

Workshop: Philosophy of Social Science

3rd Term, Academic Year 2021-2022: 19, 20, 26, 28 April 2022

Instructor & Rooms

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Rooms

19 April - Sala del Capitolo, Badia Fiesolana

20 April - Seminar Room, Villa Malafrasca

26 April - Sala del Capitolo, Badia Fiesolana

28 April - Sala Europa, Villa Schifanoia

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 Sessions II, III and IV, we consider newer work in the philosophy of social science, asking if it marks a beginning at philosophical renewal, philosophical reconciliation – or just heightened philosophical confusion.

We then apply all this material, exploring how differing philosophical starting points affect everything that follows in the research process. Session V considers theory, and its problem solving, interpretive, grounded and normative variants; Session VI zeroes in on cause, with its correlational, process, experimental and local/situated flavours. In Session VII, we turn to method, examining the relation between philosophy and methodological choice and standards; Session VIII explores the relation of philosophical priors to one's understanding and operationalization of open science, research transparency and ethics. Sessions IX & X are devoted to collective brainstorming on researchers' own work.

The workshop is worth 20 credits.

Format

The workshop will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm. For Sessions I – VIII, groups of researchers will take turns leading the discussion. If it is your session, the group should prepare 5-7 discussion questions along with a motivation for them. 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, empirical contributions – or omissions? The resulting memo should be 2-3 pages (double-spaced) in length.

In Sessions IX and X, we shift gears and look at your work. Before the workshop, researchers should upload to Brightspace a 3-4 page (double-spaced) overview of their thesis and its use of theory, cause, method or ethics. Is your understanding and operationalization of – say – cause consistent with your meta-theoretical and philosophical priors? We will devote 20-30 minutes to each researcher’s work. She/he gets 5 minutes at the beginning to highlight issues and problems; the remainder of the time is devoted to feedback and suggestions from the rest of the group.

Accessing Literature

- 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.

If you encounter any problems accessing workshop readings, please contact Charlotte Bufano.

Requirements

- Workshop Participation: Your active participation is required. No ‘consumers’ allowed!
- Discussion Questions / Memo: Group-based preparation of discussion questions / memo for one of the Sessions I – VIII; the memo should be uploaded to Brightspace at least 24 hours before your session.
- Leading the Workshop Discussion: For Sessions I - VIII, researchers will take turns leading the discussion for the session on which they prepared a memo. Your job is to set an agenda: what we need to clarify, what is missing, what should be debated, *etc.*
- Philosophy of Social Science & You (Sessions IX & X): All participants are required to prepare a 4-5 page (double-spaced) overview of how they plan to use and operationalize theory, cause, method or ethics in their thesis. These overviews should be uploaded to Brightspace prior to the first workshop session.

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).
- Katzenstein, Peter, Editor, *Uncertainty and its Discontents: Worldviews in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
- 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).
- Wendt, Alexander, *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

On the readings, please note that 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. Also, 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 (☺).

Schedule

Day #1: Tuesday, 19 April

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, Part I: Social Science and Pluralism

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](#))

Day #2: Wednesday, 20 April

Session III (0900 - 1200): Philosophies of Social Science – New Work, Part II: Social Science and Uncertainty

Katzenstein, Peter J., Editor, *Uncertainty and its Discontents: Worldviews in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) – Chapters 1, 3, 6, 10.

Session IV (1400 - 1700): Philosophies of Social Science – New Work, Part III: Social Science and Ontology – Beyond Classical Physics

Wendt, Alexander, *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) – Chapters 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, Conclusion. ([E-Book](#))

Erskine, Toni, Stefano Guzzini and David A. Welch, Editors, “Book Symposium: Alexander Wendt, *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology*,” *International Theory* 14/1 (2022): 115-209.

Ohio State University, [Quantum Social Science Boot Camp](#) (Columbus, OH: Mershon Center for International Security Studies, The Ohio State University, July 2021)

Day #3: Tuesday, 26 April

Session V (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](#))

Priya, Arya, “Grounded Theory as a Strategy of Qualitative Research: An Attempt at Demystifying Its Intricacies,” *Sociological Bulletin* 65/1 (2016): 50-68.

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](#))

Wendt, Alexander, “Quantum Theory as Critical Theory: Alienation, Entanglement and the Politics of Social Physics,” Article Manuscript (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, May 2021)

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 VI (1100 – 1200, 1330 – 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 1, 2, 5. ([E-Book](#))

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

Session VII (1500 - 1700): Philosophical Priors & Method

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.

Day #4: Thursday, 28 April

Session VIII (0900 - 1100): Philosophical Priors & Open Science / Research Transparency / Ethics

Rinke, Eike Mark and Alexander Wuttke, “Open Minds, Open Methods: Transparency and Inclusion in Pursuit of Better Scholarship,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54/2 (2021): 281-84.

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

Christensen, Garret, Jeremy Freese and Edward Miguel, “What Is Ethical Research?” in Christensen, Freese and Miguel, *Transparent and Reproducible Social Science Research: How to Do Open Science* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019) – Chapter 2. ([E-Book](#))

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

Kapiszewski, Diana and Elisabeth Wood, “Ethics, Epistemology, and Openness in Research with Human Participants,” *Perspectives on Politics* (FirstView, 15.03.21: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720004703>).

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](#))

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

Session IX (1100 - 1300): Philosophy of Social Science & You – Part I

Researcher Presentations

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

Researcher Presentations