



Stockholm  
University

## Entrepreneurship from the perspective of the Entrepreneurial Self (Doctoral course; 7,5 ECTS credits)

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### **Course director**

Karin Berglund, Professor in business with specialisation in entrepreneurship ([kab@sbs.su.se](mailto:kab@sbs.su.se))

### **Course Coordinator**

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### **Background**

Contemporary society is imbued by an ‘entrepreneurial logic’ that invites individuals to become active, responsible, rational and yet compassionate, contributing to society while managing their lives as ‘entrepreneur of themselves’. Through this expanded interpretation, entrepreneurship has become a concept spanning issues from personal development to sustainable change and social inclusion. Implicitly, entrepreneurship has come to guide human activity, not only in relation to business-making and making business, but to life itself. In a societal context with neoliberal tendencies, the individual is called upon as an entrepreneurial self, who simultaneously calls upon others to become entrepreneurial. For instance, entrepreneurship tends to be presented as a more desirable option than other kinds of human activity, and thus influences how we understand ourselves and others. In this course the entrepreneurial self is introduced as an analytical lens to develop a sociological understanding of entrepreneurship.

### **Learning objectives**

The course strives to familiarize doctoral students with ideological, in particular neoliberal, tendencies in society that sculpture the subjectivities that are possible for individuals to assume in organizational and societal life. The aim is to introduce to students the concept of ‘the entrepreneurial self’ (and affiliated theoretical concepts) and for students to use these concepts to develop a sociologically founded understanding of entrepreneurship, on individual, organizational and societal levels. On successful completion of the course students are expected to be able to:

- Demonstrate comprehension of the entrepreneurial self and affiliated concepts, including an understanding of their ontological and epistemological basis, and how these are enacted on individual, organizational and societal levels.
- Be able to analytically trace how new forms of entrepreneurship and subjectivity unfold in the expansion of an entrepreneurial logic.
- Demonstrate ability to meaningfully and reflectively apply the entrepreneurial self, and affiliated concepts, as an analytical lens in their research.

## **Content**

The course “Entrepreneurship and the Entrepreneurial Self” provides students with a broad introduction to theories on entrepreneurship in general, and the entrepreneurial self in particular, based on an understanding of social sciences. It explains different ways of comprehending the concept of “the entrepreneurial self” along with its affiliated concepts, such as neoliberalism, governmentality, power, subjectivity, and to shed light on how these concepts can be used as an analytical approach in research of entrepreneurship.

The course consists of six topics:

1. An introduction to the concept of “the entrepreneurial self”
2. The entrepreneurial self: To be fostered in neoliberal society
3. The entrepreneurial self in different organizational and societal terrains:  
Alternative/Social entrepreneurship
4. The entrepreneurial self and its role in (re-)producing hierarchies
5. Ethical considerations associated with the entrepreneurial self
6. Final course seminar

## **Teaching and learning activities**

In the first meeting an introductory lecture, covering the core concepts of the course, is held. The following four meetings are organized as literature seminars in which students share between themselves the responsibility for presenting the literature. Readings and students’ interpretations are then discussed interactively between students and course faculty. To these four seminars students prepare by studying the literature in advance and by writing a reflection paper (max 500 words) to be handed in at the start of the meeting and discussed during class. For the second of these four seminars students are also to hand in a description of their empirical material and formulate a research problem based on the course literature. The sixth and final meeting of the course consists of a full-day seminar, devoted to discussions between students and faculty of the literature, to students’ application of the literature on their research projects, and to feedback on students’ papers. After each meeting/topic students are to write 1- 2 pages of reflections from the group’s discussions. These reflections are to be submitted within one week from the seminar. An exception is made for topics 4 and 5 – the reflection paper concerning these topics can be merged into one paper submitted after topic 5. The course runs on a part time basis and is taught by Karin Berglund, Anna Wettermark, Jessica Lindberg and Birgitta Schwartz. We have also invited a guest teacher, Docent Viktorija Kalonaityte, to the meeting in November.

## **Examination**

The course is examined through active participation in seminars and through a written paper that should relate to the doctoral student’s thesis project.

Participation in all activities is compulsory. Students’ performance on the course is assessed individually and graded according to a two-level scale (Pass or Fail). In order to pass the course, students must have participated in at least 5 of the 6 course meetings (the final meeting is however compulsory), have handed in all assignments (i.e. four reflective papers of max 500 words – one for each literature seminar – and a description of their empirical material, including a research question based on the course literature).

**Readings**

The course literature consists of *The Entrepreneurial Self – Fabricating a New Type of Subject* (Bröckling, 2016), *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Fricker (2007) TBC, *Om undran inför samhället* (Asplund, 1970) or the English version *Johan Asplund: Ideas and position* (Eriksson, 2005), and a number of scientific articles. For the third seminar, students are invited to suggest additional articles to complement the course literature according to the research interests of the participants.

# Course instructions: Entrepreneurship from the perspective of the Entrepreneurial Self

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Welcome to the EES PhD course!

Please find below instructions for the sessions in the EES PhD course with assigned readings. Though the literature for the first topics is fixed, articles will be added to the reading requirements for later topics. The list of articles to be read in preparation for each meeting will thus be updated on a rolling basis.

