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| Course Code & Title: | LISS003 Philosophy of the Social Sciences | | | | |
| Convenor(s): | Various | | | | |
| Institution: | King's College London | Department: | Various | | |
| Academic Year: | 2021-22 | Term: | Autumn | | |
| Number of Sessions: | 7 | Research Platform | Core Training & Methods | Length of Session(s): | 1 hour lecture/seminar, with time for questions |
| Dates: | Start : End | | Room location: | | |
| Thursday 7 October 2021 (a) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | Online via Zoom | | |
| Thursday 14 October 2021 (b) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | | | |
| Tuesday 19 October 2021 (c) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | | | |
| Thursday 28 October 2021 (d) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | | | |
| Thursday 11 November 2021 (e) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | | | |
| Monday 15 November 2021 (f) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | | | |
| Thursday 18 November 2021 (g) | 15:00 – 17:00 | | | | |
| Enrolment Link: | <p>Available to book on Skillsforge from 24th September. (Click to log in and register)</p> <p>Questions? Visit our Training FAQ here: https://liss-dtp.ac.uk/our-training-programme/ <i>*LISS-funded students must attend all seven sessions of this course. Other students can enrol on individual sessions.</i></p> | | | | |

Course Description: This course is part of LISS DTP’s five-part core training in social sciences, Methods in the Social Sciences programme. It is designed to introduce students to key theoretical debates about the nature, purpose and practice of the social sciences. Students will be introduced to a range of philosophical approaches to understanding social scientific knowledge, from positivism and empiricism, to hermeneutics, Marxism, critical theory and feminism, to poststructuralism. These sessions will:

- Help students to understand and evaluate a range of philosophical approaches to social science and recognise the two-way traffic between their own particular discipline and wider currents in social theory.
- Encourage students to appreciate the significance of epistemological reflection for the actual practice of research in the social sciences.

Course Outline:

7 October 2021, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Introduction- what is Social Science? (a)

Dr Gerard Lum, School of Education, Communication & Society, King’s College London

We begin this introductory lecture by asking why *philosophy* of social science, by looking at the kind of questions asked by the philosophy of social science and considering how those questions – and their possible answers – ultimately can be seen to shape the activity of social science. Along the way we examine



the important tension between structure and agency, the problem of causation, and ask what it is that demarcates science from non-science and social science from natural science.

Recommended readings:

- Hollis, M. (1994) *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. (see Ch 1: 'Introduction: Problems of Structure and Action')
- Rosenberg, A. (2012) *Philosophy of Social Science* Boulder: Co: Westview Press. (see, Chs 1 & 2)

Supplementary readings:

- Williams, M. and May, T.(1996) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Research*. Routledge: Oxon.
- Webb, K. (1995) *An Introduction to Problems in the Philosophy of Social Science*. London: Pinter.
- Kinkaid, H. Introduction: Doing Philosophy of Social Science in H. Kinkaid (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science*.

14 October 2021 3-5pm, LECTURE: Hermeneutics & Interpretive Social Science- Understanding narrative and interpretation (b)

Dr Gerard Lum, School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London

Interpretation is a ubiquitous human activity (perhaps similarly with other species too) which we engage in whenever we seek to grasp *interpretanda* we judge to be significant. In contrast to the positivist/empiricist worldview, here it is suggested that our grasping the meaning of a text, a human activity or an artefact necessarily involves engaging in profoundly complex forms of interpretation and understanding. Distinguishing between two levels of analysis, the epistemological and the ontological, we consider the implications of the 'ontological turn' for social science and look at how this can be applied in the study of social phenomena.

Recommended readings:

- Taylor, C. (1971) 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man' *Review of Metaphysics* 25: 3–51. (Reprinted in Taylor, C. *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Vol 2 Ch1)
- Bruns, G. (1992) *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press. (see Ch1)

Supplementary readings:

- Winch, P. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (arguably the classic Wittgensteinian text on social science)
- Polt, R. (1998) *Heidegger: An Introduction*. Cornell University Press (accessible introduction to Heidegger's thought).



19 October 2021, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Empiricist & Positivist Social Science (c)

Dr Roberto Fumagalli, Department of Political Economy, King's College London

This lecture aims to provide students with an informative overview of early empirical and positivist approaches to the scientific study of society. The leading proponents of these approaches will be introduced and the main tenets of such approaches will be critically evaluated in light of more recent empirical and methodological developments in the philosophy of the social sciences.

Recommended Readings:

- Mill, J.S. *System of Logic*, Book 6 "The logic of the Moral Sciences", Ch.9-12.
- Durkheim, E. Social Facts. In *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Science*, M. Martin and L. McIntyre, Ch.27.

Supplementary Readings:

- Machlup, F. 1961. Are the Social Sciences really Inferior? *Southern Economic Journal*, 17, 173-184.
- Fay, B. and Moon, J. 1977. What would an adequate philosophy of social science look like? *Philosophy of Social Science*, 7, 209-227.

28 October 2021, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Critical Realism- Beyond Positivism & Interpretation? (d)

Dr John Owens, School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London

This lecture provides an introduction to critical realism as a philosophical and methodological framework for research in the social sciences. Critical realism was originally developed by Roy Bhaskar in reaction to what he saw as the deficiencies within the positivistic and hermeneutic research traditions. Critical realism is distinctive because of the emphasis it places on understanding the ontological nature of the subject under investigation. Key points of critical realism will be outlined with a view to understanding the implications for students' own projects.

