

# Current Topics in Management and Business Ethics:

## Creative Research on Leadership

*Preliminary Syllabus*

University of Zurich  
20-23 September 2022

### Location:

University of Zurich (Main Building), Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zürich

### Room:

20.-22.09.2022: KOL-G-210  
23.09.2022: KOL-F-103

### Instructor:

Prof. Dr. Mats Alvesson  
Lund University  
mats.alvesson@fek.lu.se

For questions regarding the seminar content, please contact Mats Alvesson.  
The seminar is worth 3 ECTS points.

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### Schedule and topics:

#### Tuesday 20 September

- 09:00-12:00 Session 1: Leadership – a general overview.
- 13:00-16:00 Session 2: Leadership and alternative ways of organizing
- 16:00-17:00 Student Presentations and Individual coaching (see note below)

#### Wednesday 21 September

- 09:00-12:00 Session 3: Varieties of leadership
- 13:00-16:00 Session 4: Critical views on leadership
- 16:00-17:00 Student Presentations and Individual coaching (see note below)

#### Thursday 22 September

- 09:00-12:00 Session 5: Doing qualitative research: some traditions
- 13:00-16:00 Session 6: Different viewpoints: reflexivity, pluralism and conflict
- 16:00-17:00 Student Presentations and Individual coaching (see note below)

#### Friday 23 September

- 09:00-13:00 Session 7: Constructing innovative research questions and theory development, Student Presentations, and seminar wrap up

*A note about the individual coaching sessions:*

Individual coaching is not mandatory. If you are a seminar participant who would like to discuss a paper you are working on, please contact Mats Alvesson (mats.alvesson@fek.lu.se) before **Sept 6, 2022** to send your paper and to arrange a time on the schedule.

## **OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SEMINAR**

This is a doctoral-level seminar in which we will review research in management and business ethics, with a specific focus on reflexive and creative research on leadership and management. We will address a mix of theoretical and empirical contributions. Due to time constraints, our examination of the material will be introductory rather than exhaustive. This course is set up to provide doctoral students with a deeper understanding of notions of theory and theoretical contributions in management and business ethics, to foster the ability to understand, evaluate, and interpret the empirical phenomena and conceptual aspects of management and business ethics research on challenging issues in business and society, and to help students to develop the skills necessary to publish in and review for top-tier journals.

The main objective of this seminar is to familiarize you with some of the basic assumptions, concepts, theories, and findings in management and business ethics pertaining to creative research on leadership and management. In addition, we will emphasize the following objectives:

1. To help you build the resources and knowledge needed to develop a mental model of the literature pertaining to creative research on leadership and management.
2. To help you sharpen your ability to critically assess academic research in the field of management and business ethics.
3. To help make you stronger at developing new ideas and/or approaches that advance some portion of the literature in the field of management and business ethics.
4. To help you become a better communicator of your academic ideas, both orally and in writing.

## **SEMINAR STRUCTURE**

In each session we will discuss the assigned books and articles. Our discussion will be descriptive, critical, and – hopefully – creative. In the descriptive mode we will explore what the author intended to accomplish and why. In the critical mode we will look at how well the authors did what they set out to do. In the creative mode we will address the question ‘what’s next in this line of research and in this general topic area?’ Thus, beyond an in-depth critique of the assigned articles we will devote time to raising and discussing new research questions.

In this seminar you will gain additional insight into what it means to be a contributor to the scholarly community. As such, my strong expectation is that you be an active participant in not only your learning, but also that of your peers. The class is discussion oriented. My role is not to lecture, but rather to guide and facilitate the discussion.

Please note:

Reading all of the assigned texts is mandatory. This is important, as the seminar will only work if everyone arrives well prepared for a thoughtful discussion.

## **GRADING**

This seminar is graded as pass-fail. Your learning and the learning of your classmates will depend upon you arriving to class fully prepared and then participating fully in the discussion. A grade of pass for the seminar indicates that your preparation for all the sessions and your participation in all the sessions were excellent.

## **PREPARING FOR CLASS**

1. Read each assigned reading carefully, taking notes on key points, concepts, theories, and findings.

Use the following questions to guide your note taking:

- a. What is the basic argument/point made by the author(s)? What are its strengths?
- b. What are the weaknesses of the argument and/or the empirical method?
- c. What alternative explanations can account for the findings of the authors?

- d. If you disagree with an argument or method, what would it take to convince you?
- e. What are the scope conditions; under what circumstances is the argument meant to apply?
- f. How might the argument in the paper be extended or applied to a different case, another context, or a different theoretical perspective?

2. Prior to sessions 1 through 6, think of one question you would like to discuss about each of the readings. Email me your questions ([mats.alvesson@fek.lu.se](mailto:mats.alvesson@fek.lu.se)) at least two hours before the start of the session. A good discussion question is thought-provoking. Try to avoid questions that would simply require someone in the class to summarize something from the reading. “Why” or “how” questions are good. You might also try to make connections with something we’ve discussed in the seminar.

## PRESENTATIONS

Each participant will give a 5–10-minute presentation of your own research idea followed by a brief discussion. We will assign each student a slot prior to the seminar starts.

## READINGS

**Session 1:** Leadership – a general overview.

Alvesson, M, Blom, M & Sveningsson, S (2017) *Reflexive Leadership*. London: Sage, ch 1-4  
 Meindl, J. R. (1995) The romance of leadership as a follower-centric theory: A social constructionist approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6(3): 329-341.  
 Smircich, L., & Morgan, G. (1982) Leadership: The management of meaning. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 18(3): 257-273.

**Session 2:** Leadership and alternative ways of organizing

Alvesson, M, Blom, M & Sveningsson, S (2017) *Reflexive Leadership*. London: Sage, ch 5-7  
 Jermier, J. & Kerr, S. (1997) Substitutes for leadership: their meaning and measurement – contextual recollections and current observations. *Leadership Quarterly* 8(2), pp. 95–100.

**Session 3:** Varieties of leadership

Alvesson, M, Blom, M & Sveningsson, S (2017) *Reflexive Leadership*. London: Sage, ch 8-11

**Session 4:** Critical views of leadership

Alvesson, M, Blom, M & Sveningsson, S (2017) *Reflexive Leadership*. London: Sage, ch 12-14  
 Alvesson, M (2020) Upbeat leadership: A recipe for – or against – “successful” leadership theory. *Leadership Quarterly*  
 Alvesson, M & Einola, K (2019) Warning for excessive positivity: Authentic leadership and other traps in leadership studies. *Leadership Quarterly*, 30, 4, 383-395  
 Gardner, W et al (2021) Authentic leadership: The case for and against. *Leadership Quarterly*, 32

**Session 5:** Doing qualitative research: some traditions, illustrations from leadership research

Alvesson, M & Sköldböck (2018) *Reflexive Methodology*. London: Sage  
 Blom, M & Alvesson, M (2014) Leadership on demand. Followers as initiators and inhibitors of managerial leadership. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 30: 344-357

Einola, K & Alvesson, M (2021) When 'good' leadership backfires: Dynamics of the leader/follower relation. *Organization Studies*, 42, 6, 845-865

**Session 6:** Different viewpoints: reflexivity, pluralism and conflict

Alvesson, M & Sköldbberg (2018) *Reflexive Methodology*. London: Sage

**Session 7:** Constructing innovative research questions and theory

Alvesson, M & Kärreman, D (2007) Creating mystery: empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review* 32, 4, 1265-1281

Alvesson, M & Sandberg, J (2011) Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 37, 2, 247-271