



Course Code & Title:	LISS003 Philosophy of the Social Sciences				
Convenor(s):	Various				
Institution:	King's College London	Department:	Various		
Academic Year:	2023-24	Term:	Autumn		
Number of Sessions:	7	Research Platform	Core Training & Methods	Length of Session(s):	2 hours
Dates:	Start : End		Room location:		
(a) Friday 6 October 2023, 3-5 PM (b) Friday 13 October 2023, 3-5 PM (c) Friday 20 October 2023, 3-5 PM (e) Friday 10 November 2023, 1-3 PM (g) Friday 17 November 2023, 3-5 PM (f) Friday 24 November 2023, 3-5 PM (d) Friday 1 December 2023, 3-5 PM			Online via Zoom/Teams		
Enrolment Link:	Available to book on SkillsForge from Thursday 21st September 2023 . Click to log in and register: https://training.kcl.ac.uk/kcl/#he/dev/eventDetails;em,providerCode=LISS,providerOrgAlias=kcl,number=003; Questions? Visit our Training FAQ here: Frequently Asked Questions - LISS DTP (liss-dtp.ac.uk) <i>*LISS-funded students must attend all seven sessions of this course. Other students can enrol on individual sessions.</i>				

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:

6 October 2023, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Introduction- what is Social Science? (a)

Dr Sara Black, 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 tensions between structure, discourse 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:

- Sayer, A. (2000). Realism and Social Science. London: Sage.
- Sayer, A. (2009). Who's Afraid of Critical Social Science? *Current sociology* 57(6)767-786.
- Benton, T. and Benton, I. (2011) *Philosophy of Social Science: the philosophical foundations of social thought* (2nd edition). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Cartwright, N. and Efstathiou, S. (2011). Hunting causes and using them: is there no bridge from here to there? *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*. 25(3) 223-241.
- 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*.

Friday 13 October 2023, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Post-qualitative inquiry, post-humanism and decolonisation of the social sciences (b)

Dr Marguerite Muller, School of Education, Communication & Society, King's College London

In this session we explore how post-qualitative inquiry can contribute to research practices that challenge unequal knowledge production in the social sciences. We explore how research inquiry shapes the nature and purpose of the social sciences and how it challenges the epistemological residue of colonialism. Furthermore, we seek to understand how and why unequal knowledge exchange between the global south and the global north might be perpetuated or challenged through research in the social sciences. In drawing on post-qualitative inquiry, we seek to redefine boundaries of what our research practices could make possible in the social sciences.

Recommended texts:

St. Pierre EA. Post Qualitative Inquiry, the Refusal of Method, and the Risk of the New. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 2021;27(1):3-9. doi:[10.1177/1077800419863005](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419863005)

Le Grange, L., 2018. What is (post) qualitative research? *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(5), pp.1-14.

Additional texts:

Barreiro, J., Vroegindewij, M., Forte, M. and Zembylas, M., 2020. Posthumanism, education and decolonization: A conversation with Michalinos Zembylas. *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, 1(2), pp.123-153.



Dick, L. and Müller, M., 2021. Assembling Roots and Writing a Book: Theory and Methodology Meet. In *Subjectivity and Social Change in Higher Education: A Collaborative Arts-Based Narrative* (pp. 19-34). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Dick, L. and Müller, M., 2021. Finding What You Have Not Yet Lost: An Affective Inquiry into Educator Subjectivity. In *Subjectivity and Social Change in Higher Education: A Collaborative Arts-Based Narrative* (pp. 54-77). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Mbembe, A. 2021. Thoughts on the planetary. An interview with Achille Mbembe. In J. Barnard-Naudé (Ed.), *Decolonising the Neoliberal University: Law, Psychoanalysis and the Politics of Student Protest* (Chapter 11). Birkbeck Law Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003198581>

Mbembe A. 2016. Decolonizing the university: New directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15(1):29-45. doi:[10.1177/1474022215618513](https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215618513)

Müller, M. and Kruger, F., 2020. Eight Weeks, Eight Verses: Using Arts-Based Inquiry to Explore Educator Subjectivity and Reflexivity during a Time of Social Change. In *Art as an Agent for Social Change* (pp. 191-205). Brill.

20 October 2023 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.

1 December 2023, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Critical Realism- Beyond Positivism & Interpretation? (d)

Dr Sara Black, 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:

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- 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.

10 November 2023, 1-3 pm, LECTURE: Marxism: Marx and the Critique of Political Economy (e)

Dr Lucia Pradella, Department of European & International Studies, 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)

24 November 2023, 3-5pm, LECTURE: Poststructuralism & the Cultural Turn in Social Science (f)

Dr Marina Prentoulis, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia



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.

17 November 2023, 3-5pm LECTURE: Feminist epistemologies: empiricism or standpoints? (g)

Gabriella Stringer, School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University London

For as far back as we have records, women have been challenging oppression through making political and social claims for life, bodily autonomy and integrity, health, safety, work and more. What does this social and intellectual tradition mean for us for undertaking social science research today? Who can produce credible knowledge and how can knowledge be justified? Whose knowledge is being produced? For whom is a particular piece of research going to provide benefits? Who is going to bear the cost of one question being pursued rather than another? What do these questions mean for us today?

Recommended Readings:

Lugones, Maria (2010) Toward a Decolonial Feminism. *Hypatia*, FALL 2010, Vol. 25, No. 4 pp. 742-759

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>



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Harding, S. (2004). A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory's Controversiality. *Hypatia*, 19(1), 25–47. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810930>