

SV9108 – Philosophy of Social Science

Course content

Philosophical questions underpin all research whether explicitly acknowledged or not. Within the social sciences, important differences exist between, for example, how social processes are conceptualised, how to isolate causality (epistemology), and what methods produce valid data (methodology). At core, they reflect underlying assumptions (ontologies) about how society works, some of which are in direct contradiction with each other. These differences have important implications for the way that evidence is gathered and validated. As a result, it is important to grasp these differences and to be able to recognise how they influence the research process.

The course:

- is aimed at providing students with a working knowledge of current philosophical debates and to help them understand the core concerns of all the disciplines in the social sciences.
- links philosophical underpinnings to the different types of empirical analysis that are used.
- discusses the challenges associated with identifying causal relationships in data on human interactions.

The goal is to strengthen students' skills in using different theoretical frameworks in their own work, and to enhance their abilities to work across disciplines.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

Students will:

- Become familiar with the dominant philosophical debates in the social sciences and how these compare to the physical sciences.

- Be provided with a working knowledge of current philosophical debates.
- Understand the core debates within most disciplines in the social sciences.

Skills

Students will know how to:

- Differentiate the ontological and epistemological differences that underpin research traditions
- Recognize different ontological and epistemological frameworks in their own work.

Competences

Students will:

- Improve their abilities to use theory appropriately within their own work.
- Improve their abilities to match their methods with theoretical commitments.
- Enhance their abilities to work across disciplines.
- Gain insight into the interdisciplinarity of the PhD programme and how researchers may view matters from different perspectives

Admission

The course is compulsory for all candidates on the PhD programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

PhD candidates must each semester register for classes and examinations through [Studentweb](#).

The deadline for registering is February 1st for courses in the spring semester and September 1st for courses in the autumn semester.

This course is only available for candidates admitted to the PhD programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo.

Overlapping courses

- 4 credits overlap with [SV9105 – Philosophy of social science](#)
- 4 credits overlap with [SV9101 – Philosophy of science \(discontinued\)](#)
- 4 credits overlap with ECON9010

Teaching

Lectures and interactive sessions spread over 4 days.

Compulsory activities

Attendance

- 75% attendance on each day of instruction.
- Active participation during the lectures, seminars and group discussions.

Curriculum

- The participants are expected to be familiar with the curriculum in advance.

Examination

Essay

The essay:

- Can only be handed in after you have attended 75% of each day of instruction.
- Must be between 4000-5000 words. Optional cover page, abstract, illustrations and list of references come in addition.
- Must have Times New Roman, font size 12, and a line and paragraph spacing of 1.5.

- For source references and quotations, please use a style template established for your own discipline. The style you use must be consistent.
- Should use sources both from within the course as well as others you identify independently to support your argument.

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English, and you submit your response in English.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a pass/fail scale. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Explanations and appeals

- [Explanation of grades and appeals](#)

Withdrawal from an examination

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you [withdraw from the exam](#) after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

Special examination arrangements

Application form, deadline and requirements for [special examination arrangements](#).

Evaluation

The course is subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students to participate in a more comprehensive evaluation.