

Philosophy of Science for Social Sciences (424014)

Download the syllabus here or read it below.

Watch here an instruction video for this course (do so before the first lecture!).

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1. Course description

This course offers an introduction to the philosophy of science and applies these philosophical questions to the social sciences. You will learn to critically reflect on science, knowledge, and knowledge production. A key question in the first part of the course is why scientific knowledge is widely considered to be an epistemically distinguished form of knowledge. The second part of the course—designed especially for social science students—combines and applies philosophical theories about science to questions about the social sciences. A key question in the second part of the course is what makes the social sciences 'scientific'.

2. Learning goals

After this course, you will be able to:

1. describe, explain, and compare different philosophical views with respect to science, knowledge, and knowledge production;
2. evaluate the arguments for and against different philosophical views with respect to science, knowledge, and knowledge production;
3. describe, explain, and compare different philosophical views with respect to the social sciences;
4. apply philosophical views with respect to science, knowledge, and knowledge production to the social sciences.

3. Literature

This course makes use of the following literature:

- Godfrey-Smith, P. (2003). *Theory and Reality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN 0226300633)
- Rosenberg, A. (2016). *Philosophy of Social Science*. New York: Routledge. Fifth Edition. (ISBN 9780813349732)

Make sure that you buy/borrow/download the newest (fifth) edition of Rosenberg's book.

4. Examination

The course will be assessed by means of a short essay assignment (30%) and a written exam about the compulsory literature and the topics discussed in the lectures and tutorials (70%).

- Partial grades (of the assignment or the exam) are only valid in the academic year one obtained them. No partial grades can be taken to the next academic year.
- There will be a resit for both the assignment and the exam. The assignment resit will be a rewritten version of the original assignment.
- Assignments that are handed in late will be treated as resit assignments.
- In case of a resit, the **last grade** counts as the final grade.
- The grades of the assignment and the exam are combined for the final grade.
- If you only do the assignment or the exam, you will nevertheless receive a final grade.
- The essay assignment will be uploaded on Canvas in week 5. In that week we will also discuss how to write a philosophical essay in the tutorial.
- The precise exam dates have to be scheduled and will be announced when known.

6. Course schedule

Consult https://www.timeedit.net/nl_tiu for the schedule. Attention! The schedule in TimeEdit **takes precedence** over the information published here, so make sure you check it regularly for possible changes. The following schedule gives the general outline of meetings and contents.

Week 1

Lecture 1: Introduction

Monday 25 August, 14:45 – 16:30 (CZ 7)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 1.1-1.4

Lecture 2: The scientific revolution

Wednesday 27 August, 8:45-10:30 (Cube 218)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 1.5 and 3.1-3.2.

Recommended reading (optional): Locke, John (1690). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Book 2, 'On Ideas', chapter 1, sections 1-9, 20-25, chapter 2, section 1, chapter 3, sections 1-2, chapter 8, sections 7-15, 19 and 23-25, chapter 9, section 15, and chapter 12, section 1. Available via <https://tilburguniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/741254812>

Week 2

Lecture 3: Confirmationism

Monday 1 September, 14:45-16:30 (CZ114)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 2.1-2.6

Lecture 4: Falsificationism

Wednesday 3 September, 08:45 – 10:30 (Cube 216)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 3.3-3.4 and 4.1-4.5

Week 3

Lecture 5: Relativism

Monday 8 September, 14:45 - 16:30 (MDZ 2)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 5.1-5.5, 6.1-6.4, and 7.4

Lecture 6: Sociological approaches

Wednesday 10 September, 08:45 – 10.30 (Cube 218)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 8.1-8.2

Week 4

Lecture 7: Naturalism

Monday 15 September, 14:45 – 16:30 (MDZ1)

Literature: Godfrey-Smith, 10.1-10.3

Lecture 8: Philosophy of the social sciences

Wednesday 17 September, 08:45 – 10:30 (Cube 218)

Literature: Rosenberg, pp. 1-42

Week 5

Lecture 9: Behaviorism

Monday 22 September, 12:45 – 14:30 (CZ112)

Literature: Rosenberg, pp. 73-85

Lecture 10: Interpretivism

Wednesday 24 September, 08:45 – 10:30 (Cube 220)

Literature: Rosenberg, pp. 121-156

Week 6

Lecture 11: Functionalism

Monday 29 September 08:45 – 10:30 (Cube 217)

Literature: Rosenberg, pp. 173-203

DEADLINE ASSIGNMENT

Friday 3 October, 17.00

No tutorial or second lecture because of the assignment

Week 7

Lecture 12: Question hour

Friday 10 October, 10:45 – 12:30 – (AZ 201) (**note: different day, time, and lecture hall**)

Literature: none but **send in your questions by email:** g.e.boes@tilburguniversity.edu