Recommended Reading:

- Owens, J., 2011. *An Introduction to Critical Realism as a Meta-Theoretical Research Perspective*, Centre for Public Policy Research Working Paper Series, King's College London. Available online: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ecs/research/research-centres/cppr/workingpapers/paper-1.pdf>
- Porpora, D., (2015). *Reconstructing Sociology: The Critical Realist Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Supplementary Reading:

- Archer, M.S., (ed.) 1998. *Critical realism: Essential readings*, London: Routledge.
- Bhaskar, R., 2008. *A Realist Theory of Science*, London: Verso.
- Collier, A., 1994. *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*, London: Verso.
- Hartwig, M., 2007. *Dictionary of Critical Realism 1st ed.*, London: Routledge.
- Sayer, R.A., 2000. *Realism and Social Science*, London: Sage.



11 November 2021, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Marxism: Marx and the Critique of Political Economy (e)

Dr Majed Akhter, Department of Geography, King's College London

Karl Marx is usually seen as the author of a general theory of history and a more specific economic theory of capitalism. But his own description of his project was the critique of political economy. His more general theories can be found mainly in the context of his critique of capitalism, where he seeks to show that this is not only an exploitive and unstable system but one that systematically conceals how it works. So uncovering what Marx calls 'the economic law of motion of modern society' requires also a critique of ideology.

Supplementary/Recommended Reading

- Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>
- Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), Introduction, also <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch01.htm>
- Karl Marx. *The German Ideology*, Part I: Feuerbach <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01.htm>
- Alex Callinicos, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (London: Bookmarks, 1983), esp. chs. 3-6
- Alex Callinicos, *Deciphering Capital: Marx's Capital and its Destiny* (London: Bookmarks, 2014), esp. chs 2 and 3
- Stuart Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology – Marxism without Guarantees', in Betty Matthews, ed, *Marx: A Hundred Years On* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), also available in *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (1986) 10: 28-44
- Norman Geras, 'Essence and Appearance: Aspects of Fetishism in Marx's *Capital*', *New Left Review*, 1/65 (1971)
- Lucia Pradella, *Globalization and the Critique of Political Economy: New Insights from Marx's Writings* (London: Routledge, 2015)

15 November 2021, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Poststructuralism & the Cultural Turn in Social Science (f)

Dr Nick Michelsen, Department of War Studies, King's College London

Poststructuralism emerges from critical and post-Marxist perspectives in social and political theory. Specifically, its primary philosophers – Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Gilles Deleuze, just to name a few influential authors – sought to move beyond structural linguistics and Marxist structuralism to engage with questions of the limits of language and representation, power, knowledge, and subjectivity. This session will focus on Michel Foucault in particular to illustrate the significance of discourse, power, and categories of understanding such as identity, culture, war, and articulations of subjectivity in situated contexts. It will highlight how we use poststructuralist 'metatheoretical' concerns in our curiosities about the social and political world and the 'methods' we design to investigate this world.

Supplementary/Recommended Reading



- Michel Foucault (1997) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge). This is crucial for any researcher interested in how discourses emerge as taken for granted categories of understanding.
- Michel Foucault (1977) *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin). Foucault's classic text on his analytics of power. See also his *History of Sexuality*, Vol 1 (London: Penguin, 1978).

Important short pieces by Foucault:

- 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin).
- 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf).
- Lene Hansen (2006) *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London: Routledge). Excellent on the 'application' of discourse analysis to a case-study.
- David Howarth (2013) *Poststructuralism and After* (London: Palgrave). Excellent advanced reflection on the history of poststructuralist thought, and its epistemological and ontological focus.

18 November 2021, 3-5pm LECTURE: Feminist epistemology: introducing bias as objective (g)

Dr Andrea Espinoza Carvajal, Department of International Development, King's College London

Since the 1980s, feminist theorists have critiqued the presumed objectivity of the practice of science in an academy dominated by patriarchal and ethnocentric (or colonial) assumptions. Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway were pioneers of a feminist philosophy of science grounded in the idea that our biases -as women, as marginal- might be a place from which to start the search for a knowledge that is more true to people's lives and their needs for social justice. Black feminist theorists added an intersectional perspective, aiming to decentre feminist thinking. In this session we will unpack the feminist critique of objectivity in science and discuss Harding's standpoint theory, Haraway's situated knowledge, and black feminist epistemology, including decolonial feminism. We aim for an understanding of feminist epistemology as reflexive and as aiming to unsettle what we know and how we know it.

Supplementary/Recommended Reading

- Harding, Sandra (1986) *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press [online in KCL library]
- Haraway, Donna (1988) Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective *Feminist Studies* Vol. 14 (3) 575-599.
- Abu-Lughod Lila (1990) Can There Be A Feminist Ethnography?, *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 5:1, 7-27
- Harding, Sandra (1992). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology. What is strong objectivity? *The Centennial Review*, Vol. 36 (3), 437-470
- Lugones, Maria (2010) Towards decolonial Feminism? *Hypatia* Vol. 25, (4) 742-759
- Dotson, Kristie (2015) Inheriting Patricia Hill Collins's Black Feminist epistemology, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38:13, 2322-2328.

This anthology is useful for further reading:

- Grasswick, Heidi (2011) *Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, Springerlink [online]