Philosophy of Science, 7.5 ECTS, spring 2017

Dates/Times:
First meeting: April 18, 12–18 & April 19, 9–13
Second meeting: May 16, 13–18 & May 17, 9–13

Place: Lund University School of Economics and Management, Alfa 2, 4th floor

Course responsible: Tomas Hellström (tomas.hellstrom@fek.lu.se)

Content

The course aims to introduce the PhD student to central topics in the philosophy of science and social science. It covers the modern history of the philosophy of science and deals with topics such as the relationship between the social sciences and the natural sciences, naturalism and interpretivism, explanation and generalization in the social sciences, rationality assumptions in social explanations, the agent/structure debate, and the role of ethics and values in social science.

Learning goals

After the course the PhD student should be able to account for the aims, possible uses, and main schools of philosophy of science for social science. They should also be able to discuss their own research and that of others in terms of philosophical and methodological assumptions and problems. Finally, they should be able to critically discuss their field of research and discipline from a philosophy of science perspective.

Examination

Written essay and active participation in seminars. All texts must be read before the first meeting.

Schedule and content

The course is built on two two-day lunch-to-lunch meetings. The first meeting will cover the literature, and PhD students will prepare by reading the material and prepare questions (one or two questions may be distributed in advance) to be discussed during the meeting. The second meeting is a seminar focusing on the thesis where PhD students present the implications for their own research, and how they intend to integrate a meta-perspective into their own work.

The schedule for the first meeting is as follows. Details on topics and readings are provided below.
Meeting 1:

| April 18 | 12.15–13.00 Welcome and introduction: What is Philosophy of Science?  
(What kind of questions does PoS address? How can PoS be used in research?) |
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| 13.15–15.00 Explanation and progress: Traditional PoS  
(Traditional topics in PoS, viz. Realism/antirealism, models of progress)  
Readings: Hausman, 1991 |
| 15.15–16.00 Social explanation I: Holism and individualism  
(traditional discussion about micro and macro type explanation)  
Readings: Durkheim, 1938; Watkins, 1957; Barnes, 2001 |
| 16.15–18.00 Social explanation II: The possibility of theory  
(Generalization and the role of rationality in social explanations)  
Readings: Hempel, 1942; Mink, 1965; Friedman, 1966; Rosenberg, 1983; Kincaid, 1990 |

| April 19 | 9.15–10.00 Understanding: Interpretive, critical and deconstructive approaches  
(the main alternatives to naturalism in social science)  
Readings: Geertz, 1983; Föllesdal, 1982; Searle, 1983; Hacking 1999 (chs. 1–2) |
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| 10.15–11 Values and objectivity in social science  
(topics related to the fact/value distinction and the role of values in social science)  
| 12.15–13 Lunch + summing up |

Meeting 2: May 16–17 (hand-in report two weeks in advance)

Literature

Readings marked * are available in Martin, M. & McIntyre, L. (1994). *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*. MIT Press, and also through most university databases.

Readings will also be available as hand-outs. Contact course responsible.


