

**THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**  
**6A:287 - EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH IN ACCOUNTING**  
**FALL 2001**

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**Office:** W276 PBB  
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**Office Hours:** By appointment.  
**Class Time and Site:** 2:30-5:00 MF C250 PBB

**REQUIRED MATERIAL:**

Shadish, W.; T. Cook; and D. Campbell. 2001. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This seminar has four primary objectives: to introduce some methodological issues that seem particularly relevant for experimental research, to introduce a subset of the experimental literature in accounting, to develop the participant's skills in critically evaluating this literature, and to provide a background for further pursuit of experimental research.

**GRADING:**

Grades will be determined by performance on the following components:

<b>Component</b>	<b>Proportion of Final Grade</b>
Seminar Participation	.40
Referee's Report	.10
Term Paper	.25
Final Examination	.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.00</b>

## **SEMINAR PARTICIPATION:**

All participants are expected to come to class prepared (i.e., with written notes) to summarize and critically assess the theoretical, methodological and practical issues and implications of each paper. In addition, they should be prepared to discuss three important insights that they acquired related to the assigned readings. Participants are expected to evaluate and expand upon other participant's comments. Seminar participation will be evaluated primarily on the basis of quality.

## **REFEREE'S REPORT:**

All participants will be assigned to a group whose responsibility will be to write a "blind" referee's report for an unpublished research paper following the guidelines for referees of the *Accounting Review*. The research paper will be distributed on October 15, and the referee's report will be due on October 29.

## **TERM PAPER:**

All participants are responsible for writing a term paper on an approved topic of their choice. The paper should be written to agree with the *Accounting Review's* editorial policy and style format. Topic approval is required by October 5. Participants will be assigned to present a progress report on their term paper to the seminar on December 3 or 10. Final reports are due on or before December 21.

Participants should focus in depth on an experimental topic within their area of substantive interest in accounting (auditing, financial, managerial, systems, or taxation). Two options exist: (1) scrutinize the literature related to the topic and consider the synergistic insights that can be learned from that literature or (2) develop an original research proposal.

Option 1: Select a topic that has been a focus of attention in experimental research in accounting. Identify the articles that currently comprise the literature for that topic, and do the following:

1. Summarize and categorize the principal findings from the literature.
2. Comment on any synergy that can be obtained from considering the various research contributions and perspectives taken. That is, can more be learned from the literature as a whole than from a summary of the individual studies? Non-experimental perspectives and findings should be incorporated if they are relevant to the topic.
3. Given the current state of the art, assess the needed directions for future experimental research in the area.

The literature review should be about 20 typed and double-spaced pages in length. The evaluation of the manuscript will be based upon the quality of presentation and the significance of its contribution (i.e., evidence of going beyond descriptive summaries).

Option 2: Develop an experimental research idea into a workable proposal. It is suggested

(but not required) that a topic that extends an existing study be chosen. Motivate the topic, explain why it is important, develop a theoretical structure and hypotheses, and then describe in detail how one would carry out a test of those hypotheses.

Ideally, the completed proposal should resemble the front end of a quality research manuscript, setting up the experiment and doing everything short of actually carrying out the study and analyzing its results.

It is often the case that experimental ideas sound great until one tries to implement them. Accordingly, another requirement for this option is to draft the experimental instructions and other instruments that would be used in carrying out the study.

The proposal length should be about 15 typed and double-spaced pages, excluding the drafts of instructions and instruments. The evaluation of the manuscript will be based upon the quality of presentation, the significance of its potential contribution, and the concern for validity displayed.

## **FINAL EXAMINATION**

There will be a final examination over the material covered in the seminar on Wednesday, December 19 at 4:30 p.m. Questions on the exam will be similar in scope to those that typically appear on the comprehensive examination in accounting.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The following individuals generously provided advice and/or syllabi for similar Ph.D. seminars that greatly aided in the construction of this syllabus: Mike Bamber, Stan Biggs, Sarah Bonner, Vicky Hoffman, Steve Kachelmeier, Bob Libby, Laureen Maines, Bill Messier, Al Schepanski, and Geoff Sprinkle.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week of	Topic	Reading
8/27	Introduction	Libby 1981, pp. 1-9 Libby 1989 (include Joyce discussion) Kinney 1986 Shadish et al. 2001, Ch. 1
9/3	Philosophy of Science	Friedman 1953 Simon 1968 Christenson 1983
9/10	Validity	Campbell and Fiske 1959 Shadish et al. 2001, Ch. 2-3
9/17	Validity	Shadish et al. 2001, Ch. 8 Lynch 1982 Swieringa and Weick 1982
9/24	Lens Model and Probabilistic Judgment	Libby 1981, Ch. 2-3 Einhorn et al. 1979 Trotman and Wood 1991 Smith and Kida 1991
10/1	Psychological Measurement	Schepanski 1983a Schepanski 1983b Vandervelde et al. 2001
10/8	Learning, Memory, and Expertise	Libby and Luft 1993 Libby 1985 Bonner and Lewis 1990 Tubbs 1992
10/15	Learning, Memory, and Expertise	Moeckel and Plumlee 1989 Sprinkle and Tubbs 1998 Tan and Libby 1997
10/22	Decision-Making Under Uncertainty	Schoemaker 1982 Kahneman and Tversky 1979
10/29	Decision-Making Under Uncertainty	Schepanski and Kelsey 1990 Schepanski and Shearer 1995 Schepanski 2001
11/5	Financial Accounting	Maines 1995 Maines and Hand 1996 Tan et al. 2001
11/12	Financial Accounting	Libby et al. 2001 Camerer et al. 1989 Bloomfield and Hales 2001
11/19	Managerial Accounting	Sprinkle 2001 Evans et al. 2001
11/26	Managerial Accounting	Lipe and Salterio 2000 Luft 1994 Fisher et al. 2001
12/3	Presentations	
12/10	Presentations	

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