not to read your presentation.** Fear concerning the adequacy of your language skills may make the strategy of reading the presentation seem very attractive. While that may be good for your nerves it can bore the audience witless. Try using hand-held, palm-size cards containing the major points, or using an overhead transparency or the blackboard. However beware of relying on memory alone - it too may be a very dangerous strategy.

Handouts
You are required to give to every participant a Summary or skeleton/outline of your presentation. You decide how detailed that summary is but it should cover the major points of your presentation. It should not exceed 2 pages. You must hand to me a full set of your presentation notes as it will form part of your assessment.

The following is what I expect from you in your role as a **seminar participant**

You will present 2 seminars each but you will also be a participant in the remaining seminars. As a participant, your role is no less vital than that of a presenter.

- **Listen Actively** - To maximise the benefits of each presentation you must concentrate on following the information and arguments of the presenter.
- **Take Notes** - You will understand how much effort has been put into the presentations simply by reference to the amount of work you have to do for your own. Respect the efforts of others by noting their arguments and data.
- **Support each other** - offer encouragement - **ASK QUESTIONS.** By questioning the presenter you will help them to better understand their topic. If your understanding of the subject differs from the presenter you are obliged to raise those doubts - only through
debate and discourse can we gain further insights into the subject. Don’t be afraid that you are ‘capturing’ or disrupting the presentation. Our culture makes allowances for and encourages conjecture. And do not worry about forcing the presenter to go over time - I will keep a check on that. Remember, I will be observing you in your role as a participant and that this activity forms part of your assessment.

USING EQUIPMENT AND VISUAL AIDS

Presentations can be improved and enhanced by using some simple, and other more complex, technologies.

- **The Blackboard/Whiteboard** - probably the most simple yet most effective technology available. Consider using the board to underscore the major parts of your presentation. If you are unfamiliar with this medium I suggest you write the major points up on the board BEFORE you begin and then refer to them as you proceed. Use different colours of chalk/pen for emphasis. Make sure your writing style and print size can be read from the back of the room.

- **Butchers’ Paper and Felt Pens** - Another simple but effective set of tools, somewhat more flexible than the blackboard because you can script a number of pages which allows you to make multiple cross-referenced points. Remember, use different colours for emphasis. Make sure your writing style and print size can be read from the back of the room.

- **Overhead Projector (OHP)** - Still relatively simple and very flexible. However, you must be careful when using the OHP. Technique is very important. Make sure your writing style and print size can be read from the back of the room. Transparencies may be either neatly handwritten or typed. You should avoid having close set typed information - it is hard to read and unattractive to look at. Use 16-20 point type size and remember LESS IS MORE! As you place each transparency on the OHP make sure it is the right way up and straight. I recommend switching the OHP off briefly while placing and removing the transparencies, and then switching it back on - it’s tidier. Make sure that you do not obscure the image by passing between screen and light while you are talking - it is annoying, tends to distract the participants and is unprofessional. Use the ‘reveal’ technique to emphasise each point by obscuring the writing with a piece of paper and drawing it down as each point is addressed. Use a pen or slim pointed object placed on the glass to point to a particular word or line.

- **Audio Cassette or VCR** - If you need a cassette player or the Department’s VCR to run a tape please let me know well beforehand.

- **Computer Hardware/Software** - If you intend using PowerPoint or other screen-based technology, arrange this well beforehand.

- **Audience Participation** - You may wish to interrogate your fellow participants or use quizzes or games as devices for moving your presentation forward. Make sure any instructions you give are clear and check to make sure we understand them. If you ask questions of us don’t rush in to answer them yourself - hold your nerve - wait for us to respond. If we won’t answer, make us work - choose someone to answer, addressing them by their name.

- **Practice your presentation skills** - they will be invaluable in other subjects also.

Finally, I am happy to help you with your presentations in advance. Come and see me for help, run your ideas past me. Talk to your friends and use any other resources available. It’s up to you.
 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 2003. 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
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:

Other:

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. *Getting to know you! Introduction and overview of the course, Assignment of seminar topics.*

BJ chapter 1 and 2
MP chapters 2 and 3

3. *Approaches to accounting theory construction*
ACCY903 Accounting, Theory p 9


4. Positive theorising
BJ chapter 11
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
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

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
CD chapter 12

9. Research and theory
Smith, C. R Whipp and H Wilmott, “Case-study Research in Accounting: Methodological Breakthrough or Ideological Weapon”, Advances in Public Interest Accounting, 1988, JAI Press, pp 95-120.


10. Accounting and social responsibility

MP chapters 18 and 19


GHH chapter 19

CD chapter 9


11. The ethical dimension

MP chapter 16


12. Review