



Topic List for a Bachelor's or Master's Thesis

Chair of Foundations of Business Administration and Theories of the Firm

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Scope and eligibility

Students interested in writing a bachelor's or master's thesis under my supervision are expected to demonstrate high motivation, capacity for effort and original thinking and clear alignment with my research agenda.

You may apply if you are interested in my research topics or have previously attended courses offered by the chair.

Writing a thesis typically takes around four to six months of work. Students should therefore *apply at least two to three months prior to their intended start date*. This lead time is necessary to set the stage for the thesis, including setting up collaborations with industry partners.

Preference is given to in-depth qualitative/ textual or philosophy driven research. The thesis will be written in **English**. **Please note that if you are motivated to undertake an interesting project and don't have high grades you can still apply, provided you are willing to put in the work and think deeply about issues. Shallow and routine thinking in any case will not be highly rewarded.**

Note that I have topics ready for you to work on, which I will assign, if there is a fit. You can also suggest your own topics, especially if you have company access. I will decide whether we will move ahead with them or not.

Research focus and indicative topics

My research interests revolve around the following topics, provocations and questions (this list is indicative and not exhaustive):

1) Digitalization and its implications for business and society

- How does democratization of voice and information change societal and business dynamics?
- Are business models of social media and Gen AI companies harmful? When? How?
- What should be the ethical guardrails for GenAI companies?
- What are the implications of using AI as an authority?
- What are the implications for privacy when we use our digital devices?
- Is wealth earned from cryptocurrency ethical?
- How can we collectively organize to thwart the harms of digital media companies?
- What role does the law and regulation play in defending our privacy?
- Do we care about our privacy? If yes, when and why? If not, why not?
- Does social media make civility difficult? Why? Can we deliberate on social media?
- Do dating apps enable racism? If yes, is that justified?
- Imagine, Gen AI can do all the jobs, what will you/ we do?
- Should digital product undergo the same pre-launch testing that food products undergo? Will slowing down innovation be worth it?

2) Experts and expertise

- Why does the layperson/ public distrust expert knowledge?
- How and why are influencers replacing credentialed experts as advice givers?
- Why is there an anti-intellectual sentiment in society?
- Why are experts seen as elitist? Is it wrong to be an elite? Why?
- Can experts be wrong? If yes, how should those cases be handled by society?
- Should experts do anything for shareholder value and private gain? What should the limits of expert activities, and when does their duty to society start?
- Why are experts unable to convince the public on many issues of their veracity?
- Should experts listen to the public? If yes, when and how?
- Is everyone an expert these days, can anyone become an expert on a given problem by reading stuff on the internet?
- How do we build common ground between the public and experts that increasingly disagree about critical issues such as climate change, economic policy, immigration?
- We know experts have benefited business and society, but experts may also cause harm. How do we examine and prevent such harm?
- While anyone can make any claim about any issue on digital media, how do we deal with such claims? For a given issue, when do we draw the line and define a moral stance that decides right and wrong?

Students are expected to think about both sides of the arguments, since rarely one side has all the valuable perspectives.

Application procedure

First contact should be made via email to siddhant.ritwick@business.uzh.ch

Your application must include the following:

- Statement of purpose (for either bachelor's or master's thesis)
- Outline of your research interests, a preliminary research question
- Show strong alignment with my research agenda
- Description of your methodological approach
- CV and a current transcript of records

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Additional guidelines

It is recommended to familiarize oneself with the chair's formal guidelines (available in German only), including:

- Guidelines for academic writing (Merkblatt für wissenschaftliche Arbeiten)
- Evaluation criteria for theses (Kriterien zur Beurteilung wissenschaftlicher Arbeiten)
- Recommendations for seminar and thesis work (Tipps für Seminar & Abschlussarbeiten)

Some texts that you can read to gain familiarity with my interests:

- 1) <https://aeon.co/essays/are-online-communities-for-chronic-illness-doing-more-harm-than-good>
- 2) Siddhant Ritwick, Tomi Koljonen (2025), "Enter the Spiral: The Adverse Consequences of Professional and Lay Expertise for Sufferers' Lived Experiences" *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*
- 3) Rintamäki, J., Parker, S., & Spicer, A. (2025). Institutional Parasites. *Academy of Management*

- 4) Ritwick, S. (2025). In the Eye of the Beholder: An Extension of Jukka Rintamäki, Simon Parker, and Andre Spicer's "Institutional Parasites." *Academy of Management Review*, 50(3), 652–655. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2024.0236>
- 5) Castelló, I., Colleoni, E., Scherer, A. G., & Trittin-Ulbrich, H. (2025). Social Media Is a Threat for Democracy! A Political Perspective for Analysing and Diminishing Harm. *Journal of Management Studies*, joms.70053. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.70053>
- 6) Bouchard, M., Cruz, L. B., & Maguire, S. (2024). Emotions and Client Participation in Jurisdictional Contestation. *Academy of Management Review*, 49(3), 487–513. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2020.0511>
- 7) Bhargava, V. R., & Velasquez, M. (2021). Ethics of the Attention Economy: The Problem of Social Media Addiction. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 31(3), 321–359. <https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2020.32>
- 8) Malhotra, N., & Voronov, M. (2026). Cycles of Passivity: How Mainstreamers Unwittingly Enable Erosion of Democracy. In G. Espedal, T. Ruebottom, M. Struminska-Kutra, J. Bento Da Silva, & D. Creed (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Emotions and Values in Organizational Institutionalism* (pp. 247–267). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-12670-2_9
- 9) Bail, C. (2021). *Breaking the Social Media Prism: How to Make Our Platforms Less Polarizing*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv18zhdhg>