

Introduction to Philosophy of the Social Sciences

PHIL 223

Instructor: Karen Brown
E-mail: klbrown@uvic.ca
Office: Clearihue B314
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00 - 3:00
and by appointment



Street Art by Just Cobe. In Runzmatteweg, Freiburg, Germany.

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

Alexander Rosenberg. **Philosophy of Social Science**. Fifth Edition. Westview Press. 2015.

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

Exam 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.

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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#>

Percentage	Grad
90 - 100	A+
85 - 89	A
80 - 84	A-
77 - 79	B+
73 - 76	B
70 - 72	B-
65 - 69	C+
60 - 64	C
50 - 59	D
Below 50	F

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	E X A M O N E
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 <i>Verbal Behavior</i> " C
February 8, 10	Chapter 6: Problems of Rational Choice Theory Nagel "Assumptions in Economic Theory" C

Reading Break – February 13 through February 17

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Course Schedule *continued*

February 21	Problems of Rational Choice Theory, <i>continued</i>
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	E X A M T W O
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	E X A M T H R E E
April 11	T A K E - H O M E F I N A L E X A M due at 5 p.m.

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