

PHIL 343: Philosophy of Social Inquiry

Spring 2022

Course Information

Time: MW 10:00A–11:15A

Instructor Name: Ge Fang

Email: gfang1@iit.edu

Instructor office: Siegel Hall 235

Office Hours: W 3:00P–5:00P or by appointments

Classroom: Siegel Hall 203

Zoom Link:

<https://wustl.zoom.us/j/93996464023?pwd=QUt1b0tVc0h5MUR4WIVsY0RTVGIDZz09>

Course Description

Social sciences include, *inter alia*, psychology, anthropology, sociology, political sciences, and economics. There is an intuitive difference between social sciences and natural sciences, which gives rise to a whole host of philosophical problems: do social sciences and natural sciences share the same method and objective? If so, why does it seem that social sciences is not progressing as fast as natural sciences? If social sciences are different in kind from natural sciences, what should be the proper way of studying social phenomena? Should we aim for predictive and explanatory theories about human actions? Is it even possible? There are polarized responses to these questions. This course provides an extended overview to the central debates in the philosophy of social sciences.

The primary goal of this course is to get students acquainted with the philosophy issues surrounding social sciences. Along the way, the students are trained to develop philosophical skills in

- Interpreting philosophical text
- Judging whether a claim about social science is philosophically controversial
- Identifying theses and defining key terms from philosophical articles
- Reconstructing important arguments from readings in a charitable way
- Evaluating arguments written by other authors
- Constructing valid arguments to support or counter a thesis
- Writing clear academic essays to communicate arguments

Textbook

Many but not all readings may be found in

Rosenberg, *The Philosophy of Social Science*, 5th Edition.

Other required readings will be uploaded to Blackboard.

Evaluation

Quizzes (30%): The quizzes in this course will not be conducted in classes. In the first ten weeks, each reading assignment will be accompanied by a quiz, except for the very first reading. Think of each quiz as a helpful set of essay questions that help you to comprehend the material. You are encouraged to reflect about these questions while you read the text. There is no time limit for the quizzes. There will be no quizzes for the last six weeks to allow more time for you to develop your research paper. Each quiz comprises 3 question. Each question is worth 1 point. There will be 16 quizzes in total. Top 10 out of 16 count towards your final grade.

Attendance and participation (10%): Please attend our meetings and participate our discussion. You can miss four classes, no question asked. I recommend that you save this quota in case you need to miss class due to family, sickness, religion, and other emergencies. After four absences, every further absence will count against the final grade.

Paper (60%):

- Research proposal (5%). After the lectures of eighth weeks, you will be asked to come up with a research question for your final paper. I will share tips on how to select a research question. The research question will be due at the end of week 8 (March 4).
- Essay outline (5%). After the lectures of the tenth week, you need to come up with a valid plan to support one answer for the selected research question. This will be due at the end of the week 10 (March 25).
- Outline partial elaboration (5%). Elaborate one central point you made in the outline into 3 pages. This should be submitted by the end of week 12 (April 8).
- Peer review (5%). Write comments for one of your classmates' part of essay. This should be submitted by the end of week 14 (April 15)
- In class presentation (10%). In the last 2 weeks, you will be asked to present in class about your project for 5 minutes.
- Final paper (30%). The length of the final paper should be between 8 to 10 pages in length, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and a standard 12-point font. The final paper is due on May 6.

Laptop policy

Laptops and electric devices are not allowed for in-person sessions, unless I have assigned some reading not in the textbook, or you have convinced me of some other legitimate reason to use your device.

Course schedule (tentative)

Topic 1: Social sciences vs Natural sciences

1/10 M: Introduction. Rosenberg, Chapter 1

1/12 W: Rosenberg, Chapter 2

1/17 M: MLK day. No class.

1/19 W: Striven, "A Possible Distinction Between Traditional Scientific Disciplines and the Study of Human Behavior"

Topic 2: Philosophy of Action

1/24 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 3

1/26 W: Davidson, "Psychology as philosophy"

1/31 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 4,

2/2 W: Fay, "General Laws and Explaining Human Behavior", (skip section II)

Topic 3: Naturalistic Attempts

2/7 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 5

2/9 W: Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior"

2/14 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 6

2/16 W: Hausman, "Mistakes about Preferences in the Social Science"

2/21 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 9

2/23 W: Kincaid, "Open Empirical and Methodological Issues in the Individualism-Holism Debate"

2/28 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 10

3/2 W: Elster, "Functional Explanation: In Social Science"

Research Proposal due on 3/4, 23:59pm (Fri)

3/7 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 11

3/9 W: Cosmides & Toby, "Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer"

3/14 M: Spring break. No class

3/16 W: Spring break. No class

3/21 M: Rosenberg, Chapter 12

3/23 W: Boyd & Richerson, "The Evolution of Ethnic Markers"

Essay outline due on 3/25, 23:59pm (Fri)

3/28 M: Birch & Heyes, "The Cultural Evolution of Cultural Evolution"

Topic 4: Anti-Naturalism

3/30 W: Rosenberg, Chapter 7

4/4 M: Collingwood, "Human Nature and Human History"

4/6 W: Rosenberg, Chapter 8

Partial elaboration due on 4/8, 23:59pm (Fri)

4/11 M: Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" first half

4/13 W: Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" second half

Peer review due on 4/15, 23:59pm (Fri)

4/18 M: Geertz, "Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture"

4/20 W: Rosenberg, Chapter 15

4/25 M: Presentation

4/27 W: Presentation

5/2-7: Exam week. No exam for this course.

Final Paper due on 5/6, 23:59pm (Fri)

Academic Honesty

Students are bound by the IIT policy on academic integrity in all aspects of this course. One of the most common violations of academic integrity is plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, copying someone else's exact words, paraphrasing their sentences, or summarizing their thoughts or ideas, without giving credit to the original author. Here is a web resource on when to cite:

http://tiger.uic.edu/~edelberg/crediting_others/index.htm

Disability

Students with disabilities may request accommodations to ensure equal access and equal academic opportunities. Requests for accommodation are coordinated through Center for Disability Resources. The Center for Disability Resources is located in Suite 3F3-1, 10 W 35th St. You can also call them at 312-567-5744 or email them at disabilities@iit.edu. Should accessibility issues arise, be sure to reach out to your instructor about your Accommodation Plan.