

# Philosophy of Social Science

Phil 420/820

David Henderson

3:30-6:05 W

## Overview:

This class will provide an overview of the philosophy of social science for both advanced undergraduates and graduates. Little background in philosophy or the general philosophy of science will be presupposed. The professor himself came to philosophy while a graduate student in political science, and welcomes social scientists in this course—valuing their sense for the disciplines they represent and the challenges face there.

## Texts:

Rosenberg, Alexander. 2008: *Philosophy of Social Science*. Westview Press.

Stueber, Karsten. 2006: *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences*. M.I.T. Press.

## Evaluation:

Undergraduates:

A midterm takehome exam (30% of the course grade), a final takehome exam (30% of the course grade), and a term paper on a topic selected in cooperation with the instructor (30% of the grade). The remainder of the student's grade is a matter of class preparation and participation.

Graduate Students:

A midterm takehome exam (20% of the course grade), a final takehome exam (20% of the course grade), and a term paper on a topic selected in cooperation with the instructor (50% of the grade). The remainder of the student's grade is a matter of class preparation and participation.

Either Undergraduates or Graduates:

May choose an alternative to the takehome exams—two presentations initiating class discussions. These should be 10-15 minutes in length. They should summarize the material for that class meeting, and they should set out matters judged to be worth special attention—open questions, special contributions to be found there, objections, and the like.

## Rough Schedule:

Week 1 1/14	Rosenberg, Chapter 1, What is the Philosophy of Social Science?
Week 2 1/21	Jerry Fodor, Special Sciences (Or the Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis). James Woodward, Explanation and Invariance in the Special Sciences
Week 3 1/28	Rosenberg, Chapter 2, The Explanation of Human Action (discussant: Abla Hasan)
Week 4 2/4	Rosenberg, Chapter 3, From Behaviorism to Rational Choice, and Back D. Henderson, Rationality and Rationalist Approaches in the Social Sciences
Week 5	Rosenberg, Chapter 4, Interpretation

2/11	C. Geertz, Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture (discussant: Justin Moss)
Week 6 2/18	Rosenberg, Chapter 5, Functionalism and Macrosocial Science Elster, Functional Explanation in Social Science
Week 7 2/25	Rosenberg, Chapter 6, Biology, Human Behavior, and Social Science (discussant: Abla Hasan & Lauren Taylor)
Week 8 3/4	Rosenberg, Chapter 7, Shall We Commit a Social Science? A. Wylie, "Reasoning About Ourselves: Feminist Methodology in the Social Sciences" (discussant: Virendra Tripathi) Chapter 8, Social Science and the Enduring Questions of Philosophy
Week 9 3/11	Stueber, Introduction and Chapter 1, Folk Psychology and Rational Agency
3/18	Spring Break
Week 10 3/25	Stueber, Chapter 2, Charity and Rational Contextualism
Week 11 4/1	Stueber, Chapter 3, The Theory of Mind Debate (discussant: Virendra Tripathi)
Week 12 4/8	Stueber, Chapter 4, Basic Empathy and Reenactive Empathy (discussant: Justin Moss)
Week 13 4/15	Stueber, Chapter 5, Folk Psychology and Normative Epistemology
Week 14 4/22	Stueber, Chapter 6, The Limits of Empathy
Week 15 4/29	Taking stock