Department of Strategy and Innovation  
**PhD course in**  
**International Business: State-of-the-art theories and topics**  
**22 – 26 April 2024**

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**Prerequisites**  
The course is designed for students with different backgrounds who have an interest in business and its applications to other fields and topics. Although a basic knowledge of management, strategy, and economics is helpful, no specific prerequisites are required. Students are expected to attend the entire course and take the final exam.

**Aim**  
The course aims to offer a systematic foundational knowledge of the theoretical building blocks of international business research, the most updated debates on theories, and an overview of topics and areas of research in the field. The ultimate goal is to develop an ability to identify opportunities for future research. The course is organized into two parts. The first part focuses on different theoretical perspectives. The second part discusses state-of-the-art research on specific topics and areas.

**Learning objectives**
- To demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of theories and topics relevant to international business literature.
- To demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of key concepts, assumptions, causal relationships and processes relevant to international business literature.
- To critically review assigned readings.
- To develop new ideas and approaches that advance some portions of theory and research.

**Teaching style**  
Lectures and workshops where students are expected to present and discuss pre-assigned readings.

**Course organization and pedagogy**  
This is a discussion-based course. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for every session. Session preparation includes reading all required assigned material for the session. During each session, the discussion will be based on the *papers for discussion* (see below). For each of these papers, student preparation must include 3 components:  
1. *Reading summary:*  
   - Purpose of the reading: Description of how this reading fits in with a broader stream of research, why it was written, and the fundamental objective of the reading.
- Theoretical argument: Summary of the theoretical argument of the reading, basic assumptions, and major propositions.
- Methodology: Summary of research methods (if any)
- Results and conclusions: Empirical results, theoretical conclusions, and practical implications

2) Evaluation and Extension of reading
- Critically evaluate each of the summary sections, identifying well-written arguments and inconsistent positions.
- Propose extensions that will fill research gaps in the literature. Extensions may be theoretical or empirical and are expected to help you build toward the proposal for the exam.

Evaluation and extension build on the ability to critically evaluate and review papers for conferences and journals and the ability to identify new ideas for research.

3) Integration with
- other papers in the session.
- papers in prior sessions, and
- own research field (if applicable)

to identify commonalities and contradictions and explore the reasons for their existence.

Integration builds on a comprehensive mental model of the literature and supports the identification of gaps and opportunities for new research.

Exam
At the end of the course, each student is requested to hand in a 3-5-page proposal that will be assessed on a pass/no-pass basis. The proposal is expected to identify a research question, theoretical framing, and preliminary hypotheses.

Course Plan

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<th>Session</th>
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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Why and how companies became multinationals</td>
<td>GS</td>
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<td>S2*</td>
<td>22/04/2024</td>
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<td>S3</td>
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<td>S4*</td>
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<td>S10*</td>
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<td>MNEs and Grand challenges</td>
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* These sessions will be scheduled in the afternoon

Detailed course plan

Session 1. Why and how companies became multinationals
The session will provide an introduction to the course and its objectives. Next, it will address the question of why and how companies become multinationals. It will introduce the Dunning OLI paradigm and the internationalization process model as theoretical frameworks tackling this question.

Background Readings

**Papers for discussion**

- Narula, R. 2012. “Do we need different frameworks to explain infant MNEs from developing countries?” *Global Strategy Journal*, 2(1), 41-47.

**Session 2. Internalization theory**

This session covers Internalization Theory, also known as the “Theory of the Multinational Enterprise (MNE)”. Drawing on transaction cost reasoning and incorporating resource-based perspectives, internalization theory scholars have aimed to answer the question: why do multinational firms exist? In other words, why do firms own operations and assets in foreign countries (where they face liabilities of foreignness) rather than collaborating with local firms (which have greater host country legitimacy) in the market or through strategic alliances?

**Background Readings**


**Papers for discussion**


**Session3. Stakeholder theory in the global context**

The session zooms in on the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders, and particularly what happens to this relationship when a focal organization operates across borders. Departing from the central assumption of stakeholder theory that organizations must not only perform but also stay legitimate, this session looks at how the cross-national context generates differences in stakeholder sets, objectives, and processes, and at how firms seek to manage these differences.

**Background readings:**


**Papers for discussion**

Session 4. Paper Development Workshop
The session offers an opportunity to present and discuss students’ ideas about the proposal due for the exam.

Background Readings

Session 5. Dynamics and flexibility of foreign operation modes
The session invites a discussion of how research on foreign entry modes, which tend to be static, should be extended into studies of post-entry changes such as mode switches (including internalization) and mode additions. The session furthermore addresses the question of how research on the dynamics of foreign operation modes can advance from being predominantly descriptive to becoming more prescriptive and thereby contribute to the international management and global strategy literature.

Background Readings

Papers for discussion

Session 6. International human resource management
The session gives an introduction to the field of International Human Resource Management, which has intellectual roots in the resource-based view, cross-cultural management, and comparative management. Its origins can be traced back to the discussions around international expansions, HQ-subsidiary relations and staffing of international operations. Later the IHRM research questions have become more complex and now they are much more about people-related drivers of internationalization and its consequences for the management of people in indifferent contexts.

Background Readings

Papers for discussion

**Session 7. Knowledge transfer across borders**
The success of MNCs depends upon their ability to transfer and deploy knowledge that is globally dispersed. The session analyses the potential benefits associated with the transfer of knowledge across borders, the factors and mechanisms that influence how MNCs transfer and integrate the unique knowledge of their units, and the implications of intra-MNC knowledge transfer for the balance of power within the MNC. The aim of the session is to develop a broad theoretical understanding of knowledge transfer across borders and enable students to develop the skills necessary to evaluate and analyze academic papers on the topic.

**Background Readings**

**Papers for discussion**

**Session 8. International business and knowledge protection**
The session will focus on a particular challenge for firms operating internationally: Balancing the opportunities of using knowledge and innovations across countries with the risks of seeing them copied and imitated by competitors. We will establish the mechanisms underlying (a) the need for protection against imitation, (b) dominant types of knowledge protection as well as (c) central considerations for the effectiveness of these strategies.

**Background Readings**

**Papers for discussion**

**S9. Backlash against globalization**
Growing evidence suggests that we may live in a period where continues globalization are questioned. We will try to understand the drivers for globalization as well as the reasons for a potential deglobalization. A backlash against globalization will induce a significant qualitative shift in strategies, structures, and behaviors observable in international business.
Background Readings

Papers for discussion

S10. MNEs and Grand Challenges
The session will consider the pressing demands MNEs face to be part of the solution of Grand Challenges. The debate whether MNEs can and do live up to these expectations and under which conditions is lively. The session will offer an overview of this debate and the different theoretical perspective that inform it. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss about the exam.

Background Readings

Papers for discussion