

Introduction to Philosophy of the Social Sciences

PHIL 223

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30 - 3:30
Thursdays 9:00 - 10:00
and by appointment



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

Class Meetings: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and
Fridays 1:30 to 2:20

DRAFT COPY
NOT the Official
Course Outline

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, 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.

We will begin by considering what makes the social sciences so different from the natural sciences. Then we'll explore the strengths and weaknesses of approaching the social world through behaviourism, functionalism, rational choice theory, social construction theory, standpoint theory, philosophical anthropology and evolutionary psychology. Along the way we will look into the current crisis of replication failures in the social sciences, explore the complexities of the push for evidence-based policy, consider the value of participatory research and investigate the disconnect between philosophical accounts of well being and constructs of well-being in the social sciences.

Texts

You will need both of these books. They are available through the UVic Book Store as both paper editions and ebooks.

Nancy Cartwright and Eleonora Montuschi, eds. **Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction**. Oxford University Press. 2014.

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

All additional readings will be available through the Brightspace page.

Course Work

Four quizzes	5% each
Two take-home exams	25% each
Take-home final exam	30%

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Take-home Exams

You'll have one week to write each of the take-home exams. Unexcused **late submissions** will immediately lose 5% and will lose an additional 5% every 24 hours. If the lateness was unavoidable let me know so that we can waive the late penalty.

Your take-home exams must be submitted on-line through Brightspace. Specific instructions and the times submissions are due are posted on Brightspace along with the the exam questions and advice on how to do well on these exams.

Online Quizzes

These will be be timed multiple choice and short answer quizzes that you will take on Brightspace. Each quiz will be available on Brightspace for 8 hours. So you can choose when in that 8 hour window you want to take it. But once you open the quiz you will have only 30 minutes to submit your answers. Information about what to expect on individual quizzes will be posted on Brightspace. If you miss a quiz due to illness or exceptional circumstance contact me immediately to schedule a make-up quiz.

Grading

Grades for the course will be assigned using the UVIC Undergraduate Grading Scale:

Percentage	Grade	
90 - 100	A+	A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations.
85 - 89	A	
80 - 84	A-	
		B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates good comprehension of the course material, good command of the skills needed to work with it, and full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application.
77 - 79	B+	
73 - 76	B	
70 - 72	B-	
		C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
65 - 69	C+	
60 - 64	C	
		D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
50 - 59	D	
Below 50	N or F	N indicates that the course requirements were not completed.

Academic Integrity

The University Policy on Academic Integrity (covering plagiarism, multiple submission, unauthorized use of an editor, falsifying materials, cheating and aiding others to cheat) will be enforced in this course. **You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the policy.** You can find it online in the UVIC Calendar at https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies

If you have any questions about what this policy requires or any doubts about whether or not you are complying with it, please don't hesitate to ask me about it.

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Course Schedule

Readings marked **C/M** are in Cartwright and Montuschi.

Readings marked **R** are in Rosenberg.

Readings marked **B** are available through Brightspace.

Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and posted on the Brightspace page.

September 8, 10	Chapter 1: What is the Philosophy of Social Science? R Fritz Machlup "Are the Social Sciences Really Inferior?" B
September 14, 15, 17	Chapter 2: The Methodological Divide: Naturalism Versus Interpretation R Lee McIntyre "Complexity and Social Scientific Laws" B
September 21, 22, 24	Eileen Munro "Evidence-Based Policy" C/M Gary Gutting "How Reliable are the Social Sciences?" B Daniel Engber "Sad Face" B
September 28	Q u i z 1 opens at noon —closes at 8 p.m.
September 28, 29, October 1	Uljana Feest "Why Replication is Overrated" B Chapter 3: The Explanation of Human Action R
October 5	T A K E - H O M E E X A M O N E due at 5 p.m.
October 6, 8	Anna Alexandrova Well-Being C/M Michael Sandel "If I Ruled the World" B
October 12, 13, 15	Chapter 5: Behaviorism in the Behavioral Sciences R
October 19	Q u i z 2 opens at noon —closes at 8 p.m.
October 19, 20, 22	Chapter 6: Problems of Rational Choice Theory R Katie Steele "Choice Models" C/M
October 26, 27	Chapter 7: Social Psychology and the Construction of Society R Hacking "What is Social Construction? The Teenage Pregnancy Example" B Cristina Bicchieri "Norms, conventions, and the Power of Expectations" C/M
October 29	T A K E - H O M E E X A M T W O due at 5 p.m.

Course Schedule Continues on the Next Page

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Course Schedule *continued*

November 2, 3, 5	Chapter 8: European Philosophy of Social Science R Chapter 9: Holism and Antireductionism in Sociology and Psychology R
November 9	Quiz 3 opens at noon —closes at 8 p.m.
<i>Reading Break — November 10 through November 12</i>	
November 16, 17, 19	Sharon Crasnow "Feminist Standpoint Theory" C/M Alison Wylie "Community-Based Collaborative Archaeology" C/M Inkeri Koskinen "Critical Subjects: Participatory Research Needs to Make Room for Debate" B
November 23, 24, 26	Chapter 10: Functionalism as a Research Program R Mark Risjord "No Strings Attached" B
November 26	Quiz 4 opens at noon —closes at 8 p.m.
November 30, December 1	Chapter 11: Sociobiology or the Standard Social Science Model? R
December 8	TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM due at 5 p.m.

Territory Acknowledgement

The University of Victoria acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Equity

Uvic is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive, supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. Information about Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at [If you have any particular concerns about equity in our course please don't hesitate to contact me.](#)

Religious Accommodation

Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVIC Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/r1q0gofdN?bc=true&bcCurrent=10%20-%20Accommodation%20of%20Religious%20Observance&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcltemType=policies>