Course Description
In carrying out their work social scientists, knowingly or not, take up positions on philosophical issues. Their choices display beliefs about the kinds of questions the social sciences can answer, which questions are most important, what methods are most likely to produce knowledge in their fields and what kind of knowledge we should be looking for. They cast their nets for causal mechanisms or for accounts of meaning. They pin their hopes on empirical methods or on interpretive strategies. They see success in accurate predictions or in an understanding of human experience from the inside. Their choices reveal their underlying philosophy of social science. This course will explore the reasons for choosing one way or another on these issues as we unearth and evaluate the philosophical foundations of the social sciences.

Texts

Additional readings, course materials, information and updates will be available on the Coursespaces page.

To access Coursespaces, go to coursespaces.uvic.ca and log in with your regular network ID.

Course Work

Exams One  30%
Exam Two  30%
Exam Three  15%
Final Exam  25%

Exams One, Two and Three will be in-class exams covering material from the readings and class discussion. Exams One and Two will include both short answer questions and essay questions. Exam Three will be only short answer questions. The Final exam will be a take-home essay exam covering material from the entire course but focusing on material covered after Exam Two.

Missed Exams
If you miss an exam due to a documented illness or accident, contact me immediately to schedule a make-up. If you miss an exam without a documented illness or accident, you will receive a score of 0.
Grading

Grades for the course will be assigned using the standard university scheme:

For N and DEF status, please see Department of Philosophy Policies posted in glass cabinets adjacent to CLE B315.

Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVIC Calendar at http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2017-01/general/policies.html#pageTop

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. Please review the University Policy on Academic Integrity at http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2017-01/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html#

Course Schedule

Readings marked with a C are available through Coursespaces.
All other readings are from Rosenberg.
All of the readings from Rosenberg are required readings. All of the other readings are recommended.
Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and posted on the Coursespaces page.

January 4
Introduction

January 6, 10
Chapter 1: What is the Philosophy of Social Science?
Machlup “Are the Social Sciences Really Inferior?” C

January 11, 13, 17
Chapter 2: The Methodological Divide: Naturalism Versus Interpretation
McIntyre “Complexity and Social Scientific Laws” C

January 18, 20, 24
Chapter 3: The Explanation of Human Action

January 25
EXAM ONE

January 27, 31
Chapter 4: Actions, Intentionality, and the Mind-Body Problem
Davidson “Actions, Reasons and Causes” C

February 1, 3, 7
Chapter 5: Behaviorism in the Behavioral Sciences
Chomsky “A Review of B. F. Skinner’s Verbal Behavior” C

February 8, 10
Chapter 6: Problems of Rational Choice Theory
Nagel “Assumptions in Economic Theory” C

Reading Break — February 13 through February 17
Course Schedule

February 21  Problems of Rational Choice Theory, continued
February 22, 24, 28  Chapter 7: Social Psychology and the Construction of Society
  Hacking “What is Social Construction? The Teenage Pregnancy Example” C

March 1  EXAM TWO

March 3, 7  Chapter 8: European Philosophy of Social Science
  Searle “The Word Turned Upside Down” C

March 8, 10, 14  Chapter 9: Holism and Antireductionism in Sociology and Psychology
  Fodor “Special Sciences” C

March 15, 17  Chapter 10: Functionalism as a Research Program
  Kincaid “Assessing Functional Explanations in the Social Sciences” C

March 21, 22, 24  Chapter 11: Sociobiology or the Standard Social Science Model?
  Alexander and Skyrms “Bargaining with Neighbors” C

March 28, 29, 31  Chapter 12: Theories of Cultural Evolution
  Richerson and Boyd “Culture Evolves” C

April 4  EXAM THREE

April 11  TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM due at 5 p.m.