Science and Interpretation in Social Theory

PS: 333

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This course is designed to provide a general survey of contemporary thinking on the philosophy of natural and social science. It pays particular attention to problems surrounding interpretation, interpretive method and social construction.

The requirements for the course are that students do all of the reading and participate actively in class discussions. This will count for at least half of the final grade. There will also be a take home midterm and final exam.

Required Books: (available at Seminary Co-op & On Reserve at Regenstein)

Charles Sanders Peirce, Peirce on Signs (Chapel Hill: UNC Press,)

Andrew Sayer, Method in Social Science. A Realist Approach (New York: Routledge)


Ian Hacking, ed., Scientific Revolutions, (Oxford-Paper)

Students are expected to read all of the readings assigned each week. You are not required to read the recommended readings. These are listed simply to provide you with a sense of the size of the universe in the topic area covered in each particular week.

Week One: Contextualizing Science: Knowledge, History, Way of Life


Hilary Putnam, “The Idea of Science” in idem, Words and Life (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) page numbers are in the mail

Recommended:


D. Ross  The Origins of American Social Science (Cambridge University Press, 1991)


M. Horkheimer
T. Adonrno,  Dialectic of the Enlightenment  (New York: Seabury, 1982)


C. West  The American Evasion of Philosophy, A Geneology of Pragmatism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press)


F. Dolan, “Representing the Political System: American Political Science in the Age of the World Picture” in diacritics, summer 1990, pages 93-108


H. Blumenberg,  The Legitimacy of the Modern Age  (MIT Press1985)


Week Two: Natural and Social Science: Mutually Sustaining Rigidities

Carl Hempel, “The Function of General Laws in History” in CG Hempel, Aspects of Scientific Explanation and other essays in the Philosophy of Science (Free Press) pages 231-244


Recommended:

K-O Apel, Understanding and Explanation, (MIT, 1984)


D. Davidson “Psychology as Philosophy” in idem. Essays on Actions and Events (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) pages 229-244


Week Three: Post Empiricism: Blurring Boundaries


Hilary Putnam “The ‘Corroboration’ of Theories” in Hacking, ed. *Scientific Revolutions* pages 60-79


recommended:


A. Musgrave "Method or Madness" in R.S. Cohen et. al., eds., *Essays in Memory of Imre Lakatos* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1976)


Week Four: Realism, Practice & Interpretation: What’s at Stake?

Hilary Putnam, “Realism without Absolutes” & “The Question of Realism” both in idem. Words and Truth, (Harvard University Press)

Andrew Sayer, Method in Social Science. A Realist Approach (Routledge) Chapters 1-3, 5 & Appendix

L. Wittgenstein, “Intentionality” and “Following a Rule” both in A Wittgenstein Reader (Blackwell) pages in the mail

recommended:

H. Dreyfus "Holism and Hermeneutics"
C. Taylor "Understanding in Human Science"
R. Rorty "A Reply to Dreyfus and Taylor"
Rorty, Taylor & Dreyfus "A Discussion"

dall in Review of Metaphysics, 1980, pages 3-56


M. Heidegger, Basic Writings (Harper & Row, 1977)


John Dewey, Experience and Nature (Lasalle II: Open Court Classics)
Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism* (Blackwell)
Week Five: Rationality, Relativism and the Possibility of Explanation: Being Sensible Without Foundations


Mario Biagoli, “From Relativism to Contingentism”

Simon Schaffer, “Contextualizing the Canon”


Evelyn Fox Keller, “The Dilemma of Scientific Subjectivity in Postvital Culture”

---- all in Peter Galison and David J. Stump, eds., The Disunity of Science. Boundaries, Contexts and Power, (Palo Alto: Stanford) pages 189-254; 417-427

recommended:


Social Text, 46-47: Special Issue on “Science Wars” 1996

Andrew Pickering, The Mangle of Practice. Time Agency and Science (Chicago)

Michael Lynch & Steve Woolgar, Representation in Scientific Practice (MIT Press)

Helen E. Longino, Science as Social Knowledge. Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry, (Princeton)


M. Hollis & S.Lukes, eds., Rationality and Relativism (Cambridge, MA.: MIT, 1982)


Note: Midterm Assignment This Week

Week Six: Interpretation 1: Semiotics, Hermeneutics and Critical Theory


HG Gadamer  “The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem”
J Habermas  “The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality”
HG Gadamer  “Reply to my Critics”


recommended:

R. Bernstein, Habermas and Modernity (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985)


Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe & Albrecht Wellmer, eds., Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment, (MIT Press)

H.S. Thayer, ed. Pragmatism. The Classic Writings (Hackett)

HG Gadamer Reason in the Age of Science (Cambridge,MA: MIT, 1981)


P. Ricoeur, From Text to Action (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991)

C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1975)


Hans Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Theory* (Chicago, 1993)


Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston: Little Brown, nd)

W. Benjamin, *Illuminations* (Schocken)


Week Seven: Interpretation 2: Structuralism and Post Structuralism


recommended:

J. Culler, Structuralist Poetics (Ithaca: Cornell Universtiy Press, nd)


T. Mitchell, On Colonizing Egypt (Cambridge, 1988)

S. Fish, Is There a Text in the Class? (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980)


J-F Lyotard, The Post Modern Condition (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)


Michael Kelly, ed., Critique and Power. Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate (MIT Press)
**Week 8: Feminism: Constructivist Science**

Regenia Gagnier, “Feminist Postmodernism: The End of Feminism or the Ends of Theory”.

John Dupre, “Global versus Local Perspectives on Sexual Difference”

both in Deborah Rhode, ed., *Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Difference*, (California-?) pages 21-32 & 47-62


Iris Marion Young, “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy” in S. Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, (Princeton) pages 120-136


**recommended:**


T. deLauretis, * Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana, 1987)

Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Vintage)


Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Gender and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990)


Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (Columbia, 1988)


Week 9: Democratic Problems From a Constructivist Point of View


**Final Take Home on Interpretation & Social Construction due in time to be read and graded by the time grades are due.**