A course dropbox folder will be set up with some of the readings – please mail Karin Berglund ([Karin.Berglund@sbs.su.se](mailto:Karin.Berglund@sbs.su.se)) if you want to get access to this folder.

NB with reservation for possible changes!

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**Thursday the 23<sup>th</sup> of October, 09.00-16.00**

**Topic 1. Introduction to the concept of ‘the entrepreneurial self’**

*Participating teachers: Anna Wettermark, Karin Berglund*

*09.00– 12.00 - Session 1: Perspectives: an introductory discussion*

In the introduction to the course we will begin to discuss the notion of ‘perspective’. What is a perspective? How can it be used? If we are to use the perspectives of the “entrepreneurial self” we need to understand how a ‘perspective’ as such be understood. This introduction relates to the ontology and epistemology of applying the perspective of enterprising self/governmentality and thus lays a ground for the discussion and presentations throughout the course.

**PhD task 1: Bring three reflections /questions to the session on perspectives based on your reading of then assigned literature 1.**

*Assigned literature 1*

- Asplund, Johan (1970), *Om undran inför samhället*, Lund: Argos. (for Swedish readers)
- Berglund, Karin and Johansson, Anders W. (2007), The Entrepreneurship Discourse - Outlined from Diverse Constructions of Entrepreneurship on the Academic Scene, *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 1(1): 77 – 102.
- Eriksson, B. (2005) Johan Asplund: Ideas and Position, *Acta Sociologica*, 48(4). (for English readers!)

Lindgren, M. and Packendorff, J. (2009) Social Constructionism and Entrepreneurship: Basic Assumptions and Consequences for Theory and Research, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* 15(1): 25-47.

10.00– 12.00 Lunch

13-16 Session 2: Introduction to the entrepreneurial self

During the afternoon we will mix lectures with discussion based on the first set of the ‘entrepreneurial self’ literature. The purpose is to get to know the concepts, how they are used in social science research and more specifically in relation to entrepreneurship studies.

**PhD task 2: Bring one or two reflections or questions to this introductory session to each of the texts assigned (literature 2)**

*Assigned literature 2*

Bröckling, U. (2015). *The entrepreneurial self: Fabricating a new type of subject*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Chapters 1 to 5.

Foucault, M. (1978/1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault Effect – Studies in Governmentality with two lectures and interviews with Michel Foucault* (pp. 87-104). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pongratz, H.J. and G. Günter Voss, G.G. (2003) From employee to ‘entployee’: Towards a ‘self-entrepreneurial’ work force?, *Concepts and Transformation* 8:3, 239–254.

Rose, N. (1996) Governing enterprising individuals (chapter 7): In *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 150-170.

Scharff, C. (2015). The Psychic Life of Neoliberalism: Mapping the Contours of Entrepreneurial Subjectivity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 0263276415590164.

**Paper development: Submit a paper (1-2 pages) from our discussions on the first day within a week from the first day. At this point we do not expect you to link your discussion to your PhD project, but the paper aims to ground you in the literature, and make you acquainted with using concepts that come with ‘the entrepreneurial self literature’ in your writings.**

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**Wednesday the 13th of November, 9 – 17, followed by dinner**

**Topic 2. The entrepreneurial self: To be fostered in neoliberal society**

*Participating teachers: Viktorija Kalonaityte , Jessica Lindberg, Anna Wettermark, Karin Berglund*

09.00– 12.00 - Session 1: Fostering the entrepreneurial self in neoliberal society

In this session we read the literature that discusses the effects of the enterprising self in contemporary society. In the upsurge of neoliberalism, entrepreneurship is reintroduced and increasingly emphasized as a way for how individual should relate to themselves and others. This transformation of labor capacity encourages the entrepreneurial self to turn into a new type of ideal highlighting the ability to self-organize, be active, adjustable and take responsibility for her/his own employment. In this session we will discuss how we are fostered to partake in this ideal and the various means used to propel the entrepreneurial self, and how the entrepreneurial self can, and often does, take on different shapes.

**PhD task:** This session will be based on your readings of the literature. Students present the literature and lead parts of the seminar. You will be assigned to groups of two or three during the first day.

*Assigned literature to the session on fostering the entrepreneurial self*

Berglund, Karin (2013) Fighting against all odds: Entrepreneurship education as employability training, *Ephemera*, 13(4): 717-735

Bröckling, U. (2015). *The entrepreneurial self: Fabricating a new type of subject*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Costea, B., K. Amiridis and N. Crump (2012) 'Graduate employability and the principle of potentiality: An aspect of the ethics of HRM', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 111: 25–36.

Vrasti, W. (2012). How to Use Affective Competencies in Late Capitalism.

*12.00– 13.00 Lunch*

**Topic 3: The entrepreneurial self in different organizational and societal terrains: Alternative/Social entrepreneurship**

*13.00 -17.00 Session 2*

During the afternoon we will mix lectures with discussion. The purpose is to better understand how the entrepreneurial self emerges on different organizational and societal stages. The discussions will be based on the articles we have chosen and each participant is expected to make a presentation of her/his article.

**PhD task:** Bring an article that discusses the entrepreneurial self in relation to your area of interest - thus an article that comes as close as possible to your PhD project. The article should be distributed to all participants well in advance.

*Literature based on participants' choices – forthcoming!*

*Approx. 17.30-18.00 Dinner*

**Paper development: Submit a paper (1-2 pages) from our discussions on fostering the entrepreneurial self and alternative entrepreneurship within a week from the seminar. At this point we want you to link your discussions to the context of your PhD project with the concepts/ideas provided in the literature, and to discuss how entrepreneurial selves are fostered in this terrain.**

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**Tuesday the 3d of December, 10-16**

**Topic 4: the entrepreneurial self and its role in (re-)producing hierarchies & social exclusion**

*Participating teachers: Anna Wettermark, Karin Berglund*

In this session we will discuss how the enterprising self is produced in relation to gender and class. Combining the perspectives of the enterprising self with gender and /or class makes it possible to discern the effects that may not be available to us from a first sight, but that might change the social landscape.

**PhD task: This session will be based on your readings of the literature. Students present the literature and lead parts of the seminar. You will be assigned to groups of two or three during the first day.**

*Assigned literature – producing hierarchies and social exclusion*

- Ahl, H., & Marlow, S. (2012). Exploring the dynamics of gender, feminism and entrepreneurship: advancing debate to escape a dead end? *Organization*, 19(5), 543-562.
- Berglund, K., Ahl, H., Pettersson, K. & Tillmar, M. (2018) Women's entrepreneurship, neoliberalism and economic justice in the postfeminist era: A discourse analysis of policy change in Sweden, *Gender Work & Organization*. DOI: 10.1111/gwao.12269
- Bröckling, U. (2005). Gendering the enterprising self: Subjectification programs and gender differences in guides to success. *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 6(2), 7-25.
- Calás, M. B., Smircich, L., & Bourne, K. A. (2009). Extending the boundaries: Reframing “entrepreneurship as social change” through feminist perspectives. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3), 552-569.
- Gill, R. (2014). ‘If you’re struggling to survive day-to-day’: Class optimism and contradiction in entrepreneurial discourse. *Organization*, 21(1), 50-67.
- Sullivan, K. R., & Delaney, H. (2017). A femininity that ‘giveth and taketh away’: The prosperity gospel and postfeminism in the neoliberal economy. *Human Relations*, 70, 836–859.
- Ogbor, J. O. (2000). Mythicizing and reification in entrepreneurial discourse: ideology-critique of entrepreneurial studies. *Journal of management studies*, 37(5), 605-635.
- Oksala, J. (2013). Feminism and neoliberal governmentality. *Foucault Studies*, (16), 32–53.
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**Wednesday the 11th of December, 13-16**

**Topic 5. Ethical considerations associated with the entrepreneurial self**

*Participating teachers: Birgitta Schwartz, Anna Wettermark, Karin Berglund*

This theme reminds us that we can always improve ourselves, since the enterprising self can never fully be acquired. The flipside of this ethic is that, by continuously being encouraged to become our best, it may be difficult to be satisfied with who we are. In addition, we need to bear in mind that relations to the self is also connected to relations with the other, the 'recipient' of entrepreneurial activities.

This focus calls for a critical reflection on political dimensions, human limits, alternative ideals and the collective efforts that are part of entrepreneurial endeavours.

**PhD task: This session will be based on your readings of the literature. Students prepares present the literature and lead parts of the seminar. You will be assigned groups of two or three during the first day.**

*Assigned literature – ethical considerations*

Bröckling, U. (2015). *The entrepreneurial self: Fabricating a new type of subject*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Chapters 9 and 10.

Dey, P., and Steyaert, C. (2016). Rethinking the space of ethics in social entrepreneurship: power, subjectivity, and practices of freedom. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133(4), 627-641.

TBC: Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press.

McNay, L. (2009). Self as enterprise: Dilemmas of control and resistance in Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(6), 55-77.

TBC: Wettermark, A. and Berglund, K., Mutuality impossible? Framing relations between entrepreneurial selves and beneficiary others in social entrepreneurship, Unpublished manuscript.

**Paper development: Submit a paper (1-2 pages) from our discussions on reproducing hierarchies and social exclusion (topic 4) and ethical considerations (topic 5) latest 16<sup>th</sup> of Dec. At this point we want you to link and discuss the context of your PhD project with the concepts/ideas provided in the literature and to discuss how entrepreneurial selves are fostered in this terrain.**

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**Wednesday the 15th of January: 10-17**

**Topic 6. Final course seminar**

*Participating teachers: Birgitta Schwartz, Jessica Lindberg, Anna Wettermark, Karin Berglund*

This day we will discuss your final papers. For this seminar we want you take off in the papers you have written during the course and turn them into a coherent course paper where you to position the entrepreneurial self within your PhD project. You will receive further guidelines regarding this this final paper during the first course meeting.

**Papers are to be submitted to all participants of the course at least one week before the seminar.**

*Approx 17: Festive arrangements to wrap up the course*

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