General introduction:

This course introduces graduate students to core theoretical underpinnings in current institutional analyses of organizations, industries and organizational fields. Our aim is to cover the major theoretical contributions to institutional analyses of organizations (old and new institutionalism, role of institutional entrepreneurs, competing logics etc.) and to examine recent advances in theory and research that extend these approaches in interesting ways. During the course, you will develop a solid understanding of different perspectives in organizational institutionalism and how they conceptualize the relationship between organizations and their institutional environment.

The course is designed to foster your skills in discussing and critiquing both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence. In order to achieve these goals, it is important that you read the required readings before the seminar. You do not only need to understand the readings and should be able to question them; you should also develop your own position in regard to the discussed readings. The seminar format supports the development of critical competences by means of preparatory memos, presentations and reflection memos (see requirements).

Being jointly taught by faculty from the University of Cologne and Sciences Po Paris and bringing together graduate students from both institutions, the seminar will offer ample opportunities for debate and exchange between senior scholars and peers from both academic institutions.

Seminar organization:

The seminar will take place in Cologne, at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (Paulstr. 3, 50676 Cologne), from June 21 to June 23, 2012.

- Students will be asked to read all the “required readings” before the seminar.
Each student will be asked to write three preparatory memos (max. 1 page) on required readings for three different topics of the seminar. Memos should highlight ideas or arguments that you found stimulating; and questions about or disagreements with the theoretical arguments and/or concepts, as well as possible methodological flaws, inconsistencies or misunderstandings. Each paper should include the discussion of a research question or hypothesis that comes from the work. The intent of the memos is to facilitate discussion during the class session. Papers should be sent one week before the seminar (15th June 2012) by email to Gerards@mpifg.de.

In addition, students will be asked to prepare one brief presentation (10 to 15 minutes each) on the peculiar ways the readings have illuminated and enriched their own research object and related empirical and theoretical issues. Presentations should as well highlight the issues that are less well addressed by these approaches and how these difficulties could be possibly overcome.

Two preparatory meetings will take place
For students in Paris: On May 4 at 3:30-5:30pm at the CSO (19 rue Amélie 75007 Paris http://www.cso.edu/contact.asp). All seminar participants from Paris must be present at this meeting.
For students in Cologne: On April 17 at 2-4pm in the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (Paulstr. 3), seminar room 1. All seminar participants from Cologne must be present at this meeting.

Day 1 (June 21, 2012)
13.00 – 18.00

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS, PART 1

Required readings

„Old institutionalism“


„New Institutionalism“


Advised readings


Evening (20.00-22.00) – dinner

Day 2 (June 22, 2012)

Morning session: 9.00 – 12.30

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS, PART 2

Required readings

Bringing actors back in


Competing logics, ambiguity and institutional heterogeneity


Advised readings


Day 2 (June 22, 2012)

Afternoon session: 14.00 – 18.00

RECENT ADVANCES, PART 1

Required readings

*Organizational action and institutional change*


*Institutional entrepreneurship –*


Advised readings


Day 3 (June 23, 2012)

Morning session: 9.00 – 12.30

RECENT ADVANCES, PART 2

Required readings

*How do organizations shape their institutional environment?*


*How do organizations adapt to their institutional environment?*


Advised readings


Day 3 (June 23, 2012)

Afternoon session: 14.00 – 16.00

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION