RESEARCH SEMINAR

TERM 2 2020

RELATIONAL INQUIRY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

CO-ORDINATOR
A/PROF SCOTT EACOTT

ADVANCING RELATIONAL THEORISING LAB
Scott Eacott leads the Advancing Relational Theorising (ART) Lab in the School of Education at UNSW Sydney. He has developed a distinctive relational research program, best captured in ‘Beyond leadership: a relational approach to organisational theory in education’ (2018, Springer). A/Prof Eacott has been invited to speak about his relational approach in Norway, Canada, Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico and all states of Australia.

Using a variety of approaches, my classes are distinctive for their privileging of rigorous and robust discussion and debate of key ideas. Unlike conservative lecture or tutorial models, my teaching approach draws on the traditional research seminar model.

The seminar approach involves faculty and participants engaging in meaningful dialogue around key readings. In particular, it is about challenging participant’s ways of thinking and seeking to develop a commitment to the logic of scholarly debate – argument and refutation.

It is expected that all participants complete the necessary pre-reading for classes and are prepared to offer their position and defend that position in the face of criticism. It is through this justification that I believe the greatest learning takes place.
While relations have always been central to the social sciences, there has been increasing interest and even a ‘relational turn’ in contemporary social thought and analysis (Dépelteau, 2018; Donati, 2011; Emirbayer, 1997; Prandini, 2015). The fundamental shift of relational scholarship is a move away from seeing the social world as one constituted by things to one focused on unfolding relations.

As Pierpaolo Donati argues, society does not have relations but is relations. Relational scholarship is however not a homogeneous space. There are many different forms (e.g., Dépelteau, 2018). What they share is that in moving away from an entity based approach.

Relational scholarship allows us to understand the world in ways not previously possible. For higher degree researchers (including honours candidates), it offers both a methodology and a suite of theoretical resources.

This seminar provides an introduction to relational sociology and in particular Eacott’s relational approach. Emphasis will be given to locating this approach as both a methodology and suite of theoretical resources and it can be mobilised for the study of any topic of interest.
This seminar involves a number of readings from books, edited collections and journal articles as the basis for rigorous and robust scholarly debate of ideas.

**PRESCRIBED TEXT**


**Supplementary Readings**


Topic Two: The relational approach

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


Topic Three: Underlying generative assumptions

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


Topic Four: Problematising the research object

**Essential Reading:**


Topic Five: Constitution and emergence

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


Topic Six: Beyond analytical dualism

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**

Topic Seven: Generative contributions

Essential Reading:


Topic Eight: Reviews/Critiques of the relational approach

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Readings:


All readings, essential and supplementary, will be made available to participants through the UNSW Library.

In addition, a list of further readings / resources will be made available by the seminar co-ordinator.

Further opportunities include joining regular ART Lab meetings and monthly meetings of an international network of relational theorists.
The Advancing Relational Theorising Lab is pushing the edge of what we know about the social world. Our work is located within a network of renowned and emerging scholars whose ongoing work is seriously and consequentially engaged in theoretical and methodological developments in relational research. Scholarship from the team is therefore aimed at the forefront of contemporary thought and analysis and in doing so, stimulates dialogue and debates in the field.

We are constantly seeking outstanding researchers whether they be Honours, Masters, Doctoral, Post-Doc, Interns, or Visiting Scholars to undertake projects that advance our goal of changing the way people think and act through the relational approach. Details of current opportunities can be found in the 2021 Research Prospectus available at scotteacott.com

The Advancing Relational Theorising Lab's primary purpose is creating a research environment dedicated to fostering and delivering internationally recognised research and research training.

This is achieved through weekly Lab meetings, monthly international network meetings, an annual symposium, and establishing collaborations with key national and international scholars and research centres to develop new and ground-breaking theories and methodologies relevant to the contemporary world.

For further details contact A/Prof Scott Eacott (s.eacott@unsw.edu.au)