



Workshop: Philosophy of Social Science

3rd Term, Academic Year 2020-2021

18, 19, 20 May 2021

Seminar Room 2 (18, 20 May), Seminar Room 4 (19 May), Badia Fiesolana

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Office Hours: Mondays, 12:00-14:00 (Please book a time through Adele Battistini.)

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Description

This workshop addresses philosophy of social science and why it matters for empirical research. We start - Session I - with foundational issues, as well as the content and features of the main philosophies of social science: positivism and interpretism. In Session II, we consider newer work in the philosophy of social science, asking if it marks a beginning at philosophical reconciliation – or just heightened philosophical confusion.

However, the bulk of the workshop will be applied, exploring how differing philosophical starting points affect everything that follows in the research process. Session III considers theory, and its problem solving, interpretive and normative variants; Session IV zeroes in on cause, with its correlational, processual, experimental and local/situated flavours. In Session V, we turn to method, exploring the relation between philosophical priors and methodological choice, standards, and understanding of research transparency. Sessions VI & VII are devoted to collective brainstorming on researchers' own work.

The workshop is worth 10 credits.

Format

The workshop will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm. Written discussion questions will serve as the starting point for Sessions I – V, with all students preparing 2-3 discussion questions and comments for each of these sessions. In addition, for the first five sessions, individual researchers or groups of researchers will take turns leading the discussion.

The discussion questions should be based on the readings and must be uploaded to Brightspace before our first workshop session. Your questions and comments will reflect a critical assessment of the readings. What are their strong and weak points? Their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, ethical, or empirical contributions-omissions?

In Sessions VI and VII, we shift gears and look at your work and its use of theory, cause and method. The goal is for the group to give you advice on operationalizing theory – say - in your thesis. Is its use and construction consistent with your meta-theoretical and philosophical priors?

Sessions VI & VII will work as follows. The day before the workshop begins, researchers must upload to Brightspace a 4-5 page (double-spaced) overview of their thesis and its use of theory, cause or method. During the sessions, we will devote 30-45 minutes to each researcher's work. She/he gets 5 minutes at the beginning to highlight issues and problems encountered with her method (say); the remainder of the time is devoted to feedback and suggestions from the rest of the group.

Workshop Readings

- Books & Chapters in Books, Articles: Nearly all the books and articles are available electronically from the EUI Library.
- Difficult-to-Access Materials: Any reading not available electronically through EUI will be uploaded to Brightspace three weeks before the workshop begins.

If you encounter any problems accessing workshop readings, please contact Adele Battistini.

Requirements

- Workshop Participation: Your active participation is required. No 'consumers' allowed!
- Discussion Questions: Preparation of written discussion questions for Sessions I – V, which should be uploaded to Brightspace prior to our first meeting.
- Leading the Workshop Discussion: For Sessions I - V, individual researchers / groups of researchers will take turns leading the discussion. Your job is to set an agenda for the session: what we need to clarify, what is missing, what should be debated, *etc.*
- Philosophy of Social Science & You (Sessions VI & VII): All participants are required to prepare a 4-5 page (double-spaced) overview of how they plan to use/operationalize theory, cause or method in their thesis. These overviews should be uploaded to Brightspace prior to the first workshop session.

Workshop Readings

Books to be read – mostly select chapters - include the following.

- Bevir, Mark and Jason Blakely, *Interpretive Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating, Editors, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Gerring, John, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework, 2nd Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- Hollis, Martin, *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Jackson, Patrick, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2016).

- Kincaid, Harold, Editor, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Kratochwil, Friedrich, *Praxis: On Acting and Knowing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- Kurki, Milja, *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Two comments on the readings ... First, some of the books have a part of a title or a subtitle with phrases like ‘World Politics’ or ‘International Relations.’ Don’t worry! Their philosophical arguments and insights are relevant across sub-fields and, indeed, beyond political science. Second, much of this reading is, well, philosophical. For sure, nearly all of it is written by social scientists, and not philosophers. Still, you will likely find it more abstract and conceptual than usual. Thus, my advice on reading strategy: Start early (☺).

Workshop Schedule & Readings

Day #1: Tuesday, 18 May

Session I (0900 - 1200): Philosophies of Social Science – The Basics

della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating, Editors, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) – Chapters 1-2. ([E-Book](#))

Hollis, Martin, *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) – Chapters 1, 3. ([E-Book](#))

Jackson, Patrick, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2016) – Chapters 1-2. ([E-Book](#))

Bevir, Mark and Jason Blakely, *Interpretive Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) – Chapters 1-3. ([E-Book](#))

Session II (1400 - 1700): Philosophies of Social Science – New Work Getting Us Beyond Positivism and Interpretism, or into a Philosophical Rabbit Hole?

Kincaid, Harold, “Introduction: Doing Philosophy of Social Science,” in Kincaid, Editor, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) - Introduction. ([E-Book](#))

Jackson, Patrick, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2016) – Chapters 3-7. ([E-Book](#))

Kratochwil, Friedrich, *Praxis: On Acting and Knowing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) – Introduction, Chapters 1-3. ([E-Book](#))

Day #2: Wednesday, 19 May

Session III (0900 - 1100): Philosophical Priors & Theory

Van Evera, Stephen, "Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User's Guide," in Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997) – Chapter 1. ([E-Book](#))

Bevir, Mark and Jason Blakely, "Concept Formation," in Bevir and Blakely, *Interpretive Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) – Chapter 4. ([E-Book](#))

Bauböck, Rainer, "Normative Political Theory and Empirical Research," in Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating, Editors, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) – Chapter 3. ([E-Book](#))

Session IV (1200 – 1430): Philosophical Priors & Cause

Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) – Chapters 1, 3, 6. ([E-Book](#))

Gerring, John, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework, 2nd Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) – Chapters 8, 12.

Kurki, Milja, *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) – Introduction, Chapters 5-7. ([E-Book](#))

Hedstroem, Peter and Petri Ylikoski, "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 49–67.

Session V (1530 - 1800): Philosophical Priors & Method / Research Transparency

Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) – Chapters 11-12. ([E-Book](#))

Johnson, James, "Consequences of Positivism: A Pragmatist Assessment," *Comparative Political Studies* 39/2 (2006): 224-52.

Bevir, Mark and Jason Blakely, "Methods," in Bevir and Blakely, *Interpretive Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) – Chapter 5. ([E-Book](#))

Pouliot, Vincent, "'Subjectivism': Toward a Constructivist Methodology," *International Studies Quarterly* 51/2 (2007): 359-384.

Kratochwil, Friedrich, "Showing," in Kratochwil, *Praxis: On Acting and Knowing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) – Chapter 4. ([E-Book](#))

Isaacs, Jeffrey, "From the Editor: For a More Public Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* 13/2 (2015): 269-83.

Jacobs, Alan, et al, "The Qualitative Transparency Deliberations: Insights and Implications," *Perspectives on Politics* 19/1 (2021): 171-208.

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren MacLean and Benjamin Read, "Ethical Challenges: Managing Power, Positionality and Expectations," in Kapiszewski, MacLean and Read, *Field Research in*

Political Science: Practices and Principles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) – Pages 145-150. ([E-Book](#))

Moravcsik, Andrew, “Active Citation: A Precondition for Replicable Qualitative Research,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 43/1 (2010): 29-35.

Day #3: Thursday, 20 May

Session VI (0900 - 1200): Philosophy of Social Science & You – Part I

Researcher Presentations / No Reading

Session VII (1400 - 1700): Philosophy of Social Science & You – Part II

Researcher Presentations / No Reading